Doctors don't try to figure out a new technique or procedure for every patient who comes to their office.

following week.

Some people say this use of computer technology would constitute a move to make teaching "teacher-proof," which they consider an infringement on teacher professionalism. But you could also look on these lessons as something like the standard techniques that doctors use. Doctors don't try to figure out a new technique or procedure for every patient who comes to their office; they begin by using standard techniques and procedures that are based on the experience of many doctors over the years. Nobody considers this a way of doctor-proofing medicine, although they do have a name for the failure to use standard practices—it's *malpractice.* The standard practices that all doctors (and other professionals) use contain the wisdom of the profession. The same could come to be true of a national database of lessons that have been polished and perfected by the most skillful members of the teaching profession.

# The Wrong Target

*Where We Stand / September 15, 1996*

Many people believe that getting tenure guarantees a teacher a lifetime job, even if the teacher's subsequent performance is lousy. So they listen sympathetically to calls for abolishing tenure. But tenure does nothing of the sort. It simply guarantees that there will be some form of due process before a teacher can be dismissed. The real problem lies in the evaluation process that leads to tenure and monitors the performance of tenured teachers.

Tenure decisions are typically based on evaluations made by an administrator. He probably pays a flying visit to a new teacher's classroom a couple of times a year, which gives him very little basis for deciding whether or not a teacher is doing a good job. As a result, novice teachers who need help don't get it; instead, they are likely to receive a *satisfactory* or even an *excellent* on their evaluations. After three or four years, when the probationary period is over, they probably get tenure.

Because evaluations of tenured teachers are even skimpier, administrators are also unlikely to notice that someone's teaching is not up to par. So they often don't have any firm basis for recommending that a tenured teacher be let go.

"Don't Let Teacher Evaluation Become a Ritual," an article directed to school administrators (*Executive Educator,* May 1988), minces no words in describing how worthless evaluations often are. The authors cite their survey of 35 school districts in eastern Pennsylvania, which showed that 98 percent of the teachers were given a perfect score of 80 by the administrators who evaluated them; 1.1 percent got scores between 75 and 79; and fewer than 1 percent scored below 74. Was there something in the Pennsylvania water that made for perfect teaching? The authors thought it more likely that the evaluations were sloppy—and they didn't think this was a local problem: "We suspect that inflated scores on teacher evaluations are common. And these scores are a sign that teacher supervision and evaluation are in trouble in many school systems."

Everybody loses with a system like this—other teachers, who have to live with the results of bad teaching by a colleague, as well as students. But there is an alternative that works. Peer review or peer intervention—it goes by various names—is a system developed by teacher unions, in collaboration with their school districts, in which experienced and excellent teachers observe probationary teachers and offer them help when they need it. At the conclusion of the probationary period, these master teachers make recommendations about who should be offered tenure and who let go. Peer review also includes assistance to tenured teachers who need help with their teaching and, in some cases, advice to quit the profession.

The Toledo Federation of Teachers' peer review program, perhaps the first in the country, has been in operation since 1981. In Toledo, consulting teachers spend up to three years helping to train and evaluate new teachers, and they play a major role in deciding which new teachers will get tenure. Tenured teachers who are in trouble get the same kind of one-on-one help from colleagues, and it continues until the troubled teacher has either improved to the point of being successful or a termination is recommended.

But aren't teachers likely to be even easier on their colleagues than administrators? Both the Toledo Federation of Teachers and the Cincinnati Federation of Teachers, which has had a peer assistance and evaluation program since 1985, have found the opposite to be true. In the Cincinnati program's first year, consulting teachers rated 10.5 percent of their new teachers less than satisfactory, compared to 4 percent by administrators. And 5 percent of beginning teachers under peer review were recommended for dismissal as compared to 1.6 percent of those evaluated by principals. Results for subsequent years have been similar.

Cincinnati has an arrangement similar to Toledo's for veteran teachers whose teaching is not up to par. After

two years of support and assistance, the consulting teacher makes a final report, recommending dismissal if necessary. This system salvages teachers who can be helped, but there is another important plus. It greatly reduces the number of dismissals that lead to lengthy and expensive disputes. According to Tom Mooney, president of the Cincinnati Federation of Teachers, this is because the teachers who are advised to leave can't blame their termination on sloppy or unfair procedures by management. They have been offered help by their colleagues and given a chance to improve. At best, the decision to terminate represents a consensus among the various parties. At the very least, the teacher sees that he won't have much of a court case.

Teachers (and teacher unions) don't hire, evaluate or tenure teachers: administrators do. But the whole process would be a lot better if teachers *were* able, as a profession, to take responsibility for themselves. The programs in Toledo and Cincinnati, and similar ones sponsored by the Minneapolis Federation of Teachers and the Rochester Teachers Association, show that this idea can work. Instead of getting rid of tenure, we should be moving to give teachers more say about who becomes—and remains—a tenured colleague.

# A General Idea Won't Do

*From "A Tribute to Al Shanker"*
*Education Week / May 1997*

*Al is speaking here at a Pew Forum meeting held in Jackson Hole, Wyoming, July 1996.*

There's this romantic notion that unless each teacher invents something on the spot that is different from what she did before, she's in a rut. It's an asinine point of view when you consider other professions and how they practice. Certain things are known, and you better do it that way or it's malpractice. Sure it can be boring because you're doing the same thing over and over again in the same way, but that's what you do because it's better than any other way we know. I don't want a doctor to tell me that he's bored with the usual way of doing an operation and wants to do something different because it might be more interesting.

This idea of giving people a general philosophy and expecting them to implement it is silly. Years ago, when I visited Israel, my wife Eadie and I went to a section where they had the new Jews from African and Arabic countries. As we were touring this housing project, we were told that most of these people had lived in tents or in very primitive housing and that most of them had not eaten on tables. There was this concerted effort to convince them to use tables. As we went through the development, our guides said, "Let's visit one of these families; let's take a look at an apartment." And they knocked at a door and said, "We have Mr. and Mrs. Shanker here from New York; can they come in?" We walked in, and there was a family from Yemen, and they were eating from the table. But the table was upside down with the top on the floor and the legs standing up.

If you give people in any field a general idea, they will translate that into what they've done before. And so if you don't have this level of specificity, you're wasting your time.

# Remembering Teachers

*From Where We Stand / December 29, 1996*

A couple of years ago, I picked up an excellent book about teachers and teaching, *A Special Relationship: Our Teachers and How We Learned,* edited by John Board. (Pushcart Press, 1991). The book presents comments from a number of famous people about the teachers who were most important to them. There is no question what made these teachers stand out in the memories of their former students. They knew and loved what they taught and communicated that. It is too bad, then, that there is a prejudice against content among many members of our educational establishment. Prospective teachers are often indoctrinated with the idea that they should "teach the student, not the subject." This means focusing on the process of learning—on "problem solving," "higher-order thinking skills," and "critical thinking," rather than American history or *Macbeth* or W.E.B. Du Bois. The terms may sound impressive but, without content, students don't have anything to think about—or, probably, any interest in thinking. Subject matter, as the great teachers in John Board's book knew, is the life's breath of learning.

As a part of reforming our education system, we need to think about what we consider important in a teacher. Of course, good teachers are skilled in techniques of what we now call classroom management. They are sensitive to who their students are and know what kinds of approaches will help the youngsters learn. But these things are worth very little unless a teacher knows and loves the subject. So our reforms must reestablish the preeminence of subject matter by setting standards that focus on content and curricula and assessments attached to these standards. When this happens, content will assume its correct place in the preparation of young teachers. And then teachers who are in love with their subject will once more be the models to which everyone in the profession aspires.

*This page: Al speaks in Warsaw, Poland, at memorial for martyred leaders of General Jewish Workers Union.*
*Opposite page: Shoulder to shoulder, Al and Bayard Rustin push through crowd at 1968 New York City rally in support of striking teachers.*

# Civil and Human Rights



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# When Al Wept

*From New York Teacher / City Edition*
*March 10, 1997*

*The following is based on an interview with Al shortly before he died; the interviewer was Jack Schierenbeck.*

Not long ago, while lying in Memorial Sloan-Kettering Hospital receiving chemotherapy, Al Shanker told a story that spoke volumes about what made him tick.

The year was 1966. In East Harlem, a new junior high was set to open. Stanley Lisser, who had taught in Harlem for many years and had developed an Afro-American curriculum, was the Board of Ed's choice for principal. Lisser was Jewish.

His assistant principal was a black woman named Beryl Banfield who had written a biography of Marcus Garvey. That combination didn't satisfy everyone. A group threatened a boycott if the school didn't get a black principal. To avoid any further escalation of tension, city school Superintendent Bernard Donovan apparently leaned on Lisser, who asked for a transfer.

The teachers in the school, half black and half white, rose up in protest. Reaching out to the UFT for support, they were ready to shut down the school unless Lisser stayed. To press their case, the entire faculty boarded buses and traveled to 110 Livingston Street to meet with Donovan.

Said Shanker, "I remember sitting in the back as Bernie Donovan told them that they were breaking the law and that if they got back on those buses the whole thing would be forgotten. One by one, those teachers got up and told Donovan that they weren't afraid of him and that they weren't going back without their principal. I remember sitting in the back of that room with tears in my eyes. Here were 100 people standing up for what they believed in, refusing to be cowed into submission or intimidated by threats. It was democracy. It was solidarity. It was the dignity of the individual. It was just beautiful."

At that point, Shanker, the ailing lion in winter, wept.

