Program of Action: The Rev. L. Francis Griffin and the Struggle for Racial Equality in Farmville, 1963

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Leading the struggle for racial equality in Prince Edward County had taken an emotional and physical toll on the Rev. L. Francis Griffin. The stress elicited frequent illnesses, culminating in 1962 with a long hospital stay to remove half of his ulcerated stomach. The strain was compounded by the opposition's campaign to undermine his leadership, police surveillance trailing him and his associates, and economic measures leveled on his family by local merchants. The burden also afflicted his wife, Adelaide, who suffered several nervous breakdowns. Griffin had opportunities to leave the community, and he knew that would have been a tonic for him and his family. Nevertheless, he chose to remain and lead the black community that "stood up to make possible the Supreme Court School decision" and for years put its faith in the "Fighting Preacher." Griffin's leadership proved particularly crucial in the tumultuous summer of 1963, as he capitalized on events to put the county on an irrevocable path toward racial equality.

The Reverend Griffin's leadership predated the classical period of the civil rights movement. After serving with the 758th Tank Battalion in World War II and studying at Shaw University, he returned home to assist his ailing father at the First Baptist Church in Farmville, the county seat of Prince Edward. There, the younger Griffin found not only many apathetic African Americans encumbered by white paternalism but also a corps of progressive-

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The Reverend L. Francis Griffin (1917–1980) led the civil rights movement in Prince Edward County. (Library of Congress)

minded people in need of leadership. In 1949, he succeeded his father as pastor and used his pulpit to preach the social gospel. He believed “that all forms of worship should be related to a form of action,” and many in the black community considered action on education imperative. Throughout the 1940s, and now under Griffin’s leadership, the black Parent Teacher Association petitioned the local school board to improve the separate but unequal educational system. The school board “agreed about the conditions but said there was ‘no money,’” explained Griffin. “They dragged their feet like that for years.” In response, in 1951, the students at the all-black Robert R. Moton High School launched a strike to protest the inadequate facilities. The student leaders sought guidance from Griffin, who connected them with NAACP attorneys in Richmond. Shortly thereafter, the NAACP filed a lawsuit in federal court to eradicate “separate but equal” public education in the county. The litigation was combined with similar cases and argued before the U.S. Supreme Court as Brown v. Board of Education. On 17 May 1954, the Court ruled that racially segregated schools were unconstitutional. The following year, it ruled that its integration order must be implemented “with all deliberate speed.”2
The ambiguous implementation orders prompted resistance and delay. At the same time that segregationists throughout the South lobbied successfully for “massive resistance” policies, Prince Edward County’s attorneys employed litigation to prevent school integration for four additional years. Finally, in May 1959, the U.S. Fourth Circuit Court of Appeals, which held jurisdiction over Virginia, ruled that the county had to desegregate its white high school by that September and consider applications to the elementary schools “without regards to race . . . at the earliest practical date.” In defiance, white leaders organized a segregated private school for the county’s 1,400 white school children, and the board of supervisors cut off operating funds for public education, leaving 1,700 black children without formal schooling. Many black children were forced to leave the county to continue their education. Still, hundreds remained in Prince Edward without formal schooling, leading some parents to consider abandoning the campaign for integrated schools. The Reverend Griffin asked his followers to continue their struggle, warning that “[i]f the Negro in Prince Edward gives up now, he will retrogress one hundred years.” Throughout the ensuing struggle, Griffin acted as a bulwark against regression.³

Nevertheless, Griffin faced powerful forces acting against racial progress. The Supreme Court delegated oversight of school desegregation to U.S. district court judges without providing clear guidance. Congress took no action on the matter except to reject for a second time the provisions to authorize the attorney general to intervene in school desegregation litigation. President Eisenhower never publicly endorsed the Brown decision, and when the Reverend Griffin petitioned the chief executive to intervene on behalf of the locked-out children, the White House replied that the federal government was “powerless to take any action” because responsibility for public education rested with the states. Most politicians in Virginia fiercely opposed school integration, and the General Assembly passed legislation that bolstered private segregated education. Attorneys for Prince Edward County capitalized on the situation by fighting a war of attrition in state and federal courts. The NAACP legal team challenged every delay, but its legal strategy became captive to the judicial system’s glacial pace, as 1959, 1960, 1961, and 1962 passed without the resumption of public education in Prince Edward County. Under these constraints, Griffin could do little more
than maintain morale, work with other organizations to place students in schools outside the county, and run makeshift training centers, with meager funds, for those who remained.4

The school closings represented one aspect of the racial strife in Prince Edward County. “The school problem is a minor problem in comparison with what has been going on in this county over many years,” Griffin privately lamented. “Democracy is being crucified daily.” Although African Americans comprised two-fifths of the population, the county had no black elected representatives. The black community earned less than half the income of whites, and many lived in poverty. With rare exception, professional employment was closed to African Americans. There were no black clerks, no black police officers. In addition, African Americans suffered the indignity of de jure and de facto segregation. Law and tradition barred blacks from the theater, country club, and lunch counters; dictated racially segregated entrances and waiting areas; and proscribed social interactions to reinforce racial hierarchy. Blacks and whites remained generally cordial, but there was no biracial communication among leaders, which frustrated the Reverend Griffin and other members of the black community. One black teenager likened Prince Edward County to living in a “twilight zone” reminiscent of the Civil War era.5

Nineteen sixty-three was a pivotal year for the black freedom struggle in Prince Edward County. That spring, demonstrations in Birmingham, Alabama, led by the Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., captured national attention for their use of direct action and the repressive response by law enforcement. Birmingham ignited a revolution that summer, touching off nearly one thousand demonstrations—“little Birminghams”—in thirty-eight states and the nation’s capital, leading to twenty thousand arrests. Birmingham, too, captured the imagination of Prince Edward’s black youth and inspired them to pressure local officials to restore public education and challenge Jim Crow.6 The Reverend L. Francis Griffin capitalized on the moment by channeling their youthful enthusiasm into a grassroots direct-action campaign to address the problems of Prince Edward County. Simultaneously, Griffin pressed government officials to provide an educational program and eradicate Jim Crow, while also monitoring the NAACP’s legal efforts. The Reverend Griffin’s leadership in 1963 did not resolve all the
black community’s grievances, but it altered the trajectory of Prince Edward County toward full emancipation.

