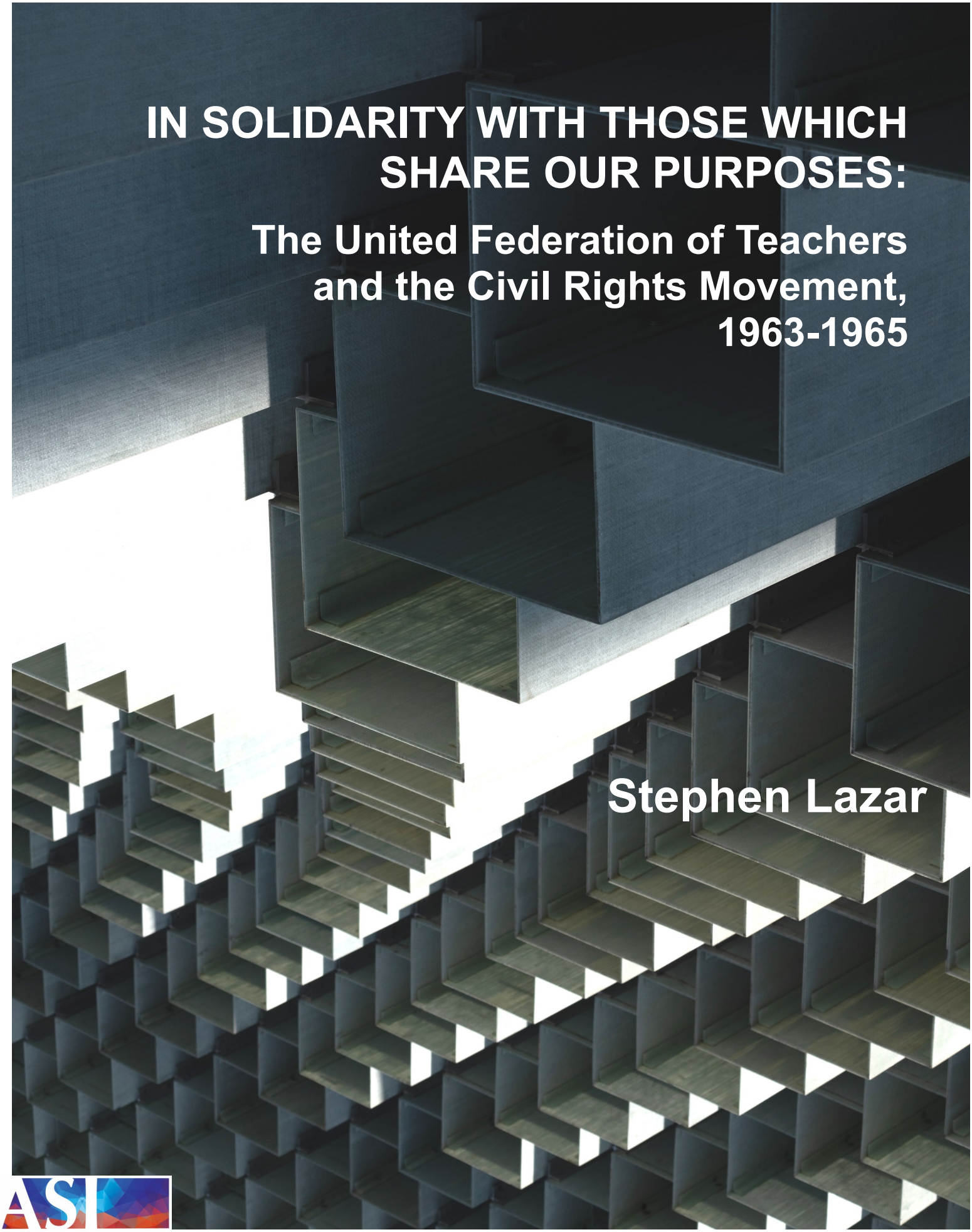

# IN SOLIDARITY WITH THOSE WHICH SHARE OUR PURPOSES:

## The United Federation of Teachers and the Civil Rights Movement, 1963-1965

Stephen Lazar

ALBERT SHANKER INSTITUTE


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## About the author

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I am incredibly thankful to the historians who took the time to discuss the contents of this paper with me or who offered suggestions on earlier drafts: Josh Freeman, Thomas Kessner, Daniel Perlstein, and Michael Rawson.  The feedback I received from my classmates in the History Department at the CUNY Graduate Center helped strengthen this paper tremendously: Maddy Lafuse, Cody Nadler, Duangkamol Tantirungki, Chandni Tariq, Carin Thomas, and Helena Yoo. George Altomare and Rachelle Horowitz offered insights and wonderful stories about many of the events and people discussed in this paper, particularly around the 1964 Student Boycott.  I am particularly thankful for the comradeship and mentorship of Leo Casey, who in addition to sharing his knowledge of the history of NYC teacher unionism, feedback, enthusiasm, and support for this project, turned me onto this history in the first place.