# Affirmative Action Without Quotas

*From "A Tale of Two Programs"*
*Where We Stand / March 31, 1974*

*In this column Al describes a program initiated by the UFT that led to the hiring of 10,000 paraprofessionals in New York City by 1974.*

These paraprofessionals were nearly all black and Puerto Rican mothers of schoolchildren and were mostly high school dropouts and welfare recipients. When, in 1969, the paras decided to organize, they voted for the UFT to represent them. Unionization brought them salary increases, welfare benefits and job security—but more important to them was the commitment by the UFT and the board of education to the Career Training Program. The program gives paras time off from work, with full pay, to take tuition-free college courses. It also pays them stipends—this year $80 a week—to attend college during the summer. The Career Training Program provides assurance to the paras that their jobs are no longer dead-end jobs. It is for them a vehicle to higher attainment. Because of it, the paras are now qualifying as people with a profession and a future.

The para program clearly demonstrated that affirmative action can succeed without quotas. It showed that minorities and welfare recipients can make it with traditional education. It showed that minorities can compete on the basis of existing standards and that the standards need not be modified or lowered. It showed that minorities can advance most rapidly as part of the American labor movement, through the benefits of membership in an AFL-CIO union.

# Vladimir Bukovsky

*AFT Executive Council Meeting*
*Bal Harbour, Florida / February 1977*

We have with us this morning Vladimir Bukovsky. You have all read about him. He served extensively in prisons and also was the subject of a special type of psychiatric treatment, and I must say that when I read some of your materials, it makes perfect sense. Anyone who did the kinds of things that you did in the Soviet Union must certainly be crazy.

*[Laughter]*

So you see, there is a simple logic to it all, and we can understand exactly why he was subjected to this treatment in the Soviet Union.

I would urge all of you to read the letter—and we will reprint it for you, those who do not have it—the letter that Mrs. Bukovsky, Vladimir Bukovsky's mother, wrote. It was the beginning of the final, successful effort to release him from the Soviet Union, and it is an amazing letter.

Here is a woman writing a letter from Moscow to three groups—to a human rights organization in Germany, to George Meany, and to the president and people of the United States of America. It is a very beauti-

ful letter, and within it is an appeal to the AFL-CIO, to the leaders of labor unions in America, and to George Meany. There are one or two simple sentences showing great admiration for the fact that, somewhere in the world, workers are able to organize in a great movement that has tremendous power and is free from control of government. That was the sentence.

George Meany received this letter indirectly. Mrs. Clive Barnes, the wife of *The New York Times* drama critic, was able to get it, I believe through her work in Amnesty International; and it was given to one of the *Time's* labor reporters, who brought it to George Meany. He wrote to President Ford and to Mr. Kissinger, and finally there was an exchange arranged—I think it was last December.

So we are very happy to have you with us, Mr. Bukovsky. And you will notice in yesterday's *New York Times* that the Soviet government is objecting, trying to bring pressure on the United States government, because President Carter and Vice-president Mondale are scheduled to meet with Mr. Bukovsky in the next few days. This is quite a change from the decision of President Ford not to see Solzhenitsyn, and we can be very happy about this change of policy.

I am very happy at this time to present to you Vladimir Bukovsky.

# Regardless of Ideology

*Convention Proceedings*
*Boston, Massachusetts / August 1977*

Show me a dictatorship and I will point out that the very first thing the dictator did was to throw the union leaders in jail or kill them and disband the union movement. But we in the AFT are not like some people who are for human rights—but selectively. Some people are for human rights but only in Chile or in Spain when Franco was there; or in Greece under the dictators. But they are not for human rights when those rights were violated by Cambodia or when they where violated by Cuba or by the Soviet Union...

*[Applause]*

... and I want to say that our position throughout the years—and I hope that there will be a re-affirmation of it at this convention—is that we stand for human rights, and we will protest the violation of human rights regardless of whether the dictatorship is fascist or Communist; regardless of whether it is a white oppression or a black oppression; regardless of what the politics or the ideology is. We will work against it equally anywhere in the world.

# High Court Should Bar Racial Preference

*Where We Stand / September 25, 1977*

It's too bad President Carter caved in to pressure and refused to let the Justice Department do what it wanted to do—file a brief with the U.S. Supreme Court in support of Allan Bakke in the landmark case the court will hear in a few weeks. The *Bakke* case tests whether a university can set aside a specific number of places for minority applicants and admit them under a separate and lesser standard than white applicants. If the Justice Department had been permitted to support Bakke, it would have taken a firm stand against such racial quotas. Reportedly, the brief that was drafted did so. But, faced with intense pressure from proponents of quotas, "goals" and other forms of racial preference, the president backed down.

The brief the administration finally submitted to the Supreme Court says universities may and should consider race as one criterion in admissions. It urges the high court to make its decision on very narrow grounds. It does not come out against quotas and other forms of racial preference.

The president made a bad decision on this one—a decision that is wrong for the country and wrong for the very minorities such quotas supposedly help. It is not even a popular decision. A Gallup Poll published last spring showed that 83 percent of all respondents, and 64 percent of non-white respondents, opposed racially based preferential treatment in admissions to colleges and jobs. But even if the president had been bowing to the wishes of the American people, the decision would still be wrong. There is no issue in American society today that is as divisive as preferential treatment along racial and ethnic lines—no issue more guaranteed to keep race relations in this country in a state of conflict. Unless the Supreme Court declares once and for all that the Constitution demands equal treatment for all Americans and bars race as a consideration, we are in for endless lawsuits, mistrust and resentment.

Most Americans believe in equal treatment. Most even feel that people who have been victims of discrimination should be given special help to "catch up" and be able to compete on an equal footing for college openings and jobs. Ben Wattenberg, co-chairman of the Coalition for a Democratic Majority, put it well in a letter he wrote to President Carter urging the president to come out against racial quotas. Wattenberg wrote:

"Educational institutions must be encouraged to recognize that there are better indices of potential academic success than mere grades and test scores. Stu-

dents with deficiencies in their educational background should have ample access to remedial programs designed to bring their academic skills up to prevailing standards. Outreach programs should encourage and assist students in taking advantage of every opportunity to realize the full potential of their abilities. That is what is properly meant by the term 'affirmative action.' "

Wattenberg took issue with those who claim that it is the word "quota" that is objectionable—and if the practice of racial preference were called something else, opposition would vanish. He wrote: "What opponents of 'quotas' oppose is the idea that individuals should be treated on the basis of their race rather than on the basis of their individual abilities. That is what is offensive, no matter what you call it."

In recent weeks, those who favor racial preference, *The New York Times* among them, have taken to silly and specious arguments. They maintain that if universities are permitted to reserve places for applicants from certain geographical areas or to fill the need for a promising quarterback or to enroll the children of alumni, they should be permitted to select along racial lines as well. While such arguments demonstrate that pure merit has never been the only basis for selection, that is a separate issue—and the arguments miss the real point. All of these other criteria have an element of *choice* on the part of the applicant. People *choose* where they live. They *choose* whether or not to play football. They even *choose* whether or not to attend the alma mater of a parent. *About race there is no choice.* Race is an incident of birth. It cannot be changed. A black man rejected because he is black—or an Allan Bakke rejected because he is white—has been denied opportunity by factors over which he has no control, no matter what his individual ability or achievement. It is this kind of discrimination the 14th Amendment bars. It offers no such protection to those who aren't quarterbacks.

Allowing race or ethnic origin to be a criterion for college admission or jobs raises a host of questions and a generation of probable lawsuits. What groups constitute "minorities?" Thus far, blacks, Hispanic-Americans, American Indians and Asian-Americans have been targeted in special admissions programs. How about Ukrainians? Indian Indians? Polish-Americans? Italian-Americans? Many groups can claim some discrimination, some disadvantage, some unfair treatment. How do we choose? How *much* weight should be given to such factors? How far should standards be lowered to admit applicants from groups so favored? And when do we stop lowering them? At college entrance? In admission to law and medical schools? In bar or medical examinations? How do those admitted, perhaps even graduated, under lesser standards avoid being stigmatized by that fact? What about the many black students who make it on their own merit? In the suspicious world we are creating, are they going to have to *prove* that they did so?

As the Supreme Court hears the *Bakke* case and weighs its decision, it should take these questions into account. It should also pay close attention to the argument that American society has an interest in expanding opportunities for those previously excluded. That is true—the question is only *how* we do it. If quotas and other forms of racial preference are permitted to continue, they will foment a political backlash that may actually succeed in narrowing opportunities, as the American people perceive new discrimination replacing the old. No one wants that. The one way to avoid it is to banish race as a factor. We hope the Supreme Court rules clearly that racial preference is unconstitutional, unnecessary, and undesirable.

# World Must Act To Rescue Indochina Refugees

*Where We Stand / December 31, 1978*

Last summer, as a member of the Citizens Commission on Indochinese Refugees, I visited a number of refugee camps in Thailand. In these camps, which provide temporary refuge, tens of thousands of refugees were waiting for some other nation to accept them. Of the hundreds I personally spoke to, most had been waiting in the camps for a year or two. They had no guarantee that they would ever be placed elsewhere, but, in spite of the poverty of life in the camps and the uncertainty of the future, all of them said that they would not return to their homelands under any circumstances and that they would be willing to go through it all again.

Most world attention has been focused on the Vietnamese "boat people" because their plight is so dramatic. Those I met at a camp in Laemsing in southern Thailand told of the difficulty of leaving Vietnam, the difficulty of finding a boat and a willing fisherman, the escape from the Viet police, the dangers of storms at sea and of pirates who attack refugee boats to steal, kill, and rape. Most boats were refused entry in many places, and only the most fortunate survived and found haven.

But the dramatic story of the boat people is not the only one. At Nanh-Kai, I visited a camp with almost 30,000 Laotians, people of the hills who are being bombed and systematically destroyed. Many of them drown trying to swim the three-quarter-mile-wide, swift Mekong River. There are now 150,000 refugees

in Thailand who have come by land.