The forty-six-year-old Griffin had a penchant for action, though he did not press for demonstrations before 1963. He had threatened Farmville with boycotts in 1959 and 1960 but had blocked an effort by the Southern Christian Leadership Conference to lead a “Sit-in on Congress” in 1961, and he had convinced teenagers to abandon their plans for demonstrations in 1962. Griffin sympathized with the young people but feared harming sympathetic merchants and jeopardizing African Americans who depended on whites for employment and store credit. Moreover, as special consultant to the NAACP, Griffin conformed to the association’s orthodoxy of resolving matters through litigation, which further stifled his inclination for action. The NAACP’s strategy yielded little progress in the county, thus opening the association to criticism and threatening Griffin’s leadership. In 1961, Griffin urged the state NAACP to “step up our activity.” He would soon assert more influence on NAACP policy. In the fall of 1962, Griffin was elected president of the Virginia State Conference of the NAACP. He believed that it was “imperative that all phases of the Association’s program be strengthened and accelerated” to find “speedy and lasting solutions” to racial injustice across Virginia.7

The Reverend Griffin’s ascendancy symbolically placed the Prince Edward County school crisis at the top of the NAACP’s agenda. The organization’s “main interest” was to procure action from the federal government. The Kennedy Administration, unlike Eisenhower’s, had taken an interest in the case. In fact, in January 1963, the Department of Justice joined with the NAACP to present arguments to reopen the schools before the U.S. Fourth Circuit Court of Appeals. Many, however, grew impatient with the Kennedy Administration’s focus on the legal aspects of the case. In the winter of 1962–63, Griffin coordinated with several agencies to pressure the administration to do more, culminating with the national NAACP petitioning Kennedy to organize a remedial education program for the locked-out children. In April 1963, the U.S. Office of Education awarded Dr. Robert L.
Green of Michigan State University a grant to conduct a study of the situation in Prince Edward to form the basis for further federal action. Working with the federal government provided the NAACP with such victories as this, but juxtaposed against the direct action protests in Birmingham, the NAACP’s conservative approach appeared outdated.

As events in Birmingham unfolded, the Reverend Griffin faced increasing pressure from those seeking more militant action. “The hardened attitude and techniques in Birmingham,” he told the Richmond Times-Dispatch, “certainly has served to arouse a great many lethargic and complacent Negroes to action in Virginia and elsewhere.” In Danville, about ninety miles southwest of Farmville, African Americans frustrated with the local NAACP launched a disorganized campaign in late May that was met with police brutality rivaling, if not exceeding, Birmingham. Protests like this, which presented a crisis of law and order, concerned Griffin, who sensed the “lurking danger of organizations which use a more violent approach and of unorganized groups which advocate violence.” As a result, in early June, Griffin convened a special meeting with leaders of the Virginia State Conference of the NAACP to discuss a new direction. Those in attendance determined that “[w]hat we are actually faced with is a ‘revolution’ which is already under way, and in order for any of the established organizations to play a significant role, it is necessary for them to catch up with the revolution. More specifically, the conservative tactics of the NAACP need to be supplanted.”

President Kennedy also recognized the “revolution” that Birmingham had ignited, and he employed the moral authority of his office to make “that change peaceful and constructive for all.” In mid-June, Kennedy proposed a federal civil rights bill to protect “every American’s right to vote, to go to school, to get a job and to be served in a public place without arbitrary discrimination.” The president expressed his sympathy for the recent street demonstrations but also asked his countrymen to “lessen tensions and to exercise self-restraint” to permit Congress to do its work. Discounting the propriety of such a truce, the Reverend Griffin told the Richmond News Leader that the federal government had to guarantee African Americans that full equality was forthcoming. “Without this assurance, a stop to demonstrations would be improper.” African Americans had the full-throated support
of the administration, but they needed to keep pressure on their state governments.

Albertis Harrison was elected governor in 1961 on a platform that promised to continue the fight for segregation in Virginia. Harrison publicly opposed Kennedy's civil rights bill, contending that "local action and cooperation would be more effective and lasting than new federal legislation in the civil rights field." The Reverend Griffin and Lester Banks, executive secretary of the Virginia State Conference of the NAACP, issued a blistering rejoinder to Governor Harrison's statement. They criticized his failure to utilize the "good offices of the Governor" to mediate racial troubles, citing his silence over the civil unrest in Danville and his misplaced trust in Prince Edward County's officials. Griffin and Banks also warned that African Americans' patience was waning. "It is becoming abundantly clear that there is every intention to make 1963 ... the year of full Emancipation; and this is to be accomplished non-violently if possible, but violently if necessary." The Virginia State Conference of the NAACP had struck a new tone.

In late June, Griffin convened a special meeting of the Virginia State Conference of the NAACP in Petersburg, and attendees unanimously adopted a new "Program of Action." Local branches were instructed to initiate selective buying campaigns and petition their municipal government for desegregation. The failure of local officials to address black grievances would result in demonstrations. The "freedom demonstrations" were to be lawful, orderly, and led by an "indoctrinated NAACP representative," not affiliates of other organizations. A few weeks later, at its national convention, the NAACP adopted a Direct Action Resolution requesting branches to initiate "picketing, sit-ins, mass action protests, selective-buying campaigns, and all appropriate constitutional means of attacking discrimination and segregation in public accommodations, housing, education, employment and political action." In the meantime, Griffin and Banks had already urged members "to take immediate steps to effectuate this program in their respective localities."12

The Reverend Griffin sought to implement the Program of Action in Prince Edward County, but mobilizing the black community proved difficult. Blacks could not join the picket line without fear of economic reprisal, a consideration that limited the activism of adults. Griffin acknowledged
that the school crisis had also made some “despondent” and others “lethargic” and “complacent.” A new minister in town agreed. “When I first came here, I was struck by how complacent both sides were,” explained the Reverend Goodwin Douglas. “The grown-up Negroes were complacent even without any schools for their children.” Black teenagers, frustrated with the pace of change, blamed their parents for not taking more aggressive action to open the schools. “They are too afraid to stand up for what is ours,” bemoaned sixteen-year-old Barbara Ann Botts. “They are afraid and won't stick together.” Griffin found a cadre of young people, galvanized by Birmingham, willing to execute the Program of Action. Many locked-out teenagers were eager to participate in the broader civil rights revolution and to bring about change in their community. Dozens of teenagers had recently returned home from boarding with families in the North to attend school. Many of them had lived in white households, attended integrated schools, and experienced a life far removed from Jim Crow. For some, like Bessie Reed, who recently graduated from high school in Massachusetts, demonstrations were “the only way to get what we want.” Griffin reconstituted the NAACP Youth Council, assigning two veterans of the 1960 sit-in movement as its advisors. The twenty-nine-year-old Rev. J. Samuel Williams was a local man whom the black youth knew, trusted, and regarded as a brother figure. The Reverend Goodwin Douglas was an outsider with a more militant philosophy, who at twenty-five provided youthful inspiration. Griffin, Williams, and Douglas held frequent planning sessions with a core group of teenage leaders, including Ernestine Land, Grace Poindexter, Catherine Scott, Carlton Terry, and Leslie Francis “Skip” Griffin, Jr. Nevertheless, the final decisions were made by the Reverend Griffin. Everyone paid him deference.13

Ivanhoe Donaldson and Roland Sherrod of the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee (SNCC), presumably upon Griffin’s invitation, trained the teenagers in nonviolent protest. Donaldson and Sherrod simulated potential scenarios to test the trainees’ ability to maintain their discipline, including dousing the teenagers with ketchup and mustard. The trainees were taught to “go limp” when arrested and to protect themselves from a beating. Also as part of their training, NAACP attorneys provided legal advice. Samuel Tucker and Henry Marsh counseled the teenagers not to par-
ticipate in the demonstrations, but the attorneys also outlined proper conduct with law enforcement officials for those who chose to protest. The training lasted for days, which was too long for an impetuous youth like Carlton Terry, who argued that “[w]e’ve had enough training.” Terry pushed for demonstrations to commence immediately “because the summer was going to pass quick.”