# In Solidarity with Those Which Share Our Purposes: The United Federation of Teachers and the Civil Rights Movement, 1963-1965[1]

On November 9, 1966, United Federation of Teachers (UFT) member Laurel Epstein wrote a letter to UFT President Al Shanker regarding the union's opposition to community demands for a black principal at the new Intermediate School 201 in Harlem. She criticized Shanker for siding with the Board of Education against the community's desires. Harlem parents, frustrated over years of limited action to integrate New York City's public schools, sought to at least assert community control over one of their schools. Epstein wrote that "representation by a Negro in an all-Negro school is not an anti-union principle" and that "no adult, thinking person could call it racism to want a Negro principal." While Shanker agreed with the former claim, he responded strongly to the latter. In his reply, Shanker argued that "demanding a Negro principal merely on the basis of race is racism." Shanker expressed a firm belief that racism is defined by any racial preference. After three years of active involvement in the Civil Rights Movement, Shanker undoubtedly felt that he and the UFT were on the right side of history in doing so.[2]

This paper examines why the UFT got involved in with the Civil Rights Movement between 1963 and 1965. This was a complex moment for the UFT, a new organization in the old-left. Its membership, however was in some ways split between old-left values and the values of the emerging new left, which sought to achieve larger social justice ends. The UFT's most important civil rights work occurred from 1963-65. This period coincided with the Civil Rights Movement's most significant legislative achievements and Shanker's rise to leadership within the UFT. It was the first time in which the UFT had the capacity to focus significant attention on larger issues after negotiating their first multiyear contract in 1963, which meant there was time off before new negotiations began.

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[1] I am incredibly thankful to the historians who took the time to discuss the contents of this paper with me or who offered suggestions on earlier drafts: Josh Freeman, Thomas Kessner, Daniel Perlstein, and Michael Rawson. The feedback I received from my classmates in the History Department at the CUNY Graduate Center helped strengthen this paper tremendously: Maddy Lafuse, Cody Nadler, Duangkamol Tantirungki, Chandni Tariq, Carin Thomas, and Helena Yoo. George Altomare and Rachelle Horowitz offered insights and wonderful stories about many of the events and people discussed in this paper, particularly around the 1964 Student Boycott. I am particularly thankful for the comradeship and mentorship of Leo Casey, who in addition to sharing his knowledge of the history of NYC teacher unionism, feedback, enthusiasm, and support for this project, turned me onto this history in the first place.

[2] Laurel Epstein to Al Shanker, 9 November 1966; Al Shanker to Laurel Epstein 17 November 1966, Box 36, Folder 20, United Federation of Teachers Records, Tamiment Library & Wagner Labor Archives, New York (hereafter cited as UFT Records). For a full history of the conflict over I.S. 201, see Michael Glass, "'A Series of Blunders and Broken Promises': IS 201 as a Turning Point," The Gotham Center for New York City History, accessed April 14, 2018, http://www.gothamcenter.org/1/post/2016/08/a-series-of-blunders-and-broken-promises-is-201-as-a-turning-point.html.

The UFT's most impactful civil rights work was the creation and staffing of the first southern Freedom Schools in Prince Edward County, Virginia, in 1963, followed by staffing, planning, and curricular support for the more widely known Mississippi Freedom Schools in 1964. The UFT also offered financial, human, and organizational support to three large-scale actions of the Civil Rights Movement: the 1963 March on Washington for Jobs and Freedom; the 1964 NYC school integration boycott; and the 1965 Selma campaign. There was little organic connection between these two strands of work; the Freedom Schools were largely the work of Richard Parrish, the union's lone black executive officer and chair of the Human Relations Committee, while the connections with mass actions came largely from Shanker. Although the UFT's civil rights initiatives originated from different leaders, they all shared the common goal of ending the racist conditions that limited blacks' ability to integrate into mainstream American society.