The group that showed the least hope and greatest sense of desperation was the Cambodians—in a camp at Aranyaprathet, a few miles from the Cambodian border. All of them said that they had started their escape with 20 or 30 friends and that all were killed on the way with the exception of themselves and one or two companions.

Throughout much of the world this is the season of joy and happiness, Christmas and Chanukah, a season of peace and good will toward men. Yet, while we celebrate the holiday season, the plight of the Vietnam refugees continues to mount to the point where a tragedy of monumental proportions is likely unless action is taken now.

• Hundreds of refugees have drowned after being pushed back to sea. Thousands of others drowned because merchant ships, in violation of the law of the sea, have refused to rescue refugees for fear that if they took refugees they would be denied entry into most ports.

• Twenty-six thousand refugees on the island of Pulaubidong, 30 miles off the coast of Malaysia, may be considered lucky, but they still face death through starvation and illness (the incidence of infectious hepatitis doubled within a recent week's time) because there are just too many refugees on a small island that is difficult to reach with supplies, that has no adequate sanitary facilities and on which 300 to 400 new refugees arrive daily.

• Malaysia refused entry to a ship that had taken on refugees at $2,000 a head, saying that these people were not real refugees because they had paid to get out. Others have echoed the same views. But this completely ignores the fact that there has rarely been a refugee crisis anywhere in which those fleeing were not forced to pay. Six months after Hitler came to power, his finance minister offered to sell the Jews of Germany for $1.5 billion. Nobody bought. More recently, the Soviet Union asked emigrants to pay for the cost of their education.

In spite of the fact that those fleeing know the chances are that they will die in the attempt, they keep coming. And in greater numbers. So far, Thailand and Malaysia have accepted more than 250,000 refugees with the understanding that they will provide only temporary refuge. Both countries are small and quite poor. They cannot continue giving even temporary refuge unless they are assured by other countries that the refugees will eventually be taken off their hands.

What must be done?

• Those countries that have not taken any refugees—or have taken only a few—should do their share. The problem is a world problem.

• The countries that have not done the most so far—the United States, France, Australia, and Canada—must increase the number they are willing to take and do so with great speed.

This will not be an easy thing to do, especially with problems of unemployment and inflation that these countries face. But fortunately there is growing support from all sectors of our society for such a move. The AFL-CIO, which has been emphasizing the problems of unemployment, has nevertheless strongly endorsed opening our doors to these refugees. All of the major civil rights groups representing black Americans have taken the same view. Recently, former Senator James Buckley of New York reminded us that, "after the Bay of Pigs, we absorbed 600,000 Cubans, who are now among our most productive citizens."

"True," Buckley said, "the United States is no longer an empty land, and it can no longer afford open-ended entry to anyone who wants to share our richer, freer life. But surely we are still capable of making necessary distinctions. These men and women have risked death to give their children a chance to live and work in freedom. They have paid an initiation fee for a life of liberty that few Americans can honestly say they would have had the courage to meet, and they cannot turn back. Surely we will have room in our land and in our hearts for these free and tested souls."

Recent history is full of tragic stories of thousands, indeed millions, who could have been saved if timely action had been taken. For the Indochinese, the time to take action is now, before it is too late.

# A. Philip Randolph April 15, 1889-May 16, 1979

*Where We Stand / May 20, 1979*

It may be said—I think without exaggeration—that no American in this century has done more to eliminate racial discrimination in our society and to improve the condition of working people than did A. Philip Randolph, who died this week at the age of 90.

For A. Philip Randolph, a man of quiet eloquence with dignity in every gesture, freedom and justice were never granted people. They had to be fought for in struggles that were never-ending. And progress was something that had to be measured in terms of tangible improvements in people's lives, in the condition of society generally, and in the quality of human relationships.

Randolph never allowed himself to be distracted from his central purpose or to indulge in self-delusion. He distinguished himself in his early years by his refusal to accommodate his ideas to the national mood of resistance to racial progress. He dissented from three trends that were then popular among different elements

of the black population: Booker T. Washington's resigned acceptance of inferior status for blacks; Marcus Garvey's escapist "Back-to-Africa" movement; and W.E.B. DuBois' elitist approach of educating "the talented tenth" among blacks. Randolph looked to "the masses," as he would say, and devoted all of his energies to bringing them into the struggle for racial equality and economic betterment.

Through his accomplishments, he not only ushered in the modern civil rights movement, but also transformed the labor movement into a powerful ally of the drive for racial equality. His first great achievement was the organization of the Brotherhood of Sleeping Car Porters in 1937. It was a 12-year struggle against tremendous odds. But having won it, Randolph did not stop there. The once-servile porters, he said, would become "the spearhead that will make possible the organization of Negro workers." From his base with the porters and his position within the American Federation of Labor, Randolph pressed forward the cause of organizing black workers and eliminating segregation from the union ranks. Significantly, he never joined the CIO and John L. Lewis (as the obituary in *The New York Times* mistakenly said he did). He took the position that since the fight for integration was in the AFL, that was where he belonged. Year after year he pressed the point that only a fully integrated labor movement would be a strong and united labor movement, and in the end he prevailed. The labor movement not only supports apprenticeship and equal employment programs but has been a major force in the fight for civil rights legislation and against the Haynesworth and Carswell nominations to the Supreme Court. It also supports the A. Philip Randolph Institute, which strives to mobilize black workers as a political force—one of Randolph's life-long objectives.

Randolph also understood that the porters "constituted the key to unlocking the door of a nationwide struggle for Negro rights." The Brotherhood was not just a union but a network of organizers who could carry the message of racial equality to all corners of the land. Though no one had ever before organized a massive civil rights demonstration in America, President Roosevelt took seriously Randolph's threat to do so if blacks were not granted equal opportunities in the defense industry. Roosevelt complied with Randolph's demand and signed an executive order outlawing discrimination in defense plants in 1941. Seven years later, in 1948, Randolph once again successfully used the tactic of mass protest when he forced President Truman to issue an executive order integrating the armed forces.

These gains, and the experience with the effective use of mass pressure, set the stage for the civil rights movement. It was entirely fitting that the March on Washington in 1963, which was the culmination of the civil rights movement, was organized by Randolph and his colleague, Bayard Rustin. With this march, and with the subsequent passage of the Civil Rights Acts of 1964 and 1965, the legal foundation of segregation in American life was dismantled once and for all.

Randolph's effectiveness as a leader was the result of the forcefulness of his personality as well as the consistency of his commitment to human freedom. While his struggle was for black freedom, he saw this as part of a common effort to improve society on the basis of common, universal principles of equality and individual rights.

He stuck to his principles even when it meant going against the current in the black community. In 1966 he opposed the firing without due process of a white principal at I.S. 201 in Harlem. It was this same issue of due process that led him to defend the UFT in the Ocean Hill-Brownsville conflict of 1968. When criticized for his position by some of his long-time admirers, he responded: "I could not very well refuse to support the teachers' right to due process and job security since it is not only a basic part of our democratic life, but is indispensable for the ability of workers to hold jobs."

In other words, this was a right that could not be applied selectively. If it could be denied to whites, then it also could be denied to blacks. As a trade union and moral principle, it had to be applied equally and fairly to everybody, or it had no validity at all.

Randolph's strength lay in the universality of his vision and in the moral integrity of his outlook. In terms of uplifting the economic conditions of blacks in our society and breaking the chains of segregation and poverty, his achievements are unsurpassed. But his most precious legacy to us—to *all of us*—is his vision of a just society, a society in which every individual's rights are respected, regardless of his race.

He was a friend and counselor to me, as well as a teacher and a leader. The proudest moment in my life was when he nominated me to serve on the Executive Council of the AFL-CIO. For some of us, myself included, his death is a personal loss. But all of us have been affected by what he did. Our society, and the world, is a better place because of A. Philip Randolph.

# Andrei Sakharov: More Than a Symbol

*Where We Stand / May 25, 1980*

When Andrei Sakharov won the Nobel Prize, he could not go to Stockholm to accept it. When, four years ago, he was honored by Hebrew University in Jerusalem, again he could not be there. So, when the

Coalition for a Democratic Majority presented its Friend of Freedom Award to Sakharov recently, it was no surprise that once again, Dr. Sakharov could not be there. But things had changed, for the worse. Where before he was prevented from leaving the U.S.S.R., now he has been sent into internal exile. He can no longer meet foreigners, since Gorky, his city of exile, is off-limits to non-Russians. He has been deprived of telephone and mail privileges. When he leaves his apartment, located near the local police station, he is followed closely by KGB agents. KGB agents are also at his door, admitting only those with official permission to see him.

Social studies lessons across the country have spent hours on the crisis in Iran and Afghanistan, as well they should. But how many lessons have been devoted to Andrei Sakharov? Through threats, punishments, and finally exile, the U.S.S.R. hopes to silence him. It may succeed, but over the years he has sent the free world a message. And now that he is suffering more than ever and in great danger, we owe it to him to consider his message carefully.

It's true that Dr. Sakharov has not been completely neglected in our classrooms. But, more often than not, he is treated as a symbol of the Soviet dissident struggle for human rights. He is indeed a symbol of man's unconquerable yearning for freedom. But we will be the losers if we view him only as a symbol and fail to heed his very specific message about the nature of Soviet society and the Soviet role in world affairs.

Maybe we in the West are reluctant to pay attention to his views because they give us little cause for comfort or self-satisfaction. They attack our illusions.