A county election that summer provided a great opportunity to mollify the anxious teenagers and draw attention to their plight. The Democratic Party primary was scheduled for 9 July, and the national and state press had shown interest in Sonny Pairet’s campaign to unseat John Steck from the county board of supervisors. Steck had voted with a unanimous board five straight years not to operate public schools. Pairet, a local white shopkeeper, campaigned on the conviction that Prince Edward County had “a moral obligation to open the schools.” As election workers tabulated the results, thirty-five African Americans demonstrated in downtown Farmville. Steck was reelected, but the young demonstrators won the day by dramatizing voting inequality, gaining direct action experience, and publicizing their campaign to potential recruits.

The election day demonstration foreshadowed growing tensions in the community. The county became inundated with outsiders. The Michigan State University research team continued interviewing black school-aged children. Volunteers from Queens College and the United Federation of Teachers, both from New York, arrived to administer remedial summer school programs for the locked-out children. A Department of Justice representative engaged in shuttle diplomacy between black and white leaders to find a resolution to the school crisis. Barrye Wall, owner of The Farmville Herald, editorialized that if “the Department of Justice and all the other do-gooders” left the county, the local people could solve their own problems. The school crisis, the civil rights revolution, and outsiders formed a volatile mixture that was foreign to a community that had avoided civil unrest thus far. Wall privately expressed his concern that the white community would respond violently: “Some of the whites, more emotional ones—very few, are inclined to start something, but we have them pretty well in hand.” Tensions mounted further as rumors circulated that the leaders of the Danville demonstration had chosen Farmville as their next target for direct action.
“There are rumors,” lamented Wall, “and I would not be surprised that this bunch is planning something before long.”

In the meantime, county and town officials prepared for more demonstrations. Together, the Prince Edward County sheriff’s department and the Farmville police employed less than two dozen full-time officers. In July, the county hired two additional deputies and deputized dozens more. The Town of Farmville also authorized Police Chief Otto Overton to hire several special officers. The additional personnel would be identified by an armband and assigned guard duty and traffic control, but they would receive no formal police training. Mayor Billy Watkins obtained assurances from the state police that additional officers would also be available if necessary.

In terms of weaponry, the sheriff’s department had “three riot guns and an undetermined supply of ammunition, one gas gun, .37 caliber and a limited supply of gas. . . . [and] three motor vehicles attuned to the State Police frequency.” The Farmville police possessed “1 riot gun with 50 rounds of ammunition, one small pistol-type tear gas gun, one walkie-talkie radio . . . three police cars equipped with 3-way radios on the same frequency and one 9mm German-type machine gun with approximately 50 rounds of ammunition.” That summer, Chief Overton ordered flashlights, riot sticks, and identification armbands. If demonstrations grew too large or disorderly, dozens of untrained civilian officers, armed with riot sticks, would help the professional police force maintain order. Asked years later if the community was prepared for demonstrations, Chief Overton reflected, “[n]ot at that time.”

In addition to such physical preparations, local officials updated plans and policies related to civil unrest. Farmville had ordinances on the books prohibiting loitering and parading without a permit, and Mayor Watkins was prepared to reject all such parade applications. If demonstrators violated the ordinance, the protest leaders would be arrested and, if necessary, so would other participants. Unfortunately for the authorities, the detention center had a maximum occupancy of fifteen. One act of civil disobedience could have filled the jail. If needed, the Farmville Airport would be converted into a detention center for adults, and juveniles would be sent to the state farm in nearby Goochland County. Finally, the media would be required to obtain a permit from the town manager to enter “any troubled area.”
Watkins wanted to avert another Danville, but the execution of this plan could have drawn more attention and invited a similar outcome.\textsuperscript{19}

Police Chief Overton had observed the demonstrations in Danville, Virginia, and in Chapel Hill, North Carolina, and recognized the potential dangers for his community. He determined that demonstrations had to be handled with “kid gloves.” It was imperative that law enforcement cultivate positive relations with the black community, starting with the Reverend Griffin, whom Overton considered “one of the finest, a peaceful man,” and a friend. Overton met regularly with Griffin, often for lunch at First Baptist Church, to discuss problems and share intelligence. Despite these meetings and their cordial relationship, Griffin did not reveal anything about the forthcoming demonstrations. “Of course, I knew it was coming,” explained Chief Overton. “You’d hear pieces and all. Reverend Griffin and I were pretty close then, but not enough for him to give me information.” Not suspecting anything imminent, Overton took a beach holiday. He would soon be recalled.\textsuperscript{20}

On Thursday, 25 July, the Queens College program held class in the basement of First Baptist Church. Around noon, as Phyllis Padow began teaching the English lesson, the class heard a group outside singing “We
Shall Overcome.” The class gazed through the window and saw teenagers formed in a circle, holding hands, and swaying in harmony. “They’ve started!” blurted Chuckie Reid, an eleven-year-old student. Many of the younger children knew little about what had just started, having no entrée into the planning meetings. Chuckie Reid had contacts on the NAACP Youth Council and knew that the group was planning demonstrations to open the schools so that black children would not have to leave the county to receive an education or attend summer programs. Padow sensed history happening and escorted the children outside to “see the beginning of the public activities that will probably affect the rest of their lives.”

At 12:35 p.m., seventy demonstrators began, as the Richmond Times-Dispatch reported, “the first full-scale ‘nonviolent action’ by Negroes in Prince Edward County.” Feeling a mix of excitement, fear, and uncertainty, protestors formed six groups to picket downtown businesses, the courthouse, and the Farmville Shopping Center. The demonstrators marched eight feet
apart, providing shoppers with ample space to enter and exit stores. They carried homemade signs protesting segregation and the county’s closed schools. The Reverend Douglas carried a sign that drew attention to the federal court’s six months of delay: WHILE THE FOURTH CIRCUIT CONTINUES TO WAIT, EDUCATION FOR NEGRO CHILDREN SUCCOCATES. Another sign called out the chairman of the board of supervisors: ASK MR. VAUGHAN WHY THE SCHOOLS ARE CLOSED—HE WILL “HEM” AND “HAW” AND DECLINE TO DISCLOSE. Still another asked: WE’VE GONE FOUR YEARS—MUST WE GO FIVE? While the picketers marched, other teenagers distributed leaflets urging black patrons to boycott certain stores “until you can work where you spend your money.”

