The Black Teacher Faces A New Challenge

By ELLA M. DeLEGALL
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It seems that one of life's ironies is that those who have suffered most have the responsibility of insuring that others will not have to endure the same sufferings. This is no less true for the back person in the teaching profession. What bothers me is my fear that we may have lost our dedication and side-stepped the challenge which now stands before us.

In the past, the black teacher has been the buwark of the black community: respected, trusted, held up as a model for black children. The fact that teaching was one of the few profession open did not slight the fact that black teachers made contributions disproportionate to their numbers.

Today's world presents so many possible occupational avenues that our ranks are increasingly being filled with those who see our profession as a temporary fling or a step on the

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ladder to bigger successes. This, at a lime, when our profession needs people who care, especially black people.

The problems which the black teacher faces, in my opinion, are essentially those of anyone involved in the profession's progress. The major exception, it seems, is that of identity: "Do I consider myself first to be a black person or to be a teacher?"

I see no inconsistency in believing yourself to be both. Regardless of the answers the important factors in this question are the same: Confidence in one's own ability, devotion to the furtherance of the profession and repect for the children you teach.

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Is it too much to ask that each of us respect his individual self as a prerequisite to respecting our children; that we then, engage in meaningful dialogue with them, so that together we can force the system to come to grips with its inadequacies?

Is it too much to ask that we assist our communities in the struggles they are now undergoing so that they can begin to gain the confidence they so badly desire? Is it too much to demand that our professional organizations cease their in-strife and intellectual vergiage so that they can begin to deal with relevant educational issues?

The time has long since passed when we had to see ourselves, whether we identify as black as as teacher — as second-best. We have and can make a positive contribution. If we care enough to dare to try, then we will have lived up to the proud heritage of our young, who rewrote history by demanding civil rights NOW. If we care enough to dare to try, we will have gained the identity we crave, and we will have gathered the courage we need to humanize our profession for all — black and white.

This is the challenge to the black teacher — we have suffered most, by right, we should be the most human. Our profession does not seem to care nor have the courage to make meamingful changes. It seems to me that it is our duy to save it from itself; if only for our children's sake.

Teachers Union describes Baltimore school progress

By HARRY B. WASKOW
(Special to Afro)-American'

BALTIMORE — The Baltimore Teachers Union, Local 340, was first chartered by the American Federation of Teachers in 1934. This year, it celebrates its 35th anniversary as the exclusive spokesman and negotiator for the city's classroom teachers.

The Union was the first racially integrated teachers' organization south of the Mason-Dixon Line.

It fought before and after 1954 to implement the lofty principles of the integration of public schools. It openly supported, before 1954, the entrance of colored students into Polytechnic Institute and the Western High School to enjoy the benefits of specialized curricula.

In the transitional period after 1954, BTU leadership achieved a reversal of the unjust dismissal of a group of colored probationary teachers from one junior high school. Action by an ex-president of the union led to an overthrow of an election "misscount' to enable a colored student to receive her proper office in a predominantly white school.

Teachers Union delegates to national conventions in the late 1950's voted consistently and successfully to expel from the American Federation of Teachers those Southern locals with lily-white constitutions, an action which the National Education Association has yet to do.

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In the 1960s, the Teachers Union instituted its drive for quality education for all in Baltimore. The union forced wide improvements at both Mergenthaler and Dunbar High Schools. The Union fought for the building of a new Dunbar and achieved a reversal of the thumbs-down action of the School Board's building committee on the proposition.

The Teachers Union promoted the concepts of the the More Effective School so clearly, that they were reality.

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Thus, when the Teachers Union achieved election, in June, 1967, as the sole negotiator for the city's teaching force against admittedly tremendous odds, it did so, because it had gained recognition as the trumpet and the shield of minority groups, indeed, of individual teachers.

The union's record of efforts for the protection and advancement of all children and teachers regardless of race, color, or religion was achieved by a leadership composed of, but not representative of, individuals of various races, colors, and religions.

Now that the Teachers Union has gained its proper share of power within the body politic, it can give greater leadership to the underprivileged in their aspirations to achieve their proper share of power.

Similarly, the union can and must support the urge by parents that all children achieve identity and self-dignity, the precious gifts of equal opportunity and first-class citizenhip.

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Sooner or later, Baltimore must face up to — and solve — the potentially explosive problem of school decentralization.

