

The Southside Messenger
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Civil Rights Pioneer to Speak at Moton Museum
by Samuel Weddington

This Saturday at 2:30 p.m., the R.R. Moton Museum will be hosting a lecture and book signing led by John A. Stokes. The event commemorates the events leading up to the 1951 filing of *Davis v. County School Board of Prince Edward County*, as well as the December 2007 publication of Mr. Stokes' memoir entitled "Students on Strike: Jim Crow, Civil Rights, Brown, and Me." The memoir is aimed at educating young children about the civil rights movement, as well as inspiring them to leadership in their own communities. "Students on Strike: Jim Crow, Civil Rights, Brown, and Me" is published by National Geographic Children's Books, and is co-written by Herman Viola, with contributions by Lois Wolfe. The event is sponsored by the Martha E. Forrester Council of Women, Barnes and Noble of Longwood, and the Virginia Foundation for Humanities and Public Policy, and is free to the public.

Stokes, a native of Farmville, was one of the student leaders who participated in the student strike at the Moton school in 1951. This student-led protest would eventually result in the filing of *Davis v. County School Board of Prince Edward County* in 1951, a case that would eventually be combined with four other cases into *Brown v. Board of Education*. The landmark Supreme Court ruling in *Brown* overturned state laws which allowed or promoted school segregation, stating that "separate educational facilities are inherently unequal." After graduating from the 11th grade, Mr. Stokes went into the Army and served for two years, afterwards graduating from Virginia State University. Mr. Stokes later served as a teacher in the Baltimore, Maryland school system, and eventually became a school principal, retiring in 1994.

The R.R. Moton Museum can be contacted at (434) 315-8775, or at their website www.motonmuseum.org, for more details concerning the event.

Note to editor: Mr. Stokes did graduate from the 11th grade, it is not a typo. To verify, you can check out an interview conducted with Mr. Stokes that is contained at the VCU archives. Here is the address: <http://www.library.vcu.edu/jbc/speccoll/civilrights/stokes01.html>