With Chief Overton out of town on vacation, acting chief George Crowder assembled twenty officers along Main Street, but he ordered them not to interfere unless violence erupted. Curious shopkeepers stepped outside to see what was happening. “We surprised everyone,” delighted Betty Jean Ward. “I don’t believe anyone thought this would happen in Farmville.” A contingent of white teenagers heckled the picketers, but there were no incidents and no arrests. The demonstration ended at 1:55 p.m., when the marchers returned to First Baptist Church, reformed their circle, joined hands in song and prayer, and chanted “Old Jim Crow has got to go.” Griffin told reporters that the demonstrations will continue “indefinitely” to protest “closed schools, delay in the courts, and segregation in its totality.”

On Friday afternoon the demonstrations intensified. Fifty teenagers in five groups carried placards in front of the downtown businesses, the courthouse, and the Farmville Shopping Center. At the same time, several teenagers staged try-ins at department stores to “tie up” clerks. Traditionally, African Americans could not try on clothing before purchasing items, which was a sore point among local blacks. In this case, the Reverend Douglas recalled, “[w]e would select clothing stores, where we knew that they didn’t want us in. We would go in there and try on clothes and not buy them.” Simultaneously, fifteen protestors in three groups attempted sit-ins at downtown lunch counters. They were refused service at Rhue’s Diner, Southside Sundry, and J. J. Newberry. After the demonstrators left J. J. Newberry, the manager closed the counter and removed the seats. At the College Shoppe
This photograph shows teenagers picketing outside the State Theater to protest against its discriminatory business practices. (Darrell Hodges collection, courtesy of VCU Libraries)

and at Chappell’s Fountain, white patrons were permitted to enter, but the businesses locked the doors to the black teenagers. Later that afternoon, demonstrators targeted the State Theater. The marquee read: YOU WILL ENJOY THIS MOVIE, but a sign on the ticket window stated: IN ANSWER TO ALL QUESTIONS—WE RESERVE THE RIGHT TO REFUSE SALES OF TICKETS TO ANY PERSON. Protestors formed a circle and repeatedly attempted to purchase tickets until the ticket booth closed, and thus closed day two of the campaign. The demonstrators had not yet won any tangible victories, but their presence was having an effect. “The atmosphere in town is getting tenser,” noted one observer.24

On Friday evening, Beulah African Methodist Episcopal Church hosted an electrifying rally. The NAACP Youth Council implored more teenagers to join the picket line, even if it meant defying their parents. The energy and emotion captured the attention of a member of the Michigan State University research team. Melvin Moore, a nineteen year old from Inkster, Michigan, had spent several weeks interviewing Prince Edward’s youth.
“The whole impact of what they had been denied and the poverty really didn’t hit home until I interviewed them,” explained Moore. “It was . . . very sad. There was a certain amount of anger I had.” The rally inspired Moore to cast aside his clipboard and join Saturday’s picket line. For the protestors more broadly, the rally raised morale, heightened enthusiasm, and increased their determination.25

The next morning, Mayor Watkins denied the Reverend Griffin’s application for a parade permit “because of the possibility of some trouble.” Saturday was the principal shopping day in Farmville, drawing patrons from the five surrounding counties. “We felt that because of the large crowds, we could not control it as well as we would like to,” explained Mayor Watkins. Sensing displeasure, Chief Overton employed shuttle diplomacy between Watkins and Griffin to arrive at an agreement. The police would rope off a half-block section of Main Street for picketing in front of First Baptist Church. This arrangement would sap the strength of the pickets because they would be too distant from the businesses to have an effect. Undeterred, Griffin elected to continue the demonstrations without a parade permit. More than one hundred picketers paraded up and down Main Street, marching two abreast and singing freedom songs.26

The Rev. Richard Hale, pastor of St. James African Methodist Episcopal Church in the nearby community of Prospect, led nine demonstrators to the College Shoppe. The picketers attempted to enter the luncheonette, but the shopkeepers barred the entrance. So, the picketers stood silently along the storefront. Chief Overton soon arrived, alerted the protestors that they were in violation of a town ordinance that prohibited loitering, and repeatedly asked them to disperse. When they refused, Overton told Hale, “[a]ll right, you’re under arrest.” Hale and the nine others went limp and dropped to the sidewalk. As they sang “We Shall Not Be Moved,” the demonstrators were carried by policemen to the courthouse. The five juveniles were soon released, as were three adult women who posted bond. The Reverend Hale and Melvin Moore refused bond and were jailed.27

Melvin Moore’s arrest provided a potential propaganda coup for the county’s segregationists, because he was both an “outside agitator” and employed under a federal grant. The Department of Justice was sensitive to anything that might embarrass the administration, and it had received assur-
Ten people were arrested outside the College Shoppe in Farmville, including the Rev. Griffin's teenage son. (Darrell Hodges collection, courtesy of VCU Libraries)

ances from Robert Green, who headed the research team, that “he will not be involved in any way with demonstrations or other action.” Green had exhorted his research team to concentrate on their work but admitted to the Richmond News Leader that he could not control what his team did “on their own time.” Local officials contemplated exploiting the arrest, but Moore’s accusation of police brutality, an alleged blow to the abdomen, may have tempered considerations to further publicize the episode.28

Following the arrests, Mayor Watkins informed the Reverend Griffin that all future demonstrations would require a parade permit and that no permits would be issued on the weekends. Further, Watkins expected that future demonstrations would be orderly. However, the three days of protests, highlighted by the arrests, marked a new day for Prince Edward County. The younger generation had refused to accept anything short of full citizenship, revealing the local white leadership’s inability to manage white supremacy. Segregationists would no longer dictate how and when the black community would exert its constitutional rights. The demonstrators were now on the offensive and would determine their next action.29
The following day was the Sabbath. The white clergy in Prince Edward County considered the school closings and segregation political issues that would “stir the waters,” divide congregations, hurt church finances, and complicate their leadership positions. As one scholar explained, “[m]inisters who stand alone can often be silenced or shipped to another church by segregationists.” The Rev. James R. Kennedy, pastor of the Farmville Presbyterian Church, provides an instructive example. In the aftermath of the Brown decision, Kennedy made public statements opposing segregation, including: “As a Christian, I can’t defend segregation. . . . You can’t take the Gospel with its great message of His love for everyone and defend enforced segregation.” As dissent mounted, the Reverend Kennedy voluntarily left Farmville rather than divide his congregation. His departure left a progressive void among the white clergy and eliminated white ministerial cooperation on matters of race. Griffin lamented that the local churches “have been reduced to Sunday social clubs,” and he was resolved to force the white ministers and their congregations to confront segregation forthwith.30