How to define the problem, how to analyze the elements of the dilemma and how to implement proposed solutions to the question are subjects to tax the goodwill and ingenuity of the entire Baltimore community.

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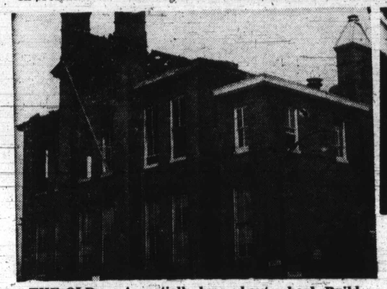
Fortunately, Baltimore seems blessed among the large cities with a combination of historical circumstances, statesman - like political leadership, and organized professional personnel most hopeful of easing the city's educational system into a proper balance between the aspirations of ethnic groups and the needs of general civic uplift.

Baltimore moved quickly and easily in 1954 from its scholastic integration, with only a modicum of disturbance.

In Baltimore, the Teachers Union can and should be the bridge between the Board of School Commissioners and the local ethnic communities.

LEADERS OF THE Baltimore Teachers Union and its parent organization, the American Federation of Teachers, hear the news that the Union has been elected by a majority of city teachers as their exclusive bargaining agent with the school board. Second from the left is Dennis Crosby, Union president. George Brickhouse (center) and Joseph Cascella (right) are AFT national representatives.

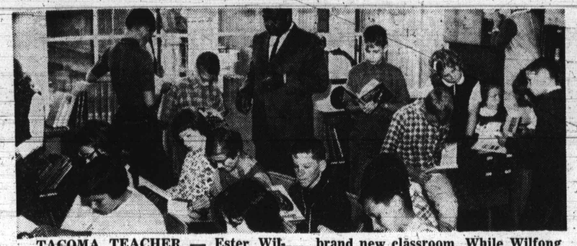
MARTYRS TO THEIR cause, these Baltimore teachers are hustled into paddy wagons by city police who tried to halt picketing of city schools during the May, 1967, strike which the Teachers Union eventually won.



THE OLD — A partially burned-out school, Building No. 108 in Baltimore, was still in use when the Baltimore Union, Local 6 of the American Federation of Teachers, protested. It was soon closed.

AND THE NEW — Children in one of Baltimore's six Model Schools, negotiated under the contract between the board of education and the Baltimore Teachers' Union hear a story in a bright, new classroom from a reading specialist. The Model Schools are patterned after the More Effective Schools program of the American Federation of Teachers. Others are found in New York City, Detroit, and elsewhere in urban areas.

MEMBERS OF THE BALTIMORE Teachers Union, AFT Local 340, are served with summonses during their May, 1967, strike. Like other professional teachers in other parts of the country, they were forced to walk off their jobs when the board of education refused to grant their demand for collective-bargaining rights. The board eventually agreed to hold a bargaining representation election, which the Union won.



TACOMA TEACHER — Ester Wilfong, currently president of the Washington Education Association, has taught since 1959 in the Larchmont Elementary, but he will return to a brand new classroom. While Wilfong is on leave, a modern Larchmont is being constructed. More than 800 new classrooms have been built in Tacoma since 1949, about half the total in use.

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Tacoma School District No. 10 is fine place to practice teaching

TACOMA, Wash. — How do you find out what a school district is really like? Ask someone who has taught in the system!

That's why Superindendent Angelo Giaudrone asked Ester Wilfong, the current president of the Washington Education Association to tell the readers of the AFRO about his impressions of Tacoma Public Schools.

Wilfong, who has taught sixth grade at Larchmont Elementary since 1959, had this to say: "My impression of the Tacoma School District No. 10 is that it is a fine place to practice the profession of teaching.

"The commitment to learning by the administration, the professional attitude of the staff and the overall cooperation between the two, provides for a partnership that is most productive in producing the kind of youth we feel will be competent to carry on and improve upon the society we find ourselves in today.

"There is a kind of perfectionist attitude and an eagerness to experiment with new ideas that will improve the love of classroom instruction and teacher competency within the district.

"Teachers are encouraged and supported by the administration to develop new, different, and inovative ways of helping teach children to recognize their own individual worth and their unique responsibilities to work towards their fullest potentials.

"I have been impressed with the individual help and attention given to teachers new to the system by the helping teachers that the district provides.

"You are not left alone and on your own. This is most important to one new to the system and to teaching.

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