Historians have failed to adequately account for the UFT's actions in the early 1960s because their attention has been primarily focused on the late 60s. The controversy at I.S. 201 was the first in a series of battles over black community control of New York City schools, which culminated in the 1968 Ocean Hill-Brownsville strikes. Because of the significance of those strikes, nearly all historical accounts of the UFT's first decade focus on them. Historians view this conflict multiple ways: as one between white individualist and black mutualistic values;[3] between a UFT with ambivalent views on race and an increasingly radical black community;[4] between a UFT antagonistic to the aspirations of the black community;[5] as an attack by the new left on core labor value of due process;[6] or as a militant commitment to craft unionism at the expense of everything else.[7] In all of these interpretations, historians charge that the UFT was at best myopic or at worst racist. In trying to explain the roots of the conflicts of the late 60s, historians look to the UFT in the early 60s to explain what would come later. There, some see evidence of racism in the UFT's resistance to the forced-transfers of teachers to predominantly black schools.[8] Others see the UFT's support of testing policies for hiring and promotion as evidence of a racialized craft unionism aiming to keep black and Puerto Rican teachers out of the

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[3] Jerald E. Podair, *The Strike That Changed New York: Blacks, Whites, and the Ocean Hill-Brownsville Crisis* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2002).

[4] Daniel Perlstein, *Justice, Justice: School Politics and the Eclipse of Liberalism* (New York: Peter Lang, 2004).

[5] Jonna Perrillo, *Uncivil Rights: Teachers, Unions, and Race in the Battle for School Equity* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2012).

[6] Richard D. Kahlenberg, *Tough Liberal: Albert Shanker and the Battles over Schools, Unions, Race, and Democracy* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2007).

[7] Stephen Brier, "The Ideological and Organizational Origins of the United Federation of Teachers' Opposition to the Community Control Movement in the New York City Public Schools, 1960–1968," *Labour/Le Travail* 73, no. 1 (2014): 179–193.

[8] The UFT supported this position, as did its predecessor the Teacher's Guild. One historian goes so far as to claim that the Guild's and UFT's post-war strategy "focused on insulating teachers from civil rights demands." Perrillo, *Uncivil Rights*, 5, 199. More on the Teacher's Guild will follow.

workforce.[9] These analyses of the UFT's early years, to one degree or another, are too anachronistic, in that they fail to take the UFT's actions as anything other than an explanation of what would come later.

These interpretations miss both the scope of the UFT's civil rights work in the early 60s, as well as its continuity with the antiracist stances and actions the UFT's founders took as members of its predecessor, the Teacher's Guild, and as leaders within the national teachers' union, the American Federation of Teachers (AFT). They additionally ignore the UFT's efforts to recruit black teachers from the South, overlook the UFT's support of Milton Galamison and Bayard Rustin's 1964 boycott for school integration in NYC, and diminish the significance of the UFT's work in the southern Civil Rights Movement in the early 1960s. From its founding in 1960 through 1965, there was no ambivalence in the UFT's stance towards black communities either in the south or in NYC.

Beyond correcting omissions and inaccuracies in the historical record, this paper seeks to demonstrate the ways the UFT worked to prioritize larger social justice goals, even as it was establishing itself as a force to forward the "bread and butter" job-based concerns of its membership. The UFT's work in the early 1960s shows that these need not be in opposition to each other. Rather, at its founding, the UFT served as a model for how unions can work to effect larger social change.

Al Shanker, a white Jewish Social Democrat, and Richard Parrish, a black Socialist unionist, played the most significant roles in the UFT's civil rights work in the early 1960s. While they would find themselves on opposite sides of the 1968 conflict, these tensions did not develop until 1966. Before that point, both they and others, such as Sandra Adickes and Norma Becker, used the UFT as a vessel to serve larger social justice ends. From 1960-65, the UFT showed a clear, across the board commitment to race, ethnic, and religious-blind due process and meritocracy. Most of the UFT's membership benefitted from purportedly ethnic and race-blind testing systems, which gave them access to both NYC's public City University system and public-school teaching jobs, at the same time that private universities and private white-collar jobs still regularly discriminated against Jews and other minorities. Instead, the UFT sought to create a city and nation where blacks and all other citizens would have the same opportunities. The UFT and its leaders demonstrated a consistent commitment to race-blind equal opportunity and support for those fighting for it.