On Sunday, 28 July, the demonstrators targeted four white churches for integration. Seven African Americans attended the service at Johns Memorial Episcopal Church. An outspoken, subsequently ostracized moderate, Dr. Gordon Moss, a professor at Longwood College, saw the group at the door and invited them to worship with him in his pew. Eight blacks entered the Wesleyan Methodist Church, but all but five of the white parishioners walked out of the church, and some went to the police station seeking arrest warrants. The visibly shaken young minister asked the blacks to leave, and they complied. A separate group arrived at the Farmville Presbyterian Church, but the services had already begun, and the attempt to enter was aborted.31

The Rev. J. Samuel Williams led a fourth group to Farmville Baptist Church, arriving before the start of the eleven o’clock service. The large brick building, which housed the largest congregation in the county, stood on Main Street next to the courthouse. Six white columns and two sets of double doors formed an impressive front porch. At the entrance, parishioners received the bulletin, which read: “If you feel the need for prayer, if you are heavy laden and are tired—if you are in need of friendship—and want a friend that will stick closer than a brother—if you want to know the way of
Twenty-three people were arrested during the kneel-in demonstration outside the Farmville Baptist Church. (Courtesy of the Richmond Times-Dispatch)

life more perfectly, walk through the doors of this house, worship with us and make your wants known.” Ruth Turner, the group’s twenty-four-year-old spokesperson, asked the usher, “[h]as the service already started?” The middle-aged usher with balding red hair and glasses snapped, “[y]ou people are not coming in here.” He gestured down the street and said, “[y]ou have your own church.” Turner then asked, “[d]o you mean we are not going to be admitted to this church?” The usher crossed his arms and blocked the entrance. The church leadership had grown alarmed by the recent demonstrations and rumors that their church was targeted for one. Therefore, the previous evening the board of deacons unanimously adopted a policy that barred blacks. Undeterred, Ruth Turner declared, “[t]hen we will wait until the service is over.” The group stood silently on the front porch. The church
leadership locked the front entrance, and late parishioners were directed to a side door.32

The Rev. Otis McClung opened the service with the offertory, accompanied by the singing of the anthem. The demonstrators heard the choir from the porch, as did more protestors who had just arrived after being turned away from other churches. The group decided to sing as well. Twenty-three demonstrators belted out “We Shall Overcome” so loud that the Reverend McClung could hear himself preach, “but that was about all.” Many parishioners expressed their irritation to church leaders, and the steamy summer heat, intensified by the closed doors and lack of air conditioning, exacerbated the tension. Deacon Robert B. Burger urged the Reverend Williams to leave, but he refused. The demonstrators continued clapping and sang “Let Us Break Bread Together,” “Lead Me, Guide Me,” and “This May Be the Last Time.” The volume was so great that the choir, which sat behind the pulpit, had trouble hearing the sermon. The deacons determined that the disturbance had to end. Burger again asked the demonstrators to leave, and again they refused. The deacons then summoned the police.33

When the police arrived, Chief Overton asked the Reverend Williams to lead his followers away, but the group remained steadfast. Williams was arrested for disturbing public worship. The other twenty-two protestors fell limp on the porch. Chief Overton read each their arrest warrant. Then one-by-one, each demonstrator was carried, wheeled on a stretcher, or transported by motor vehicle to the county courthouse, singing freedom songs along the way. Overton’s policy of personally executing every arrest prolonged the spectacle for forty-five minutes. The church service ended early, and irritated parishioners filed out the side entrance, staring in disbelief as they witnessed the final arrests. Whites gathered outside the courthouse, as did blacks one block away. Tensions peaked, but a timely downpour doused a potential confrontation.34

The detainees were processed at the courthouse. They would have overcrowded the jail, so they were placed in a courtroom supervised by civilian officers. They continued to sing so loudly, recalled Chief Overton, that “you couldn’t hear yourself talk.” The seventeen juveniles were released into the custody of their parents, but the six adults refused bond and were locked up. A contingent of NAACP officials, including the Reverend Griffin, Lester
Banks, and attorney Henry Marsh, visited the detainees. After interviewing the detainees, Marsh paid a visit to the commonwealth attorney’s office to obtain assurances for his clients’ safety. In the meantime, Marsh sent his law clerk, Fred Wallace, back to the jail to deliver a message to his clients. When Wallace reentered the courthouse through a side door, an officer asked him what he was doing. Wallace perceived this as harassment, as he was conducting lawful business. He cursed the officer, and a melee ensued. It took several officers to restrain Wallace. During the altercation, he had kicked a deputy sheriff. The deputy later testified that “my leg hurt a lot, and he had put a right-sized knot on my leg there. It didn’t bleed, but it took some of the skin, the outer layer of skin off, up on my leg.” Wallace was arrested and charged with several counts, including cursing an officer, resisting arrest, and assaulting an officer “with the intent . . . to maim, disfigure, disable, and kill.” The suspected felon was released on $5,000 bond.35

In the evening, the six adult detainees were moved to the Lunenburg County jail, presumably to clear space in the event of more arrests. “That was kind of a mistake there,” reflected Chief Overton, “because then the blacks got mad because we were taking their kinfolks to another jail.” While in jail, Ruth Turner, too, had time to reconsider her role in the kneel-in. She determined that the arrests were “unwise” and “not timely” because they removed twenty-three demonstrators from the picket lines. Numbers were the movement’s greatest deficiency. The Reverend Griffin was upset that his instructions were broken and so many were arrested. At a rally on Sunday night, he appealed for more volunteers, but only a handful stepped forward, not nearly enough to replenish those detained or out on bond.36

Integration, of course, was not a one-way street. Earlier in the day, the Rev. Edward Meeks Gregory, a white Episcopalian minister and president of the Richmond Area Council on Human Relations, had delivered a guest sermon at Griffin’s First Baptist Church. “The Gospel makes it quite clear,” preached Gregory, “that church, by its very nature, is aggressively integrationist in order to draw men together under God.” In an interview with the New York Times, the Reverend Griffin used Gregory’s sermon to draw a contrast between First Baptist and the white churches: “I would surrender my pulpit before I would let anyone connected with my church prevent anybody from worshipping in it.” Furthermore, the arrests “showed that the
white ministers of this community and their congregations have failed to realize the moral issues connected with the integration movement.” Finally, Griffin noted that the arrests “intensified our determination to demonstrate.”

