



Standing Before the Shouting Mob: Lenoir Chambers and Virginia's Massive Resistance to Public School Integration

Alex Leidholdt

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A southern journalist campaigns for racial understanding during the struggle over school desegregation in Virginia.

In 1958 the nation's attention was focused on Norfolk, Virginia, where nearly ten thousand students were locked out of their schools. Rather than comply with the desegregation mandate of *Brown v. Board of Education*, Governor J. Lindsay Almond, supported by the powerful political machine of Senator Harry F. Byrd, Sr., had closed Norfolk's white secondary schools.

Massive resistance to integration transformed Norfolk into a civil rights arena. Although the process by which Norfolk's schools were integrated was far from orderly, the transition was characterized by debate, political maneuvering, and judicial action--not violence. Lenoir Chambers, editor of the *Norfolk Virginian-Pilot*, conducted a five-year editorial campaign supporting the peaceful implementation of the Court's order. *The Pilot* was Virginia's only white newspaper to take this position. Chambers was later awarded a Pulitzer Prize for his editorials.

Utilizing a wide range of primary and secondary sources, *Standing before the Shouting Mob* examines Chambers's campaign, explores the influences that shaped his racial views, and places him within the context of southern journalism. The book also provides a detailed analysis of Virginia's massive resistance and Norfolk's school closing.

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