## Contexts: The Teacher's Guild and New York City

The UFT's involvement in the Civil Rights Movement came on the heels of a major transition in teacher unionism in New York City. In the first half of the twentieth century,

[9] Brier, "The Ideological and Organizational Origins of the United Federation of Teachers' Opposition to the Community Control Movement in the New York City Public Schools, 1960–1968," 190.

dozens of groups vied to represent teachers and their interests. The most significant were the Teachers Union, founded in 1916, and the Teachers Guild, founded in 1935. When the Teachers Union of New York City was first established in 1916, it also became local no. 5 of the American Federation of Teachers (AFT), which formed and affiliated with the American Federation of Labor that same year. The Union was originally made up of socialists committed to craft unionism. They sought economic advancement and legal protection for teachers.[10] The Guild broke off from the Union in 1935 in response to communists beginning to assume increased influence and leadership within the Union.[11] Under the communists, the Union practiced a broad social justice unionism that had a particular focus on issues of racial justice, such as desegregation and intercultural education, in solidarity with New York's black communities.[12] The AFT revoked the Union's charter in 1941 because of its Communist Party allegiances and made the Guild the chartered AFT local.[13] Membership in the Union became a "red flag" in Red Scare persecutions of teachers under New York's 1949 Feinberg Law, and they were formally banned from operating in schools in 1950.[14] The Union continued, with diminished influence, until its members voted to disband at the beginning of 1964, encouraging former members to join the newly formed UFT.[15]

As the Union's role diminished, shifting conditions nationally and locally opened the door for the Guild to evolve into the United Federation of Teachers. In 1958, NYC Mayor Robert Wagner Jr. issued Executive Order 49 enabling the city to certify exclusive collective bargaining units of city workers.[16] At the time, experienced teacher Charles Cogen led the Guild as president, but they had an emerging group of young activists, including Al Shanker and George Altomare, whose influence was beginning to increase.[17] In 1959, the Guild merged with the High School Teachers Association to become the United Federation of Teachers, with Cogen as president. The UFT won recognition as teachers' collective

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[10] Philip Taft, *United They Teach; the Story of the United Federation of Teachers.* (Los Angeles: Nash Pub, 1974), 15–16.

[11] Taft, 51.

[12] Clarence Taylor, *Reds at the Blackboard: Communism, Civil Rights, and the New York City Teachers Union* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2013), 298–312. Martha Biondi, *To Stand and Fight: The Struggle for Civil Rights in Postwar New York City* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2003), 174.

[13] Marjorie Murphy, *Blackboard Unions: The AFT and the NEA, 1900-1980* (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 1992), 167–71.

[14] Murphy, 184–92.

[15] Taylor, *Reds at the Blackboard: Communism, Civil Rights, and the New York City Teachers Union*, 314.

[16] Joshua Freeman, *Working-Class New York: Life and Labor since World War II* (New York: New Press, 2001), 203.

[17] Mamie Shanker and Pauline Altomare, Al and George's mothers, worked side by side in a sewing factory. One day in 1953 they picked up George after work and they discovered that he would be working that fall at the same school as Al. The two met on their very first day teaching and would work together for the rest of Shanker's life. George Altomare, interview by the author, February 2018.

bargaining unit in 1960 after their first strike and won their first contract in 1961 after their second. As it was only a one-year contract, efforts immediately turned to negotiating the second contract in 1962.[18] Cogen left to become president of the AFT in 1964, and Shanker took over as president of the UFT.[19]

The UFT continued the legacy of the AFT's mid-century civil rights work. The AFT's founding was "firmly based in radical movements that sought to better the position of American blacks."[20] Black Guild member, and later UFT vice-president, Richard Parrish became head of AFT Human Rights Committee in 1952, taking over from black socialist Layle Lane, also a Guild member at the time.[21] Parrish facilitated the AFT's amicus brief in support of Brown v. Board of Education.[22] He also pushed for and won a resolution for the immediate integration of AFT locals in 1955, leading to the expulsion of the Atlanta, New Orleans, and other segregated locals in 1956 for their refusal to integrate.[23]

Parrish came to this work after two decades of activism on issues of both race and class justice inside and outside of teachers' unions. Parrish, whose parents moved to New York as part of the Great Migration, started his teaching career in 1947 after a decade primarily working for the Navy where he became active in labor issues.[24] Parrish developed a relationship with A. Phillip Randolph, joining him to call for the original 1941 March on Washington as president of the Negro College Students of New York.[25] Parrish was the Socialist Party's candidate for comptroller in 1949 and for New York City council in 1963.[26] He took on national issues of race and teaching in his role as head of the AFT's Human Rights Committee in the 1950s. As a Socialist, Parrish initially viewed issues of race as secondary to those of class and expressed a commitment to a "race free" teaching of

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[18] Taft, *United They Teach; the Story of the United Federation of Teachers.*, 131.