For starters, Sakharov attacks the illusion that the U.S.S.R. is a workers' state in which it is necessary to sacrifice personal liberties in order to produce impressive material achievements for the masses. Many in the free world continue to accept this in spite of the evidence that the Soviet system has failed to provide a decent standard of living for workers. Sakharov reminds us that Soviet workers suffer from low wages, poor but expensive housing, discrimination against Jews, ethnic Germans, religious believers, dissidents, and all others without party connections in getting an education. Added to this is the fact that Soviet workers have no means to deal with their problems because they are denied real trade unions, being forced to join official, government-sanctioned unions designed to keep workers in their place. Worker dissidents who try to organize real unions—Vladimir Klebanov and Vladimir Borisov—are shunted off to insane asylums and given daily tranquilizing drugs. In this way we are told that the system is sound and that complaints come only from a few individuals with "sick minds."

There is a good reason why Sakharov dwells on the economic failures of the system. He is letting us know that it is not just a few dissidents and intellectuals who suffer, but, rather, millions upon millions of ordinary men and women who are denied both material well-being and basic civil liberties.

A second Western illusion that Sakharov exposes is the notion that there is no connection between the system of internal repression and Soviet behavior in international affairs—the idea that no matter how brutal the Soviet regime is to its own people, its foreign policy is rooted in pragmatism and moderation, that it shares the desire for world peace with the free world. But Sakharov disagrees. In his view, a society that maintains a vast slave labor system, discriminates against national minorities as a matter of official policy, refuses to let its own citizens travel abroad or emigrate, sends the children of religious believers to orphanages, locks up sane people in mental institutions, regards the expression of dissenting views as a criminal offense, puts unemployed people in jail for parasitism, and takes ruthless reprisals against workers whose only demand is for trade unions capable of speaking up for their interests—a system, in other words, that treats its own people like serfs or animals—will not hesitate to behave with similar ruthlessness against foreign countries if the opportunity presents itself.

Finally, Sakharov attacks the illusions that detente, cultural exchanges, trade, American unilateral concessions will lead to peace. There is no greater opponent of militarism or prophet of the dangers of nuclear disaster than Sakharov. His first political act was to protest dangerous atmospheric nuclear tests. But he warns that because there is repression of all internal protest, the U.S.S.R. has been able to embark on the greatest military buildup in history, to the detriment of living standards. Cultural exchanges, trade and arms agreements will lead toward peace only if there is a simultaneous democratization. Every American concession must be matched by a similar one on the other side. Action dictated by fear or appeasement only leads to further demands, further adventures around the world, and further tightening of repression inside.

I am a member of the Sakharov Defense Campaign, a committee organized to support Dr. Sakharov and other dissidents. This week protest demonstrations are being held all over the world to mark Dr. Sakharov's 61st birthday. Aside from giving whatever help we can to these courageous men and women, it seems to me that we must continue to protest as long as they are persecuted. We must insure that the ideals of Sakharov become integral to the policies of our political institutions. We can renew our commitment to the democratic ideals and humanitarian principles for which he is made to suffer. There is no better place to start than in the classroom, to ask: Who is Andrei Sakharov? What happened to him? What ideas did he espouse? Why does his country feel it's so important to silence him? What does this tell us about the nature of his country?

# Wanted: 2.4 Whites, Preferably Athletic

*Where We Stand / December 21, 1980*

Something has finally happened that may settle the issue of racial quotas once and for all. Some years ago the federal government imposed what came to be called the "Philadelphia Plan." Under it, construction contracts that involved government funds had to guarantee that a particular percentage of the skilled building trades workers would be members of minority groups. The building trades unions and the labor movement in general were opposed. The unions argued that for the most part there were not enough minority group members who were qualified and that, instead of demanding instant results through quotas, the answer was in opening up apprenticeship training programs to increase the numbers of qualified minority workers. (One such program established by the Randolph Institute, the Recruitment and Training Program, has produced impressive results.)

But when the building trades were fighting the Philadelphia Plan, they got little support from intellectuals or from college professors. The trades workers were stereotyped as Archie Bunker bigots. Few in the academic community really believed it mattered much if construction workers went through an extensive training and internship program. After all, many of them thought, how much do you need to know to be a mere blue-collar worker?

Later it was the colleges and universities that were under attack in the DeFunis and Bakke cases. Many in the academic community who saw nothing wrong with a quota plan imposed on construction work shuddered at the thought that decisions on who would be admitted to colleges, graduate schools, medical, and law schools would no longer be decided strictly by the institution of higher learning—but by rules and regulations set down by Washington or the courts. Many objected that the use of quotas in higher education would dilute traditional standards of merit and lead to the admission of some who were not qualified at the expense of applicants who were.

A lot of the construction workers who opposed the Philadelphia Plan just couldn't sympathize with the colleges. According to them, putting up a building the right way, making sure the electrical work is perfect—these are matters of life or death. But why quibble over who gets into college or law school? In some cases the building trades worker was happy to get even. "They didn't care when it happened to us," he said, "so why should we help them?"

But now there is a quota case everyone can understand. The administrator of desegregation of the Cleveland public schools found that there were many football and basketball teams in the high schools that were not integrated. Only one of Cleveland's seven East Side teams had even a single white player on the basketball team. Desegregation boss Donald Waldrip decided that 20 percent of every varsity basketball team should be white. That meant 2.4 white players on each 12-member team. Since he found it difficult to find fractional players he rounded it off to 2 whites per team.

The order set off an uproar in Cleveland and elsewhere around the country. Construction workers and graduate students are not very visible to most of America. Basketball players are. Suddenly, picking people on the basis of race—black or white—rather than skill and accomplishment appears ludicrous. The Cleveland students themselves seem most aware of the injustice. Robert Crowe, the white senior class president at a high school that is 86 percent minority, was quoted as saying: "Sure it's sometimes depressing to go to a game and see only black players, but if they're the best they should definitely play. I was elected class president by blacks and whites." The athletic director of the same high school is reported to be perplexed. A December 4 editorial in *The Washington Star* noted that he had "stationed himself near the bus debarkation station, appraising the bused-in West Side whites for prospective slam-dunkers and playmaker guards." The editorial observed that Cleveland school officials will probably come up with "ingenious ways" to comply with the quota directive—"perhaps a special busing program for white male students over 6-foot-3, possessing demonstrably effective jump shots."

Maybe the absurdity of this particular instance will make people think straight about racial quotas. But maybe not. Writing of the Cleveland situation in the sports pages of *The New York Times* on December 3, reporter George Vecsey concludes with the proposition that quotas are wrong for school sports because, after all, "basketball is only a game," but right for the "important" things in life, such as "a good classroom education or entry to housing, jobs, and graduate schools." Obviously, we should pick basketball players on the basis of their skills, surgeons on the basis of their color. (One can also argue, of course, that school sports are not "only a game" but may well be the starting point for multi-million-dollar jobs. Ask Dave Winfield.)

If not quotas, what? There is widespread belief that the Reagan administration will undo some of the mischief that has been done when affirmative action has been interpreted exclusively to mean the use of quotas. That would be healthy. But calling a halt to affirmative action that seeks to help the disadvantaged develop their potential as individuals would be a disaster. Key to

this kind of affirmative action is education—everything from early childhood education (which has now been shown to make a real difference in later schooling and life) to solid basic skills instruction in the early grades to job training programs while students are still in school.

Quotas are unfair, divisive and—as the Cleveland sports directive should help us to see—just plain dumb. Funding for programs that help to close the gap created by years of poverty and discrimination is absolutely essential.

# Teachers in Boston Laid Off by Race

*Where We Stand / June 20, 1982*

For the past seven years, Boston school teachers have been hired by race under a federal court order requiring that the proportion of black teachers be brought up to 20 percent of the teachers in the school system. Now they are being laid off by race, also under a federal court order that says that the present proportion of black teachers, 19.09 percent, must be maintained even when the school system engages in layoffs. Further, the court said, when the school board recalls teachers to replace those who retire, resign or pass away during the school year, or because the financial picture improves, black teachers must have absolute preference in recall until the 20 percent quota is achieved. And if no black teachers are available to be recalled (because none have been laid off), *new* black teachers must be hired to fill the quota, even as veteran white teachers remain unemployed.

The result is that 550 tenured teachers were laid off in Boston last year—all white, some with a dozen years of service. At the same time, 15 newly recruited black teachers were hired to maintain the quota. Now the Boston School Committee has announced 595 additional layoffs—again all white—for the coming school year, and some who face layoff have been teaching for 18 years. On the very day the layoff notices went out, the school board—which seems more interested in sowing division than in finding the $1.5 million it would take to retain all the teachers—announced a recruitment drive for new black teachers.

This week the United States Supreme Court was asked to review the lower court rulings that created this situation. I hope it decides to do so, for at stake are not only jobs of potentially millions of people but also the kind of society all of us are going to be living in.

• **Seniority.** Back in 1974, the U.S. District Court in Massachusetts found the Boston School Committee guilty of intentional segregation in the hiring and assignment of teachers. In 1975 it ordered the racial hiring quota—one black teacher hired for every white teacher hired—and by 1981, 19.09 percent of the Boston teachers were black, up from 5.4% in 1974. But then came a fiscal crunch. The Boston School Committee went back to the court for permission to violate the no-layoff agreement it had signed with the Boston Teachers Union just a year earlier—and the seniority provisions of the union contract. The court agreed and even mandated the layoff procedure, upheld on appeal.

This is new legal turf. While the federal courts have previously imposed racial hiring quotas in cases where general racial discrimination has been determined, and while they have granted retroactive seniority, and thus job protection, to *individuals* who were found to be victims of earlier discrimination—they have never required that innocent employees of one racial group be let go, regardless of seniority, to make room for less senior (or even new) employees of another racial group. (It is a mystery to me why a court that can order racial hiring and racial layoffs cannot order a school board to find the money to avert layoffs, and thus promote integration free of the tensions this case has engendered.)

