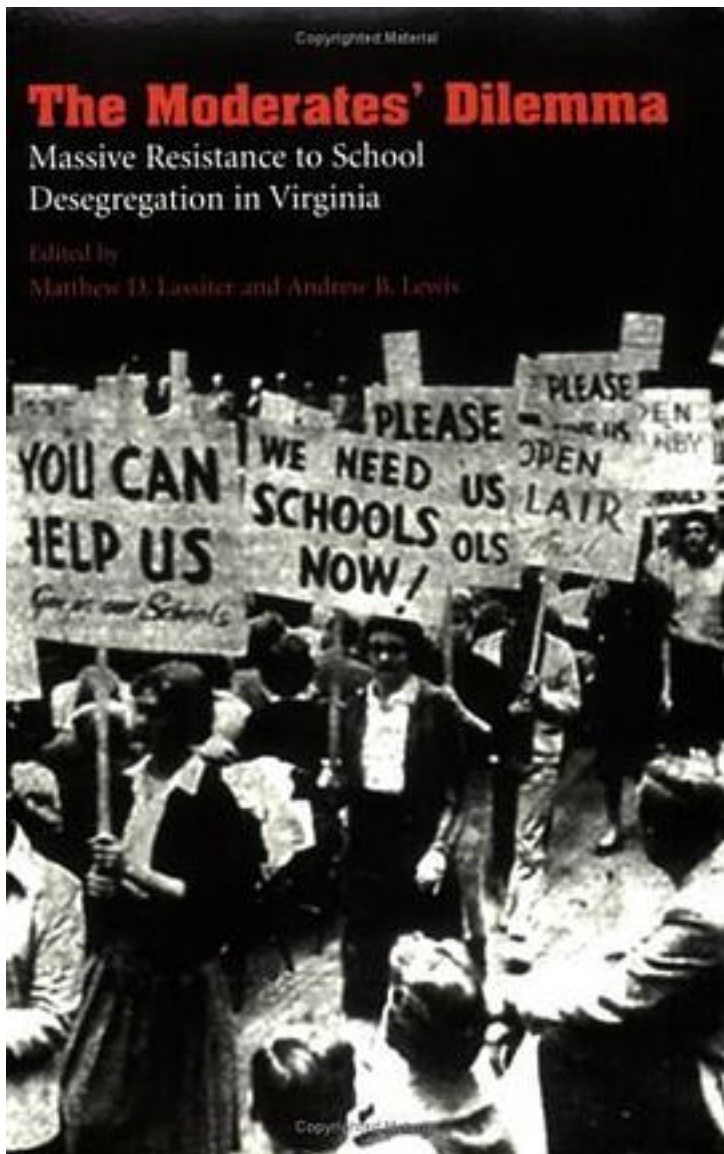


The Moderates' Dilemma



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In 1958, facing court-ordered integration, Virginia governor J. Lindsay Almond Jr. closed public schools in three cities, one of the first instances of the "massive resistance" embraced by conservative southern politicians in the wake of Brown v. Board of Education. This action provoked not only the NAACP but also large numbers of white middle-class Virginians who quickly organized to protest the school closings. Confronted with the dilemma of accepting desegregation or the ruination of public education, these white moderates finally coalesced into a formidable political coalition that defeated the massive resistance forces in 1959. September 1998 marks the fortieth anniversary of the public school closings. In *The Moderates' Dilemma*, Matthew D. Lassiter and Andrew B. Lewis have compiled six essays that explore this contentious period in Virginia history. The moderate revolt against massive resistance helped to save public schools and reshaped the political balance of power in the state, the editors argue, but it also delayed substantial school desegregation, as moderate Virginians became reconciled to the end of Jim Crow out of self-interest rather than a deep commitment to the need for equal education opportunity for all.

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