[19] Taft, 137–38.

[20] Murphy, *Blackboard Unions: The AFT and the NEA, 1900-1980*, 5.

[21] Murphy, 197.

[22] AFT Files Amicus Curiae Brief in Segregated Schools Case, *American Teacher*, February 1954, box 1, folder 4, Richard Parrish Papers, Schomburg Center for Black Culture, Manuscripts, Archives and Rare Books Division, New York (hereafter cited as Parrish Papers).

[23] Murphy, *Blackboard Unions: The AFT and the NEA, 1900-1980*, 197–99.

[24] Typescript of Amsterdam News Story by Dave Elsila, 19 March 1966, box 1, folder 11, Richard Parrish Papers (Additions 1), Schomburg Center for Research in Black Culture, Manuscripts, Archives and Rare Books Division, New York (hereafter cited as Parrish Papers (Additions 1)).

[25] A. Phillip Randolph to Fiorello La Guardia, 5 June 1941, From Library of Congress, Records of the Office of Civilian Defense, 1939-1945. https://catalog.archives.gov/id/7859715 (accessed March 21, 2018).

[26] Typescript of Amsterdam News Story by Dave Elsila, 19 March 1966, box 1, folder 11, Parrish Papers (Additions 1).

American history, emphasizing the struggle of "Negroes" and other minorities in the building of the United States.[27]

Al Shanker was attracted to the Guild, in part, because of its commitment to civil rights.[28] Shanker's upbringing predisposed him towards union membership. He grew up in a union household – his mother a member of the Amalgamated Clothing Workers and his father a union newspaper deliveryman. In college, Shanker joined both the Congress of Racial Equality (CORE) and the Young People's Socialist League. Shanker became a teacher to help put himself through graduate school and quickly became passionate about doing something about the mistreatment of teachers.[29] As the Civil Rights Movement emerged in the national consciousness in the mid 50s, Shanker drew inspiration for teachers' unions. The movement's civil disobedience made Shanker think that civil disobedience against anti-strike laws might also be worthwhile for teachers. He identified with blacks in the south, thinking that teachers had also been "'treated in a second class way,' and were engaged in 'an honorable struggle for a legitimate place.'"[30]

The UFT's emergence in 1960 occurred in a transitional moment for both New York City and the nation. Jerald Podair describes a mid-century NYC defined by two competing values systems: "a secular, rationalist 'Jewish' ethos, and a traditionalist, religious-based 'Catholic' counterpart." Jews aligned with blacks and white Protestants in a battle for control of the city against Irish and Italian Catholics.[31] NYC teachers overwhelmingly identified with the former group. In the 1960s and 70s, over two-thirds of teachers were Jewish. However, as of 1963, only 8.28% of NYC teachers were black, compared to 24% of students.[32] New York City's teaching force, as Christina Collins shows, was the result of decades of a seemingly "race-blind" meritocratic system which, in reality, reified existing racial demographics, leading the selection process to have an institutionally-racist character.[33]

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[27] Interview of A. Phillip Randolph and Richard Parrish, 1 May 1975, box 1, folder: Interviews, A. Phillip Randolph Collection, Schomburg Center for Research in Black Culture, Manuscripts, Archives and Rare Books Division, New York. Typescript of Amsterdam News Story by Dave Elsila, 19 March 1966, box 1, folder 11, Parrish Papers (Additions 1).

[28] Kahlenberg, *Tough Liberal: Albert Shanker and the Battles over Schools, Unions, Race, and Democracy*, 35.

[29] Kahlenberg, *Tough Liberal: Albert Shanker and the Battles over Schools, Unions, Race, and Democracy*.

[30] Kahlenberg, 1-43.

[31] Podair, *The Strike That Changed New York: Blacks, Whites, and the Ocean Hill-Brownsville Crisis*, 6.