How dangerous this is for *all* teachers, and other employees, is apparent. There was no individual discrimination charged in Boston—no person was ever identified as a victim of discrimination. The district court based its finding on the percentage of black teachers compared with the percentage of blacks in the Boston population, and the appeals court said the racial layoffs were necessary because Boston's black school children had rights to a "racially balanced faculty" and to minority "role models." Some urban school districts now have a majority of black teachers. Will some other court (even a later court in Boston) one day rule that the seniority rights of black teachers must be sacrificed in order to produce a racially balanced staff and white—or Hispanic—"role models"?

• **Education.** Integration is important, and it is educationally sound for every child, black and white, to see black teachers in the classroom. But there is no evidence that racial role models are more important—or even as important—as other factors. Teacher competence and sensitivity count. So does experience. In fact, federal civil rights officials have often intervened to protect the rights of minority children to experienced teachers. Perhaps the Boston courts have been too busy getting rid of senior teachers by race to notice.

Urban public school systems have many problems. The children in them need the best teachers who can be retained or found, regardless of race. The last things they need are periodic layoffs on a racial basis, heightened racial tensions, and the likelihood that changing demographics—and fiscal starvation at all levels of government—will create so much job insecurity for both

white and black teachers that the job of teacher becomes even less attractive than it is today.

• **Where are we going?** I suspect that those who made a revolution and tossed tea parties in Boston Harbor to protect monarchical oppression are turning over in their Massachusetts graves. Most of them—and most of those who followed them to these shores in the millions—believed that this country stood for opportunity—the opportunity for each *individual* to achieve his or her potential without regard to ancestry. Wars have been fought, laws have been enacted, enormous effort has gone into ensuring that individual freedom. But what we are getting now, by government fiat, is *group* entitlement, even if the rights of somebody in another group must be sacrificed. Every time we hire by race, black or white, or fire by race, black or white, we surrender a little piece of what we're all about.

# Education Is Key to Economic Equity

*Where We Stand / April 6, 1986*

Some of the most heated controversies in recent years over the best ways to improve the status of minorities in our society have raged over programs like busing and affirmative action. But a new report shows that the major avenue of advancement has really been through improvements in education. The report, *Closing the Gap: Forty Years of Economic Progress for Blacks,* written by James P. Smith and Finis R. Welch, is a new study done for the U.S. Department of Labor by the RAND corporation of Santa Monica, California.

Census figures since 1940 used in the report show that black males have steadily narrowed the income gap between them and their white counterparts. Back in 1940 the average black worker earned only 43 percent as much as a white worker. According to the 1980 information, the figure rose to 73 percent.

Though we still have a good way to go to achieve complete equity, the RAND report reminds us of the bleak world we came from. Back in 1940, three quarters of black men lived in poverty. "In that year, only one in twelve black men earned incomes larger than that of the average white....By 1980, 29 percent of working black men had incomes above that of the median white."

And now, the report says, "...for the first time in American history, a sizable number of black men are economically better off than white middle-class America."

What brought about these dramatic changes? The RAND study examines several factors that made an impact: education, the economic effect of the migration of blacks from the South to the North, the urbanization of the black population, the government "safety net," and federal affirmative action programs. It concludes that the move to urban centers offered economic opportunity, but the skills acquired through education enabled blacks to take advantage of it. Other factors made a contribution for the short haul, but education was "identified as the key factor elevating the long-run economic status of black men." Significantly, at least half the progress had already been achieved before affirmative action programs or the other gains of the civil rights movement were in place.

According to the census information, as the quantity and quality of black education increased, so did its dollar value. Since 1940, the education levels of all workers rose. But the gap between white and black men narrowed considerably. In 1940, white men averaged 3.7 years more schooling than black men at a time when the typical black worker had only 4.7 years of education. By 1980, a majority of black men were high school graduates, and the gap with white men had closed to one and a half years of schooling.

The study also documents a substantial improvement in the quality of black education: "In 1920, black youths attended school three-fourths of a year less than white students. By 1954, the year of the Supreme Court desegregation decision, there were no real black-white differences in days attended." The report also shows dramatic reductions over the years in the size of the classes that black students attend.

And, as blacks spent more time in better schools, there was a growing return for their effort. According to the 1940 figures, a white man's income was worth 5 percent more than a black's for each additional year of schooling. In other words, back then, a college degree gave a white man an average of 20 percent more income than his black classmate.

"However," according to the RAND study, "this white advantage declined as each new cohort of workers entered the labor market. In fact, among men who first entered the labor market during the 1970s, the income benefits that blacks received from schooling now exceed those of white men." Now, the study concludes, "there is little racial difference in the economic benefits of schooling for young workers."

But, despite the good news, severe problems remain. The increased number of female-headed black families have not benefitted from the progress made by black men: "the average income in female-headed households was 54 percent of average black family income in 1980." This was at a time when intact black families were approaching income parity with white families.

And, while dramatic gains were being made at the top of the education-economic ladder, "fully 20 percent of working black men in 1980 were still part of the

poor black underclass." At the same time, black youth between 16 and 25 were suffering an unemployment rate of 22 percent, more than double the rate for young white men.

The RAND study argues that in the public debate about how to deal with these problems we may lose sight of what really works in the long run and push for short-term non-solutions: "The three issues that dominated the recent political debate—the safety net, affirmative action, and busing—are a good illustration of the problem. All three issues have their merit, but if history provides useful lessons, they are not the key to long-run reductions in black poverty."

What works, as the survey convincingly shows, are good schools. Through education, large numbers of minority workers have struggled up out of poverty and welfare dependency into the mainstream of the American middle class. Our investment in schools has paid off.

The RAND report goes on to predict that further long-term reductions in black poverty will depend on what happens in our inner-city classrooms. The message is that that's where a continuing major effort has to be made. But in the age of Gramm-Rudman, the danger is that states and the federal government will be forced to sharply reduce their commitment to education, cutting off what the report calls "the safest and surest route to permanent black economic mobility."

The RAND study says that our schools have been doing something right. They shouldn't be abandoned to the budget-cutter's axe.

# An Exchange About Nicaragua

*Higher Education Breakfast / AFT Convention*
*Chicago, Illinois / July 1986*

**Question:** I would like to take up an issue very briefly that is important to a lot of people....We would like to ask you to use your obvious verbal skill and organizational skill in opposing a policy that originates in Washington against Nicaragua, which is based on the principle of shooting first and asking questions later, and to use the same kind of leadership regarding Central America that you used in a good way on South Africa.

We would like you to oppose the policies that result in the deaths of many teachers, students, and even many Nicaraguan soldiers who, instead of fighting off an invasion by the most powerful country in the world, should be in school.

**President Shanker:** This is a question period. If you want to have your own breakfast on that issue, you can.

*[Applause]*

**Same Questioner:** It is a question.

**President Shanker:** I will respond to it if it is a question.

**Same Questioner:** Will everybody who is opposed to aid to the Contras stand up?

*[A scattering of those present stood up.]*
*[Cries from the floor of "Sit down."]*

**President Shanker:** I'm sure if somebody got up and made the same statement—namely, that we should not give assistance to blacks who are fighting for freedom and against apartheid in South Africa because, if we do give assistance, it may start up a fight and there may be people dying there—you would feel that was a very immoral argument because where people are fighting for freedom, the United States stands for something in the world. Our moments of greatest pride are where we helped other people to gain freedom, and our moments of greatest shame are where we stood by and did not help them. People are fighting for freedom in the Philippines, in Chile, in South Africa and, yes, in Nicaragua, where you would not have a right to stand up and speak your mind *[applause]* or join a union that was not government approved or buy a newspaper that was uncensored by the government. It is a dictatorship, and people who are fighting for freedom, in my personal view, need the help and support of the United States just as they do in these other places, and we will fight that out on the floor of the convention.

# Bayard Rustin 1912-1987

*Where We Stand / August 30, 1987*

The death of Bayard Rustin last week is an incalculable loss to our country and the world. He was the last of the great giants—A. Philip Randolph, Martin Luther King, Jr. and Roy Wilkins—who brought us a grand, humane social vision and a dream of an integrated, democratic nation. I have lost a dear personal friend and inspiration.

Bayard was a gifted leader, but he headed no mass organization. His extraordinary influence came not from numbers and money but from his intense moral, intellectual, and physical courage. He was a black man, a Quaker, a one-time pacifist, a political and social dissident, a member of many and often-despised minority groups, yet he always believed in the necessity of coalition politics to enable minorities to build majorities in support of lasting progress.

He was a penetrating critic who had no use for those whose criticism merely destroyed and did not present a constructive program for change. He was an intellectual who could act and a visionary for whom no organizational detail was too trivial if it moved dreams to reality. Over his lifetime, Bayard was called everything from a dangerous revolutionary to a sellout conservative. The truth is that Bayard was a true democrat in a world of pretenders. Unlike those who lived by double standards and expediency, he remained constant to the principles and goals of democracy no matter what forces or insults were hurled against him.

Because of his devotion to high principles and standards, Bayard was at times perceived as an aristocrat, but democracy was in his bones, and so he was widely misunderstood by those who could not see the common roots of the two aspects of his personality.

He could not stay away from any place where people were brutalized and victimized, where democracy's promise of civil and human rights was denied or distorted. I can think of no one in our time who embraced a longer list of noble causes. In this nation, his public commitment to justice started with a lone, personal sit-in as a teenager in West Chester, Pennsylvania, when he was refused service in a restaurant; and decades later it led to the great 1963 March on Washington and other civil rights demonstrations and boycotts, including one against the New York City schools to protest segregation. Along the way, he faced down white mobs in the South and black mobs in the North.

Because he had courage and integrity and abhorred racism wherever he found it, he fought for the right of a white man to be principal of a Harlem school and for the rights of black and white teachers to due process in New York City, just as he had fought for the rights of black students to enter the University of Mississippi and for the end of Jim Crow in the South.