The weekend’s events placed a strain on local officials. On Tuesday, Commonwealth’s Attorney Frank Nat Watkins requested assistance from Governor Harrison “in the prosecution of a large number of cases growing out of the violation of State Laws dealing with sit-ins, kneel-ins and prayer-ins, etc.” Watkins also expressed concern about the possibility of violence erupting in the county. “As you know,” he explained to the governor, “the tempo of the harassment of the citizens of Prince Edward County and the State of Virginia is increasing day by day. I had hoped that we, in this county, would be spared of the ordeals that are now going on in the City of Danville.” Watkins not only asked for legal assistance but also suggested that Harrison call out the National Guard. “Small towns and counties are not equipped to continue this fight without the aid of the State,” pleaded Watkins. The governor’s office denied both requests. To meet the crisis, however, the county board of supervisors approved the appointment of ten additional deputy sheriffs.

In the end, Frank Nat Watkins found relief in the courts. State circuit court judge Joel W. Flood, citing “insufficient space” in the county lockup, issued an order incorporating the jails of eight neighboring counties, three cities, and the state farm into the Prince Edward County jail system. A black spokesman saw this action as “an attempt to intimidate the young people.” The modified system was large enough “to house every citizen of Prince Edward County, Negro and white, including horses, cattle, and dogs.” Judge Flood’s order eliminated filling the jails as a protest tactic, so the campaign had to adapt. Further arrests would sap the strength of the picket lines, so demonstration leaders obtained parade permits and protestors appropriately spaced themselves apart while picketing. The picketers, however, still applied pressure. Several teenagers performed try-ins at department stores and sought service at the lunch counters. When asked to leave, however, they did so without a disturbance. Although these actions appeared conservative by the previous weekend’s standard, a new phase of the demonstrations had begun.
In the following weeks, the demonstrators focused on exerting economic pressure on the business community to force concessions. First, the demonstrators sought to discourage white consumers from patronizing the business district. The presence of demonstrators and the fear of potential trouble did keep some people away. “We usually went to Farmville to shop on Saturdays,” remembered one white youngster. “We didn’t go a couple of times because of the demonstrations.” Second, the marches disrupted business within the confines of the law. For instance, the intersection of Main and Third streets represented a major artery. At the cross street, the marchers “would keep on walking without stopping,” recalled the Reverend Douglas, “because we knew pedestrians had the right of way.” This action blocked traffic and slowed down trucks from making deliveries. Finally, the NAACP initiated a boycott of Farmville businesses. As the Reverend Griffin explained, “Prince Edward Negroes spend proportionately more of their income than any other group in the county through necessity to eat and be housed.” In conjunction with African Americans from the five neighboring counties, “their spending power enables the economy of the business community to survive.” As a bloc, blacks held enough economic power to pressure the business community and the white leadership to make concessions. “When the merchants find out they’re not getting trade from Negroes,” Douglas told a reporter, “then they’re going to have to yield some sort of way.” For adults who chose not to picket for fear of economic reprisals, the boycott permitted anonymous participation.40

The NAACP worked diligently to promote the boycott campaign. Dozens of teenagers canvassed black residential areas, urging everyone to participate. Others solicited support in the business district by distributing flyers to black passersby. The flyers listed the businesses that practiced segregation and urged blacks not to spend their money in Farmville. Some overzealous teenagers actually went into stores and advised customers to leave, a tactic that infuriated shopkeepers. “I do not object to their parading and handing out handbills on public streets,” explained Emanuel Weinberg, the proprietor of The Hub, “but when it comes to walking into my store and catching customers by the arm telling them to come out and not deal here, as well as passing out literature of this kind is the next thing to blackmail.” The boycott was not completely successful. Several blacks crossed the pick-
et line to shop, while others shopped after the marchers went home. Some considered the boycott unfair for merchants that hired African Americans. Others stated that “no young people can tell me where to shop.” Furthermore, many African Americans had credit accounts with white merchants. “They’re good customers and always pay off,” said one businessman. “But where else can they get credit?” The NAACP considered organizing carpools to transport shoppers to Richmond and Lynchburg, but nothing substantive materialized. 41

On Saturday, 3 August, Mayor Watkins denied the Reverend Douglas’s request for a parade permit. The mayor justified the decision by saying Farmville “is so congested with pedestrian traffic and auto traffic . . . we feel [demonstrations in town] might be detrimental to the peace and good order of this town.” Chief Overton again roped off a one-block section of Main Street for protestors, and he warned the Reverend Griffin that demonstrators who crossed the barrier would be arrested. Forty law enforcement officers formed a perimeter around the business district, connected by walkie-talkies, and with two pickup trucks “ready to use if needed.” The Reverend Douglas considered this arrangement a violation of his constitutional rights and decided to challenge it. He and ten teenagers snuck around the police barricade and began picketing on Main Street. Chief Overton explained to Douglas that he was parading without a permit and asked the picketers to disperse, but they continued peacefully marching. The police arrested the eleven demonstrators and loaded them onto a pickup truck. A short time later, the police arrested Wilbert Eanes, also for picketing in the business district. Douglas and Eanes were transported to the Mecklenburg County jail. Four juveniles refused bond and were sent to the Campbell County jail. NAACP leaders could not afford to lose any marchers, but they justified the arrests as a test of the constitutionality of the local parade ordinance. They may have also sanctioned the arrests to reenergize the movement. 42

The weekend arrests marked another turning point for the Farmville demonstrations. Afterward, participation dropped to thirty to forty marchers per day, with the exception of the following Saturday, when seventy-five demonstrated within the confines of the roped-off area. There were no more arrests, and the media quickly lost interest in the protests. Subsequent newspaper articles on the demonstrations were shorter and
Demonstrators distributed handbills like the one shown here to discourage consumers from supporting businesses that discriminated against African Americans. (Courtesy of the University of Richmond)

located in the back pages. The segregationists had mastered fighting a war of attrition during the school crisis, and they were prepared to wait out the picketers as well. Many white residents believed the demonstrations would fizzle out once a “few hot-blooded” teenagers left town for school.43

In the meantime, the Department of Justice had been quietly negotiating an agreement so that no child would have to leave the community to receive an education. In May, Attorney General Robert F. Kennedy had assigned Bill vanden Heuvel as his special assistant to Prince Edward County to “see what could be done.” The continued delay of the U.S. Fourth Circuit Court of Appeals in rendering a verdict narrowed the possibility of public schools resuming in September. Vanden Heuvel determined that a temporary school system open to all students must fill the educational void. Such a program required the endorsement of the Reverend Griffin. In June and July, Griffin met with vanden Heuvel and representatives from federal agencies and other sympathetic organizations to develop the parameters of a
school system. Vanden Heuvel received Griffin’s support but only with a pledge that the Department of Justice would present arguments on behalf of the locked-out children before the Supreme Court. Vanden Heuvel also negotiated separately with state and local officials to win their support. The Department of Justice offered its “good offices” to bring about an educational program “while the public schools of the County are unavailable to them.” As the county’s attorney, J. Segar Gravatt pledged to use his influence to secure the leasing of the public school buildings. Governor Harrison agreed to “use his good offices to procure the services” of a six-man, biracial board of trustees.44

