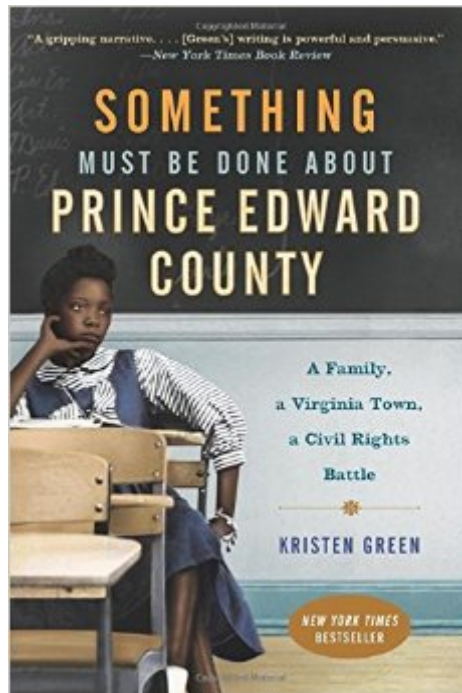


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# Something Must Be Done About Prince Edward County: A Family, A Virginia Town, A Civil Rights Battle



## Synopsis

**NEW YORK TIMES** **Â BESTSELLER** Combining hard-hitting investigative journalism and a sweeping family narrative, this provocative true story reveals a little-known chapter of American history: the period after the *Brown v. Board of Education* decision when one Virginia school system refused to integrate. In the wake of the Supreme Court's unanimous *Brown v. Board of Education* decision, Virginia's Prince Edward County refused to obey the law. Rather than desegregate, the county closed its public schools, locking and chaining the doors. The community's white leaders quickly established a private academy, commandeering supplies from the shuttered public schools to use in their all-white classrooms. Meanwhile, black parents had few options: keep their kids at home, move across county lines, or send them to live with relatives in other states. For five years, the schools remained closed. Kristen Green, a longtime newspaper reporter, grew up in Farmville and attended Prince Edward Academy, which did not admit black students until 1986. In her journey to uncover what happened in her hometown before she was born, Green tells the stories of families divided by the school closures and of 1,700 black children denied an education. As she peels back the layers of this haunting period in our nation's past, her own family's role "no less complex and painful" comes to light. At once gripping, enlightening, and deeply moving, *Something Must Be Done About Prince Edward County* is a dramatic chronicle that explores our troubled racial past and its reverberations today, and a timeless story about compassion, forgiveness, and the meaning of home.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

Kristen Green's *Something Must Be Done About Prince Edward County* is compelling, timely, brave, and so deeply necessary that its presence next to me, its pages still warm from my hand and its messages stoking the fires of change in my belly, is palpable. This book is personal, in more ways than one. It is political, in more ways than one. I hope it tops the best-seller lists for months to come, for it is a book we desperately need to read as a nation. Perhaps you have already read some reviews of this book, and seen that others find it compelling because it weaves together memoir and history so well, telling a story few outside the small community of Prince Edward County know by heart. These things are all true. The book is a well-told narrative, the author's personal experience and family history—her grandfather helped to found an all-white private school during segregation, contributing to the closure of public schools in Prince Edward County and locking black children out of an education for five years—providing the backdrop for a history that needs to be shared before it can be transcended. While the book is a quick and fascinating read that gives readers both personal and political perspective, it is more than that. It is a history told by a white person who is aware of her whiteness, and speaking the truth of white middle-class experience—the guilt, shame, and isolation that come with being born on the privileged side of an unjust system. White Americans have a tendency to think of discussions about race as centering only on people of color, as if whiteness is not a race. In these pages, we hear the truth of race and class, simply as story.

The book's author who is white and married to a man of American Indian heritage tries to connect the reader to the struggle of racism by using her fears about the discrimination her family has faced. She does acknowledge that her struggle is not as intense as the struggle would be for someone who is black. For me, as a black woman and a cousin to some of the displaced children she wrote about, the read left me feeling like she still didn't quite understand the depth of black racism vs any other skin color. It was like drinking a glass of skim milk instead of whole milk. It was still nourishing and refreshing but something was missing. Nevertheless, Mrs. Green told a story that needed telling. She brought to light a dirty nasty secret that carried shame and bred distrust then and now. Although it was not our shame, it still kept our tongues bound and we became unwitting partners in the silent shame of Prince Edward County. It took a lot of courage for her to face her relatives and old family friends and ask those hard questions. Being thought of as a traitor to her family and white heritage had to take a toll on her. As in the past, we owe a lot to the many white people who took a stand, stood tall and brave, and gave our plight a loud voice. Thank you, Mrs. Green. Some of my

cousins were affected by the school closings in Farmville. Many ended up in Pennsylvania, Washington, DC, and Maryland. Not many of our grandparents' 17+ children and none their grandchildren stayed in Farmville. They all knew the value of an education. from the 17+ children, there were 53 first cousins and most have done very well. Ministers, teachers, professors, PhDs, business owners, lots of college degrees, and awesome family reunions.

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