That courage cost Bayard dearly as he lost support from some former colleagues in the civil rights movement. But he endured because he believed that a genuine democrat was true to principles and that democracy was to be lived as well as proclaimed.

The list of Bayard's international causes is no less awesome. He recognized the close connection between supporting democracy and human rights abroad and expanding them at home when he saw Americans, after World War II, beginning to realize the terrible contradiction between fighting for freedom overseas while denying basic rights to blacks at home. So he went wherever there was injustice, knowing that the fate of people and nations everywhere was linked.

He protested the internment of Japanese-Americans in America during World War II and went to the camps. He traveled to India to help Gandhi. He worked on behalf of Israel and for Soviet Jews. He went to Africa to support anti-colonial, liberation movements. He was one of the earliest opponents of apartheid in South Africa.

After the unfortunate American invasion of the Dominican Republic, Bayard and I went there as members of the commission organized by Norman Thomas to insure that the Dominicans got free elections. Bayard also went to visit Vietnamese boat people and refugee camps for Laotians and Cambodians. As part of the International Rescue Committee, he helped to increase the number of refugees accepted into the United States. And many of us followed Bayard to the Helsinki Treaty Conference in Madrid to protest Soviet violations of human rights.

Summarizing the list of Bayard's domestic and international causes is to risk diminishing the magnitude of his achievements. What needs to be remembered above all is the line Bayard pursued all along. As C. Vann Woodward said, it "is the line of civil rights, equality, and integration, and the strategy of the ballot, the union card, and coalition politics."

Bayard knew that elections, unions, and coalition politics did not always work perfectly. But, because he was as perceptive about the flaws in the institutions he believed in as he was passionate about his democratic beliefs, he worked tirelessly to correct those shortcomings. He was a man who, in his own words, "has a vision of equality and is willing to do those things that will bring reality closer to that vision."

And, he continued, "In such a social order there will no longer be walls, representing fear and insecurity, to separate people from one another. Such walls, whether constructed by whites or by blacks, are built to oppress and repress, but never to liberate. I admit that most likely we will not achieve such equality next month, or next year, or even in this decade. But it is a goal that we must hold ever before us, even in the darkest of times; and it not only confers dignity upon our struggle, but it should indicate to us how we must act toward one another today if we are to preserve for tomorrow the possibility of a just society."

Above all, Bayard was a great teacher who deeply moved all who came to know him. There was much in his life that would have prevented a lesser person from making a positive impact on his society. He grew up as a black in a largely Jim Crow world. He had once been a Communist, then a democratic socialist. He was a conscientious objector who spent time in jail for his pacifist convictions. He was a civil rights activist who served time on a Southern chain gang. He was a homosexual. Any of these would have been enough to stop many others with less strength and conviction. That they didn't stop Bayard tells us a great deal about him and his greatness. And, if Bayard were here, he'd say that it also tells us something about our country.

There was no one like him, nor will there be again. We will miss him beyond measure.

# Paying Homage To Two Heroic Martyrs

*Warsaw, Poland / April 17, 1988*

Forty-five years ago, William Green, the president of the American Federation of Labor, spoke at the memorial service held for Wiktor Alter and Henryk Erlich. In speaking of the tragic injustice done to these two great leaders of the General Jewish Workers Union, he said, "When the time comes, when victory is won, we will move Heaven and earth to expose the hidden facts of their deaths, to clear their names, and to give them their rightful place in history as heroic martyrs in the cause of progress."

I am here to join Marek Edelman, the heroic fighter of the Warsaw Ghetto Uprising and a man who to this day carries on the spirit of the General Jewish Workers Union, to fulfill that pledge. I bring the greetings of the president of the AFL-CIO, Lane Kirkland, who greatly wanted to be here with you today.

Wiktor Alter and Henryk Erlich were well known in the American labor movement for their indomitable spirit. As trade unionists, they fought for the rights of working people in general. As leaders of the Jewish community, they warned of the danger to all of Poland posed by Hitler, and the need to garner the strength and will to defeat his evil plans. As democratic socialists, they had a vision of a more humane and just world in the struggle against the rising tyrannies of that dangerous era.

When, in September 1939, Wiktor Alter and Henryk Erlich, escaping from the advance of the Wehrmacht, were first arrested by the advancing Red Army from the East, and again in December 1941 when they were rearrested after they had on their release offered their services in the fight against Hitler, American labor leaders such as William Green and David Dubinsky did all they could to find out the whereabouts of their Polish trade union brothers.

In February 1943, Ambassador Maxim Litvinov finally informed William Green of the fate of Alter and Erlich. They had been summarily executed by order of the Military Collegium of the Supreme Court—we found out later that it was in December 1941—on the ludicrous charge of "spreading defeatist propaganda" and "[appealing] to the Soviet troops to conclude peace with Germany."

That such a calumny would be used made the injustice done to them all the more odious. Alter and Erlich were unalterably committed to the defeat of Hitler and called on Jewish workers to fight alongside the Red Army to achieve that defeat, to save Jews, and Gentiles, from further annihilation.

We know the real reasons why these courageous men were executed: because they could not be bought or cajoled into serving the plots then being laid to force Poland into submission after the war. We know now it was Stalin himself who ordered the executions, just as he ordered the executions of tens of thousands of other Poles.

In September 1939, Wiktor Alter and Henryk Erlich knew the fate that would befall the Jews in Poland and immediately called for the taking up of arms against Hitler's armies. It was in that spirit that Warsaw's last remaining Jews rose up on April 1943 in pitched and desperate battle, "to die with a gun in hand."

Marek Edelman is the last surviving leader of the Jewish Combat Organization to bear witness to those events. It is Marek Edelman to whom I turn to give human courage its true meaning.

Marek Edelman has called for this symbolic Memorial to honor Wiktor Alter and Henryk Erlich, and to testify to the solidarity of all union members and workers fighting for their rights and freedom. It is for their rights and freedom that Poland's workers today still struggle and I am here to extend that solidarity of all American workers. The AFL-CIO has been constant in its support of your struggle, and of the free trade union Solidarity, which today carries on the torch of freedom once held high by Wiktor Alter and Henryk Erlich. In honoring these two men, here, we give them at long last their proper place.

# East Teaches West

*Where We Stand / June 11, 1989*

Last year, final examinations in history and social studies were cancelled in the Soviet Union. The cancellation was ordered because of the "revelations" within the U.S.S.R. that what had really happened in history was quite different from the official versions that had been fed to students and the public. Now it may be our turn. As a result of recent events in China, Poland, Hungary, and the U.S.S.R., some of our social-studies material and curricula may need to be re-written, as well.

In recent years, there have been many efforts to make sure that history and social studies are not presented in American schools from a biased—that is, American or Western—point of view. These efforts are especially evident in the growing movement for global and multicultural education and in many of the curriculum proposals and materials associated with this movement. No one can quarrel with the need for global and multicultural education. It's essential to know about other nations and cultures and the contributions they have made. We also need to know about the growing

interrelationship and interdependence among us all. But we don't need to assume—as many social studies programs now do—that the only way to accomplish this and to avoid chauvinism is to treat all views and all forms of government as equally valid and desirable.

Our own experts in history and social studies have been saying that it's wrong for us to teach our children that our political system is superior because it's democratic. If other people have other values, who are we to say that our values are better? For example, a major professional publication in social studies stated, "In Western Europe and the United States, civil and political rights such as freedom of speech, voting, and due process are of prime concern. In Eastern European countries, economic rights such as the right to work, to form trade unions, to strike, and to take vacations are considered essential.... The rights that are deemed most important depend upon the social, economic, legal, and political traditions of the people."

This tract was distributed to thousands of American teachers, but both the facts and the reasoning are wrong. Since when are Eastern European countries noted for their tolerance of trade unions (except those controlled by the regime) or of strikes? How could anyone possibly conclude that the governments' denial of free elections, free speech or due-process rights in these countries is proof that the people there didn't want them? Where is the evidence that the people in these countries made a national choice and decided to give up free speech and due process for the right to a vacation? And what really decided which rights were important in Eastern Europe—the "traditions of the people" or the barrel of a gun?

The recent elections in the U.S.S.R. and Poland show that if the peoples of those countries are given a choice, they make the same choices we do. They not only elected nearly all the candidates who stood for pluralism and democracy, but in the races in which the people were not allowed a choice, they also defeated a large number of the candidates who ran without opposition. Yet, if the above social studies publication were to be believed, none of this should have or could have happened!

The events in Beijing over the past few weeks shouldn't have happened either, if the answer to a widespread test question is to be believed. This question has been given to thousands of American students as part of the effort to rid them of Western biases and stereotypes:

> Maria and Ming are friends. Ming's parents were born in China and have lived in the U.S. for 20 years.
>
> 'People have no freedom in China,' Maria insists. 'There is only one party in elections, and the newspapers are run by the government.'
>
> 'People in China do have freedom,' Ming insists. 'No one goes hungry. Everyone has an opportunity to work and medical care is free. Can there be greater freedom than that?'
>
> *What is the best conclusion to draw from that debate?* (A) Ming does not understand the meaning of freedom. (B) Maria and Ming differ in their opinion of the meaning of freedom. (C) There is freedom in the United States but not in China. (D) People have greater freedom in China than in the United States.

The correct answer is supposed to be (B)! But who can look at the courageous students in China—risking and sacrificing their lives, building a copy of the Statue of Liberty as their own monument of freedom—and conclude that the Chinese aren't moved by the same hunger and drive for democracy as Westerners? Was it really so wrong to conclude that there is freedom here but not in China? Must we be embarrassed about praising democracy and valuing our own traditions, as many of our social studies curriculum experts would have us believe?