Albertis Harrison asked former governor Colgate Darden to serve as chairman, but Darden refused to accept the chairmanship unless the Farmville demonstrations stopped. “I’m willing to undertake this,” Darden explained to the Reverend Griffin and Bill vanden Heuvel, “but I can’t do so unless you all can stop the marching. . . . I don’t think you can teach children under those circumstances.” As a matter of principle, Griffin could not ask the teenagers to stop picketing, but he predicted that once the schools opened the children’s participation would diminish. “I’m not going to open a school down there under conditions which I deem impossible,” Darden responded. He then threatened to withdraw his support. Privately, Bill vanden Heuvel explained to Darden that the black leadership was “not willing to go to their people and tell them they can’t march. They just can’t do that and have the people trust them; but I can say this to you: if you go to work on the schools, there won’t be a parade while you are there.” With that assurance, Darden withdrew his ultimatum. His endorsement lent the program credibility, which became essential after the ruling from the federal court—a full seven months after the hearing.45

On 12 August 1963, the Fourth Circuit Court of Appeals ruled against the NAACP’s and the Department of Justice’s latest attempt to reopen Prince Edward County’s public schools. The court found that “there is nothing in the Fourteenth Amendment which requires a state, or any of its political subdivisions . . . to provide schooling for any of its citizens.” The NAACP, not surprisingly, chose to appeal the case to the Supreme Court. In the meantime, the schools would remain closed unless further action was taken. Two days later, Governor Harrison—seated at a press conference with
At a press conference held on 14 August 1963, Governor Albertis Harrison (left) announced the establishment of the Prince Edward Free School Association. The Rev. L. Francis Griffin, Bill vanden Heuvel, and Henry Marsh were on hand for Harrison’s statement. (Courtesy of the Richmond Times-Dispatch)

J. Segar Gravatt, Bill vanden Heuvel, Henry Marsh, and the Reverend Griffin—announced the organization of the Prince Edward Free School Association, “a nonprofit association incorporated under the laws of Virginia, whose purposes will be to establish, maintain and operate a system of schools for the education of the children of Prince Edward County, Virginia, without regard to race, creed or color.”

Griffin had to convince the black community that the creation of “Free Schools” was not a retreat but “a step in the right direction,” and his leadership in the protest movement allowed him to do so. A week later, First Baptist Church hosted a meeting to rally support for the Free Schools. Griffin explained that it was not “just another crash program” but a “full school system for which children will receive credit.” This agreement was not appeasement, or a “cooling off period” orchestrated by the federal govern-
ment. The Free Schools offered a temporary solution while the case was appealed to the Supreme Court. The campaign against closed public schools and local segregation would continue. In fact, the Reverend Griffin urged adults to boycott segregated businesses “even if we have to go without some glad rags . . . a few gingham dresses and overalls would do as well.” After the meeting, five hundred people marched in two columns to the courthouse, the largest demonstration on record, to sing and pray. “Chief Overton was floored,” remembered the Reverend Douglas. “He couldn’t do nothing. It was too many of us. So we went down on the courthouse and, in essence, I guess we were trying to be like Martin Luther. We didn’t have our thesis, but we let them know what we were marching for.”

The day after Governor Harrison announced the formation of the Free Schools, the Prince Edward County Juvenile and Domestic Relations Court held hearings for the juveniles who were arrested in connection with the demonstrations. Judge William P. Hay, Jr., released the teenagers into the custody of their parents, but he ordered them to observe a 10:00 p.m. curfew, refrain from disorderly picketing, maintain good behavior, and “attend school if such be possible.” Still, Judge Hay’s order did not break the resolve of many of the activists. “We didn’t want to end [the demonstrations],” recalled Skip Griffin. He and others wanted to picket downtown after school and on the weekends, but the Reverend Griffin counseled them to focus on their studies. Griffin expressed optimism that the Supreme Court would order the public schools reopened and that the civil rights bill would become law. Attention now turned from organizing demonstrations to organizing a school system. The Free Schools had to hire a faculty, raise a million dollars, order supplies, and refurbish buildings and buses that had sat idle for years, all within a month. That fall, following the opening of the Free Schools on 16 September 1963, the protests dissipated.

The Rev. L. Francis Griffin capitalized on the broader “Negro Revolution” to accelerate the pace of racial progress in Prince Edward County. Such progress had been slowed by white resistance, black apathy and economic dependence, and the NAACP’s conservative legal focus. The Birmingham
demonstrations created an opening for Griffin to break through the doldrums. He seized the moment by solidifying his position at the vital center. The “Fighting Preacher” kept militants at bay, but he also, to a degree, radicalized the NAACP by shepherding the Program of Action through the State Conference. The “freedom demonstrations” permitted Griffin to satisfy the activists’ enthusiasm while sustaining a disciplined program to meet the specific needs of Prince Edward County’s black community. From the center, Griffin acted as the movement’s clearinghouse (receiving information and managing public relations), point man with government officials, and contact person with the NAACP legal counsel. Only the Reverend Griffin had the panoramic view and stature to align all these components with the campaign’s objectives.

The campaign’s primary goal was to reopen the public schools on a nondiscriminatory basis. Although the county government was unlikely to submit to the demonstrators’ demand to reopen the schools, it might succumb to popular pressure or a disgruntled business community. Moreover, Griffin knew demonstrations could hasten state and federal officials to take intermediary action—talks that Griffin knew were underway. As the demonstrations developed, he negotiated terms with the federal government acceptable to the black community to organize the Free Schools—a temporary solution to arrest educational erosion. However, Griffin endorsed the project with the caveat that the Department of Justice would continue providing legal assistance in the school litigation. The following spring, the U.S. solicitor general presented arguments before the Supreme Court in defense of the locked-out children, and the high court found in Griffin v. County School Board of Prince Edward County (1964) that the school closings were unconstitutional. The county board of supervisors complied with the federal courts by allocating funds to operate public schools. In September 1964, public education returned to Prince Edward County.49