[32] Christina Collins, *"Ethnically Qualified": Race, Merit, and the Selection of Urban Teachers, 1920-1980* (New York: Teachers College Press, 2011), 5, 224.

[33] Collins, *"Ethnically Qualified": Race, Merit, and the Selection of Urban Teachers, 1920-1980*.

The UFT's first years were dominated by its efforts to establish itself as the collective bargaining unit for teachers and to negotiate their first contracts.[34] While Charles Cogen served as president, the UFT did provide some support to the Civil Rights Movement. They issued a press release to support students expelled or suspended from college for protesting racial discrimination during the sit-in movement; and Cogen wrote President Kennedy to request that he free the school children, and their adult supporters, who were arrested during the Birmingham campaign.[35] While the UFT called on its members to picket Woolworth's in NYC to support sit-ins, there is no evidence that the union asked anything further of its members before 1963.[36] When Martin Luther King attended the UFT's 1964 Spring Conference, neither King's speech nor Cogen's introductory remarks make any mention of the UFT's civil rights work to that point. Cogen did call for "a revolutionary breakthrough in place of the present patchwork and half-hearted improvements."[37] Cogen also negotiated a clause in the 1963 contract to open recruitment centers in the south to attract more black teachers.[38]

## Freedom Schools

The UFT's first major involvement in the Civil Rights Movement originated from Richard Parrish, chairman of the UFT's Human Relations Committee, which focused primarily on issues of interracial relations in NYC. Parrish used this role to work on race relations beyond the classroom and New York, which led him to visit Prince Edward County, Virginia, in March 1963. Prince Edward County was home to perhaps the most extreme instance of massive resistance to the school integration demanded by the 1954 Brown v. Board of Education Supreme Court decision. In 1951, black high school students went on strike for two weeks to protest inequality in their segregated schools. The NAACP supported the effort and filed suit in 1951 in what would become the Davis v. Board of Education of Prince Edward County (VA) case, one of four other cases tried under Brown (Brown only coming first because of alphabetical order). In defiance of the court order to

[34] There is not a single mention of civil rights issues in the available Delegate Assembly or Executive Board minutes before September 1963, where there was a motion to refer those issues to the Human Relations Committee, which Richard Parrish chaired. Charles Cogen to Dick Parrish, 27 September 1963; Executive Board Minutes, 17 September 1963, box 20, folder 20, UFT Records. It is impossible to assess whether this was the case because Parrish was respected and trusted to deal with these issues, or if this was an issue of tokenization or ghettoization of these issues. Meetings minutes are in box 19, folders 23-35, UFT Records.

[35] UFT Supports Civil Rights Demonstration Press Release, 14 April 1960, box 16, folder 26, UFT Records. Charles Cogen to JFK, 8 May 1963 box 16, folder 26, UFT Records.

[36] Abe Levine to UFT Member, 15 June 1960, box 16, folder 26, UFT Records.

[37] Introduction by Charles Cogen, President, to Martin Luther King; Speech at United Federation of Teachers Spring Conference Luncheon, 14 March 1964, box 16, folder 50, UFT Records.

[38] Freeman, *Working-Class New York: Life and Labor since World War II*, 204.

desegregate its schools, Prince Edward County shut down their public-school system in 1959.[39]

When Parrish and three other UFT members went to Virginia, their intention was to arrange for Prince Edward students to foster with NYC families in order to be able to attend school, as well as to raise funds and publicity in the hope of reopening schools there.[40] The UFT team met with Rev. L.F. Griffin, a leader in the black community, who showed them the "one-room wooden frame school house, 'modernly' equipped with a rickety, outworn privy house and a sump pump well" that served as the black school. Parrish left determined to do something bigger in Prince Edward County that summer.[41] UFT President Charles Cogen appreciated the effort and expressed support for whatever the Committee decided to do to serve the children of Prince Edward County.[42] By the end of May, the Human Relations Committee developed a plan to operate schools that would seek to remediate the knowledge and skills of Prince Edward County's black students and in doing so to "develop and restore a sense of pride and human dignity" in them.[43]

The UFT's schools, opened with support from a contingent of Queens College students led by Rachel Weddington, were called Freedom Schools. The very first "Freedom School" was opened in Boston on June 19, 1963, as an alternative place for students to go during a student "stay-out" day to protest segregation; it was organized by Noel Day, a former NYC teacher.[44] The Prince Edward County "Freedom Schools" were the first in the South and they served as an inspiration for the better-known Mississippi Freedom Schools of the following summer. The Prince Edward County schools were also the first major effort to use an integrated group to teach young blacks in the South, although unlike subsequent efforts, the UFT schools were black-led.[45] The schools also marked the UFT's first attempt to initiate a civil rights agenda beyond New York City.