The recent heroism and bloodshed that has kept us glued to our newspapers and TV sets should cause us to take another hard look at our social studies curriculum materials. How was it possible for so many American educators to buy the idea that only Western Europeans and Americans value freedom and democracy? Or that many people actually prefer systems of tyranny and that these systems are morally equal to our form of government? Even before the global drama of the last few weeks, how could they ignore the drive for democracy and the struggle to restore or create it in so many non-Western places such as India, Japan, Korea, Chile, the Caribbean and Africa?

In the name of eliminating bias and chauvinism, a number of curriculum designers have merely invented new forms of bias and chauvinism. They would have us believe that freedom and democracy are just a Western taste, that totalitarianism is the product of free choice or the natural result of a people's culture and that there is little difference between governments that are perpetuated by votes and those that are sustained by guns. The peoples of Eastern Europe and China know better. So should we.

# The AFL-CIO: Steadfast through the Years

*Convention Proceedings, AFL-CIO*
*Washington, D.C. / November 1989*

**President Kirkland:** You've heard the motion. Is there discussion?

The chair recognizes Vice President Shanker for discussion.

**Vice President Shanker:** Mr. President, this morning

has been I'm sure for all of us a wonderful experience. What a great time to be alive and to see all of these changes and all of these stirrings within such a short period of time: strikes in the U.S.S.R. and in Poland; Solidarity is not in jail, but is the government; in Hungary, the rapid movement toward freedom; the events of last weekend in East Germany and the stirrings in Czechoslovakia; the movements in South Africa, in Chile, China, and more.

This is a good time for all of us in the AFL-CIO to take a look not only at these events, but to have a feeling of pride in the role that we have played as an organization and also to take a look at what is now very clear, and that is the rightness of the positions that we have held for many, many years.

It's easier now to take these positions because they have, in this short period of time, been very clearly vindicated by events. But over the years it wasn't always so. Many denied the existence of atrocities and the gulag and slave labor camps. Now, of course, we have the admission of the leadership of the Soviet Union itself that what we said as early as the 1950s—we said it before that—was indeed so.

There were many over the years who said that these other systems were the wave of the future, that with their government control and efficiency and lack of all the problems that one gets in a free market, these other systems were going to produce tremendous prosperity. And now we see that what they've produced is mass poverty.

We were told that there had to be a tradeoff in many of those countries; that people who were starving really weren't interested in freedom, they weren't interested in trade unions, they were just interested in getting more food. Now, of course, we have seen in those countries that didn't have trade unions and didn't have freedom, they didn't get food either. The systems just didn't work.

And we were constantly fed the line that in countries where the government is controlled by the workers, the workers don't need unions. Now, of course, we see that the first chance the workers get to speak freely and to speak openly and to act, they repudiate those official unions and they form free trade unions like our own.

We were told over the years that others are different, that not everybody wants freedom and democracy. Different strokes for different folks. But one of the most interesting things occurred in the middle of the Tiananmen Square struggle. So many of the protestors could not speak English, but they found a way of sending a message, a way of telling us that they wanted exactly the same things that we want. And they did it in a beautiful way: by building a replica of the Statue of Liberty...

*[Applause]*

Then we were also told for many years that we should reduce our own defense structure, that that would help to bring peace in the world. Now we see that after years of supporting a strong defense on the part of ourselves and our allies we have come to a point in the history of the world when all of us can breathe more easily in the belief that we indeed are approaching a time when there will be a reduction of armaments on all sides.

And so here's a period of time when, Lane, I think we owe you a tremendous debt of gratitude, along with your predecessor George Meany. It was not easy to take these positions over all these years. There was an awful lot of criticism, indeed vilification. This is a time when all of us can be proud of how steadfast we were over that period of time.

And I think that in addition to our applause and ovations for the courageous people who have been here this morning as representatives of their trade union movements, I think that we need one more demonstration and ovation in this convention, and that's for all the people all around the world in all these countries where you go and you see a little AFL-CIO office in some part of the world, people working against tremendous odds, have been working there all these years, many of them not believing or dreaming that during their lifetimes or ours they would see any change. To these people who worked for us and with us around the world, we owe a tremendous debt of gratitude. And I want us to express that at this time.

*[Applause]*

# Comando Por El No

*Convention Proceedings*
*Boston, Massachusetts / July 1990*

Every two years, AFT's Human Rights Committee makes a recommendation to the AFT Executive Council as to whom we should present the Bayard Rustin Human Rights Award.

This year's award is being presented to Comando Por El No, an organization that does not exist any more; in fact, it had a lifespan of about one year because it accomplished its goal, bringing democracy to Chile. It has a funny name, even in Spanish. The best English translation of "Comando Por El No" is the "Coalition for the No." This coalition transformed the society and political landscape of Chile by bringing down one of the most entrenched and ruthless right-wing military dictatorships in the world. And it did this by adhering to the principles for which Bayard Rustin—our award's namesake—stood all of his life.

To understand the genius of the individuals and organizations that created Comando Por El No, you have to recall the history of Chile in the 1970s and 1980s. When Pinochet staged his military coup in 1973, Chile

was a divided country. Political parties were splintered, and civic, social, and labor organizations were equally divided and disorganized.

For nearly 17 years, Pinochet maintained his power partly by military force and repression, but also by manipulating Chilean society to keep it divided and disorganized—by pitting one group against another and telling people that only he could hold the country together.

The strategy of Chile's dictatorship was not new; it was the classic strategy to eliminate the political center.

After eliminating all potential opposition groups in the country and consolidating his power during the 1970s, Pinochet sought to legitimize his regime in the 1980s. It's interesting that even dictators want to appear to the outside world as though they are democratic leaders by getting themselves elected by the people.

In 1980 he called a national plebiscite to ratify a new national constitution. The new constitution called for a form of presidential "election" in 1988 in which one person, Pinochet, would run. If he won a majority "Yes" vote, the new president would serve for a nine-year term, or nearly until the end of this century.

In February 1988, a coalition of more than 15 political parties, the two national labor federations, and dozens of professional and community groups got together—and remember, most of these organizations had been persecuted over this period of time, so don't think of them as powerful; they were what was left. They formed the Comando Por El No, which was dedicated to a nonviolent electoral strategy to end the Pinochet dictatorship.

The Comando first tried to change the rules of the presidential election to make it a real election with competing candidates. And when that effort failed, it set out to beat Pinochet at his own game by organizing a massive "No" vote in the October elections. And it won.

Now that Pinochet has been defeated, it might seem obvious that the people of Chile would never have let him get away with a victory in the 1988 plebiscite. But it wasn't obvious in 1987 or in the months leading to the plebiscite.

I went to Chile in 1987, and the situation did not look good. The government was still putting union and other leaders in jail. Over 50 percent of the population was not registered to vote.

The Comando first had to mount a campaign to register to vote thousands and millions of Chileans—and it had to register people who didn't really believe that Pinochet would allow a free election to take place. Then, it had to turn out the vote and insure that Pinochet did not steal the election. To help make sure that the plebiscite was not stolen, the Comando asked the international community to send observers to Chile to witness the elections.

The AFT responded to a call from the Colegio de Profesores—they are a national teachers' union—and we sent a delegation of more than 20 AFT representatives to Chile as observers.

To accept the award on behalf of the Comando is an old friend of the AFT. You met him before the struggle was won. Osvaldo Verdugo, the president of the national teachers union and a former executive member of the Comando Por El No.

# A Way To Achieve Equity in Education

*Where We Stand / December 15, 1991*

We measure a country's success not only by the average national income but also by how many people are living in poverty. Why not apply the same criteria to education? It's important that we have kids at the very top, and we also need a broad middle range of students—the country runs on them. But there's something wrong with an education system that leaves many kids far behind.

That's what U.S. education is doing, and if we need any confirmation of how *un*fair and *un*equal our education system is, we can get it by looking at *Science Achievement in Seventeen Countries* (Pergamon, 1988), which reports data from the latest International Association for the Evaluation of Educational Achievement (IEA) examination of 10-, 14- and 18-year-olds. The results of this exam, which have been widely reported—and disputed—put U.S. kids close to the bottom. But the IEA report contains some other equally interesting measures of educational quality that have not gotten any attention.

For example, IEA took the lowest-scoring school in the top-scoring country—for the 14-year-old group, the country was Hungary—and asked what percentage of schools in the other participating countries scored lower than Hungary's lowest school. According to this measure, only 1 percent of Swedish and Japanese schools and 5 percent of Korean schools fell below Hungary's worst. Schools from the Netherlands and England performed relatively poorly—16 percent of the Dutch and 19 percent of the English schools were worse than Hungary's worst. But their performance was great compared to ours. Thirty percent—nearly one-third—of our schools achieved at a lower level than the worst-performing Hungarian school. Among developed countries, only Italy had a poorer record.

Data about the performance of our low-scoring students were also very discouraging. Looking at the scores of the bottom 25 percent of students, only kids

By starting early and by giving all children the same core knowledge to learn, we can prevent the creation of an educational underclass.

from the Philippines had a lower average score than U.S. students, and our kids who had the lowest scores were performing at a level that was not much above chance.

Taken together, these measures suggest that the U.S. is one of the least successful of developed nations at preventing large numbers of students from getting an inadequate education. This may be partly a matter of financial equity. Other developed countries tend to have national education systems and, therefore, spend about the same amount of money per student. I'll take up this issue in a later column. But E.D. Hirsch, author of *Cultural Literacy,* suggests another reason.

Some people say our results are poor in comparison with Japan's or Korea's because their countries are homogeneous and ours is not. But Hirsch says that a multicultural society is no bar to achieving educational equity: Good results have more to do with whether or not a country has a curriculum that specifies a certain body of core knowledge that teachers are responsible for teaching and kids for learning. In an unpublished paper called "Fairness and Core Knowledge," Hirsch points out that Japan and Hungary, which scored well according to every measure, have such curriculums; England, which scored badly, did not, though it has since taken steps to adopt one.