The school crisis had taken primacy, but the civil rights movement permitted the Reverend Griffin to attack Jim Crow more broadly. The boycott and picketing of storefronts demonstrated the black community’s consumer power and dramatized discriminatory hiring practices. At the close of the campaign, Griffin and a delegation of local black leaders won concessions from several businessmen, who pledged to promote African Americans to
sales positions and hire more blacks in general. Compliance with nondiscriminatory hiring practices was no longer a voluntary program after President Lyndon Johnson signed into law the Civil Rights Act of 1964. In addition, the federal law barred discrimination in restaurants, theaters, and other public accommodations. African Americans immediately tested Farmville’s compliance, and these new patrons were met with courtesy at restaurants and the theater.\textsuperscript{50}

Despite these achievements, Prince Edward County was not transformed into a bastion of equality. Public education was restored but with woefully inadequate funding and an enrollment of only a handful of white students; most of the white community preferred the segregated Prince Edward Academy. Voluntary concessions and the force of federal law opened opportunities for African Americans in public accommodations, but abject poverty prevented many blacks from enjoying the fruits from the summer of protest. Although employment discrimination was barred by federal law, African Americans were hired for professional positions at a slow rate. The Reverend Griffin’s leadership helped open the schoolhouse door and new doors of opportunity for the county’s black community, but there was still much more work to be done. Southern traditions and mores would change slowly, and laws and court decisions would not change hearts and minds overnight.

Nevertheless, Griffin’s leadership in 1963 put Prince Edward County on the path to full emancipation. He opened new channels of communication with state and local leaders. The Farmville demonstrations, in part, pressured Governor Harrison to address the school crisis and endorse the Free Schools. At the press conference announcing the Free Schools, Harrison shared the platform with Griffin, thus elevating the NAACP and recognizing the racial injustice in Prince Edward County. At the local level, the Reverend Griffin had always welcomed biracial meetings, but social pressure and a leadership void discouraged white officials from sanctioning such an organization. Mayor Watkins, for one, “was never real interested in it.” When Griffin threatened demonstrations the following summer, white leaders, including Billy Watkins, softened their position and hosted a biracial meeting to discuss community problems.\textsuperscript{51} The program that Griffin implemented in 1963 put the county on an irrevocable course of racial progress.
For a decade and a half, the Reverend Griffin had done his part for the black community at great personal sacrifice. He could now leave the county to follow his own ambitions, make more money, and spend time with his family. But instead, Griffin chose to stay because, as he stated, “I’m not through.” He lived out his remaining years in Farmville. In the next decade and a half, Griffin witnessed the slow unraveling of racial inequality in Prince Edward County as more and more white students opted for integrated public schools rather than the segregated academy; blacks had steadier employment with higher wages, finding work in law enforcement and other professional positions; and African Americans were appointed to the school board and elected to the county board of supervisors. Late in his life, the Reverend Griffin expressed discontent over the community’s slow evolution in its racial attitude, but he found hope in the young people. That hopeful future can be attributed to the Rev. L. Francis Griffin’s leadership in the pivotal summer of 1963.

NOTES

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6. Adam Fairclough, To Redeem the Soul of America: The Southern Christian Leadership Conference and Martin Luther King, Jr. (Athens, Ga., 1987), 111–61; Martin Luther King, Jr., Why We Can’t Wait (New York, 1964); and Ruth Turner, interviews, Farmville, July 1963, AFSC.


Ward Berryman, e-mail message to Brian E. Lee, 29 Jan. 2011; and McLaughlin, “First Protest March Staged By Negroes in Farmville.”


25. “Negro Groups Try Sit-Ins at 5 Stores in Farmville Area”; Dr. Melvin M. Moore, Jr., telephone interview by Brian E. Lee, 1 May 2011; and Goodwin Douglas, interview, 24 May 2011.


27. McLaughlin, “10 Demonstrators Arrested in Farmville Business Area”; “33 Demonstrators Arrested in Week End of Racial Unrest Here”; and County of Prince Edward v. Fowlkes et al., hearing transcript, 9 Aug. 1963, U.S. District Court of the Eastern District of Virginia, National Archives (cited hereafter as NARA). On 8 May 1962, Farmville Town Council adopted an ordinance that stated the following: “Any person loitering or standing in the Street, Sidewalk, or Curb, shall move on or separate when requested to do so by any member of the Police Department, and shall cease to occupy such position in the Street, Sidewalk, or Curb, under penalty of not less than $10.00, or more than $50.00 for each offense; and in addition, in the discretion of the Trial Court, may be confined in jail for a period not exceeding thirty (30) days” (Town of Farmville, Sec. 16–59, 8 May 1962, “Loitering and Failure to Move On”).

28. Bill vanden Heuvel to Burke Marshall, n.d., Burke Marshall Papers and “Protests Threaten Prince Edward Study,” Richmond News Leader, 29 July 1963, 1A. After the arrest of Melvin Moore, Commonwealth’s Attorney Frank Nat Watkins wrote to Congressman Watkins Abbitt: “No doubt you have seen in the papers that we have arrested a member of Dr. Green’s team from Michigan State University who is now making a study in Prince Edward. This study is being financed by a $75,000 grant of the Federal Government. If you desire additional information on this subject, do not hesitate to call upon me and I will give you full details of the situation” (Frank Nat Watkins to Watkins M. Abbitt, n.d., Abbitt Papers and “Demonstrations Peaceful, Court Hearings Are Set,” Farmville Herald, 2 Aug. 1963, 1).


36. Otto S. Overton, interview, 18 May 2011; Ruth Turner to Jean Fairfax, 2 Aug. 1963, AFSC; “NAACP Leaders Says Schools Primary Purpose,” 6 Aug. 1963, 1; and Phyllis Padow to Mike and Sandy, 31 July 1963, Sederbaum Papers. The Washington Evening Star reported that the Reverend Griffin blamed SNCC for violating his instructions. That conflicts with Ruth Turner’s report, which states that the Reverend Williams and Ruth Turner made the decisions to sing and not leave the church steps. The authors attempted to contact Ivanhoe Donaldson for his recollections.


38. Frank Nat Watkins to Albertis S. Harrison, 30 July 1963, Abbitt Papers; Carter O. Lawrence to Frank Nat Watkins, 1 Aug. 1963, Harrison Papers; and Board of Supervisors, minutes, 6 Aug. 1963, Supervisors’ Records, PECC. The ten deputies’ employment was effective 27 July 1963 but
was formally approved by the board of supervisors on 6 August 1963.


49. Memorandum for the United States as Amicus Curiae, *Griffin v. County Board of Prince Edward County*, General Record of the Department of Justice, NARA; Allan Jones, "High Court Hears Pleas On Schools," Richmond Times-Dispatch, 31 Mar. 1964, 1; *Griffin v. County School Board of Prince Edward County*, 377 U.S. 218 (1964); "Vote $189,000 As Local Share For Opening," Farmville Herald, 26 June 1964, 1; and Robert Holland, "Prince Edward Reopens Schools After Five Years," Richmond Times-Dispatch, 9 Sept. 1964, 1.