Hirsch also links the success that French and German schools have with children who do not belong to the dominant culture—and whom we would consider disadvantaged—with their schools' emphasis on core knowledge. According to Hirsch, West German schools bring the children of Turkish "guest workers" up to grade level despite "enormous educational handicaps." And in France, the children of immigrants who are born in France and attend French schools from the beginning achieve at a slightly higher level than French children who come from similar socioeconomic backgrounds.

Why should teaching core knowledge make such a difference? And why should it be particularly helpful for disadvantaged children? The immigrant children Hirsch describes are able to compensate for differences that might handicap them in German and French schools because the education systems have specified in detail the material that all youngsters are supposed to learn. Standards like these, Hirsch says, "enable tutors to focus on the specific knowledge that students need in order to attain grade level." They set up clear expectations for the kids and their teachers, and they give kids a foundation on which to build in succeeding grades.

In U.S. schools, what is studied and in what grade is still largely a matter of local choice. So schools and school districts are free to hold students up to high standards or, as often happens in the case of disadvantaged children, to decide the kids can't do the work and give them a watered-down curriculum. The trouble with this is that it virtually guarantees these children will fall behind their more advantaged peers—and never catch up. So instead of compensating for social inequalities, our schools unwittingly help to perpetuate them.

Some people have been very critical of Hirsch's proposals on the grounds that they try to impose the dominant culture on groups that would rather have their children learn their own culture. But the thrust of Hirsch's proposal is egalitarian. He believes that by starting early and by giving all children the same core knowledge to learn, we can prevent the creation of an educational underclass.

# Standards in Ohio

*Where We Stand / May 1, 1994*

We say, in this country, that we are all in favor of tough education standards, but are we really serious? Not if the recent challenge of the Ohio high school exit exams by the U.S. Department of Education's Office of Civil Rights (OCR) is an indication.

The Ohio exams, which are designed to make sure that all graduating seniors have at least minimum competency in reading, writing, math and citizenship, were part of an education reform package that passed in 1987. But to make sure that students and schools knew about the tests and had time to prepare for them, linking the diploma to passing the tests was deferred until this year.

Now, however, OCR is raising the issue of fairness. Their challenge is based on the fact that approximately 90 percent of white students had passed all four tests as of March 1, but only about 80 percent of African-American students had done so. (The numbers of students passing has increased to 95 percent of white se-

niors and 88 to 90 percent of African-American seniors since OCR issued the challenge, but the agency is continuing its investigation.)

The tests are not tough. They were designed to measure proficiencies that students are supposed to attain by the end of eighth grade. And most students did not find them hard. When OCR issued its challenge, 99 percent of all seniors, both black and white, had already passed the writing test, and 99 percent of white seniors and 98 percent of black seniors had passed the reading test. However, there was a gap of 5 percentage points between passing rates of black and white students in the citizenship test and a 15-point gap in math. OCR does not allege that the tests themselves are biased; rather that a presumption of bias exists because minority youngsters had a higher failure rate. And their apparent explanation is that these kids were not given a fair and adequate opportunity to learn the material.

But does the fact that a student didn't learn something prove it wasn't taught—or taught adequately? When do kids themselves become responsible for what they learn or fail to learn? The youngsters who are now looking at the possibility of not graduating have had *eight* chances to take and pass the tests, beginning at the end of eighth grade—and they'll get a ninth this month. In Cleveland, where there was a big concentration of African-American students who failed early attempts to pass the exam, the school district ran remedial summer sessions. Only about 10 percent of the kids who had failed showed up at the first session. Last summer, kids who had failed were *paid* to come to summer school—and the ones who did made progress, but many did not bother.

Apparently many of these kids were not very serious about attending school during the year, either. The Ohio Department of Education, in defending its exit exams, says that the kids who are in danger of not graduating missed, on average, 32 days during their junior year of high school—that's more than six weeks. A quarter of them missed 45 days, or nine weeks. How many of them would have passed if they had made it to school more regularly?

It's not clear exactly what remedy OCR will seek if it decides the allegations of bias are correct. The tests could be thrown out altogether or made optional, or linking them to graduation could be put off for several more years. The message any of these "remedies" will send to kids who didn't bother to learn the material, or even come to school, is clear: Despite all the talk of standards and getting tough, there are no consequences for failing to pass the exit exams. The kids who couldn't be bothered will get their diploma along with the rest. And the ones who failed the first or second or third time but worked hard and finally made it will get the message that they're chumps.

With the Goals 2000 legislation, the federal government made a promising start toward setting high standards for all our students and helping them meet these standards. The point of the OCR challenge seems to be that if some kids can't pass a test after seven or eight tries—a test that an overwhelming majority of students have passed—the schools are not yet perfect enough for us to risk standards for youngsters. This is a giant step backward. What can we expect now? Will the federal government work to create and uphold standards or to destroy them?

# Brown and Beyond

*Where We Stand / May 22, 1994*

Fifty years ago, in the decade before the Supreme Court heard *Brown* vs. *Board of Education,* the American Federation of Teachers was a small union of about 50,000 members. Like other unions, it organized people where they were employed, and since schools were segregated, a number of AFT locals were, too, especially in the South. After World War II, AFT stopped accepting segregated locals into the union. Nevertheless, in cities like New Orleans and Atlanta, we had a large number of members in separate black and white locals.

When *Brown* was about to reach the Supreme Court, there were AFT members who agitated to have the union enter the suit on the side of the plaintiffs. But there were others who felt, just as strongly, that AFT should stay out of *Brown.* They said that we would alienate many union people and would lose members, and maybe even locals, in the South. It would also make further recruiting there very tough.

Despite these practical considerations, AFT decided to present a friend-of-the-court brief in support of the plaintiffs. We were the only education group to do so—no other teachers' union or association of principals or superintendents or other educators or school board association came forward to argue that school segregation was unconstitutional.

Shortly after *Brown* was decided, AFT began to enforce the decision in its locals. This, too, was difficult and controversial. Critics said that if black and white locals were ordered to merge, most white locals would disaffiliate. And in the hostile climate following the decision, it was unclear that black locals could survive alone. A national referendum confirmed the policy, but all the segregated white locals did leave the union and, ultimately, many of the black locals folded. It was a long time before AFT began to come back in the South.

Those who worked for the *Brown* decision did not question its importance. In striking down segregation, the Supreme Court righted a terrible injustice and helped to make the U.S. more faithful to its democratic

Continuing progress depends on our joining together and negotiating our differences, rather than going our separate ways.

principles. But the response of many people to the 40th anniversary of *Brown* has been skeptical or indifferent. Many schools are still segregated—some of them after being integrated 20 years ago. And some African-Americans now question the validity of integration as an ideal. Was the fight worth it? Did *Brown* accomplish anything?

Forty years later, there is still a lot wrong with our society. We have not come as far toward eradicating the effects of slavery and Jim Crow laws as we hoped. In some respects, it looks as though we have regressed. Nevertheless, the decision removing the legal basis for segregated schools led to enormous changes in our entire society. It led to the Montgomery bus boycott and the lunchroom sit-ins, to the March on Washington and the Voting Rights Acts of 1955 and 1964. Before *Brown,* we would never have had an African-American Supreme Court justice or chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff (who is now being looked at as a serious contender for a presidential nomination). We would not have had numerous elected officials who were African-American—mayors and members of Congress—some in constituencies that are not majority black.

Remembering *Brown*—and the odds against the people who worked for it—should counter pessimism and give us the guts to try harder and push for more and continuing change.

Some of the discouragement that African-Americans now feel about the pace of progress expresses itself in hostility toward white America and a desire to separate themselves from white society. *Brown* should also remind us that the African-Americans who achieved that victory were joined by white supporters, though small in number. And the great legislative victories that followed *Brown* depended on winning the support of the majority of Americans.

Since there is still a job to be done, white support is essential, and racism, anti-Semitism and talk about hatred toward all whites will only prevent African-Americans from getting the support they need and deserve in continuing their fight for justice. Some of the denial of progress and the insistence on hatred is a political tactic based on the idea that an extreme view will be more effective than a reasonable one. But white Americans did not participate in the changes introduced by *Brown* because they were afraid but because their consciences and their sense of justice were stirred. Tactics that depend on hatred and intimidation are bound to backfire.

Our democracy is capable of growing and becoming truer to its principles. But continuing progress depends on our joining together and negotiating our differences, rather than going our separate ways.

# The April Miracle

*Convention Proceedings*
*Anaheim, California / July 1994*

Reflect for a moment on this question: Who would have bet that we would see the peaceful end of apartheid in South Africa and its first democratic election with suffrage for all races? This is not to say that lives were not lost in the struggle to achieve victory. But this year's election was a victory of nonviolence over violence, and negotiation in democracy over conflict and race-based dictatorship.

The two most prominent figures in this miraculous transformation were former President DeKlerk and South Africa's new president, ANC leader Nelson Mandela. Their cooperation and dedication to keeping their eyes on the prize is a lesson in leadership and courage that every young American student should learn in school.

But beyond these two figures, you will see the multitude of individuals and organizations that made the April miracle in South Africa work. Again, the teachers and their union were at the center of the action.

We were one of several American unions that was proud to send observers to South Africa to help monitor the elections. The AFT representatives went to South Africa at the request of our sister union, the South African Democratic Teachers' Union, known as SADTU.

To serve as an observer at these South African elections was an act of courage. In the end, the elections were conducted in an atmosphere of nonviolence, but that wasn't the case in the run-up to the elections. I would like to congratulate the 15 AFT representatives who traveled to South Africa before and during the elections.

*[Standing ovation]*

It is my pleasure to introduce to you our guest from the South African Democratic Teachers' Union, Duncan Hindle. You may be surprised to see that he is