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[39] Richard Kluger offers a full account of the Supreme Court case. Richard Kluger, *Simple Justice: The History of Brown v. Board of Education and Black America's Struggle for Equality* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2004). Christopher Bonastia and Jill Ogline Titus have full accounts of the events in Prince Edward County during this period. Christopher Bonastia, *Southern Stalemate: Five Years without Public Education in Prince Edward County, Virginia* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2012). Jill Ogline Titus, *Brown's Battleground: Students, Segregationists, and the Struggle for Justice in Prince Edward County, Virginia* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2011).

[40] Human Relations Committee Meeting Agenda, 22 March 1963, box 20, folder 20, UFT Records.

[41] Richard Parrish, No Greater Need, 3 May 1963, UFT, box 21, folder 5, UFT Records.

[42] Charles Cogen to Richard Parrish, 28 March 1963, box 20, folder 20, UFT Records.

[43] UFT Human Relations Committee, Proposed Objectives of Prince Edwards' County Summer Programs, 23 May 1963, box 21, folder 5, UFT Records.

[44] Christopher Bonastia, "Black Leadership and Outside Allies in Virginia Freedom Schools," *History of Education Quarterly* 56, no. 4 (2016): 519.

[45] Bonastia, 533.

Parrish worked throughout the spring to recruit a group of fifty teachers — 43 from New York and seven from other AFT chapters — who spent portions of their summer in Virginia.[46] The schools ran from July 15-August 30, with some teachers switching in and out partway through.[47] Teachers went at a moment when many were hoping to do more to support civil rights work. Edward Carpenter, a black teacher in Harlem, went because he could not imagine telling his students to have hope if he did not go down and put himself on the line down south.[48] Ruth Feldblet, a white teacher, had been contributing money to the movement for some time, but decided she had to do more after seeing Bull Connor unleash dogs on school children during the Birmingham Campaign that spring.[49] The schools operated mainly out of eight black churches though some teachers' classrooms ended up being outside under the trees. [50]

Over 600 students attended the schools, which in addition to remediation emphasized "analyzing the social conditions under which the students' lived and, through discussion and questioning, identifying the obstacles to their progress and envisioning ways to overcome them."[51] Students were divided into four age groupings for four and a half hours a day. Students often would not want to leave at the end.[52] After school, teachers, students, and other community members gathered most evenings in one of the churches to sing and march together.[53]

It was important to keep spirits high in face of the threats and intimidation made by the local white community towards the teachers. Norma Becker recalled that a group of them were taken into the sheriff's office when they first arrived and were lectured about what to do and not do. Another time, teachers were with their students at a Dairy Queen when a group of white "rednecks" surrounded them and told the black men to stay away from

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[46] AFT Teacher's Roster, box 21, folder 5, UFT Records.

[47] Press Release, 6 August 1963, box 21, folder 5, UFT Records.

[48] Why Harlem Teacher is Joining Task Force to Aid Negroes in Virginia, NY Post, 11 July 1963, UFT, box 21, folder 5, UFT Records.

[49] Albert Shanker Institute, "Prince Edward County Freedom Schools Teachers Discuss Segregation Fight in 1963," YouTube Video, 44:12, March 14, 2014, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=FCAL9yxAnIs.

[50] Sandra Adickes, *Legacy of a Freedom School* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2005), 30. Albert Shanker Institute, "Prince Edward County Freedom Schools Teachers Discuss Segregation Fight in 1963."

[51] AFT Vice President's Report July, 1963 - July, 1964, box 1, folder 16, Richard Parrish Papers (Additions 2), Schomburg Center for Research in Black Culture, Manuscripts, Archives and Rare Books Division, New York (hereafter cited as Parrish Papers (Additions 2)). Adickes, 30.

[52] "Youngsters demonstrate," *Richmond Afro-American*, August 10, 1963, box 1, folder 15, Parrish Papers (Additions 2).

[53] Albert Shanker Institute, "Prince Edward County Freedom Schools Teachers Discuss Segregation Fight in 1963."

"their" women. Law enforcement targeted and frequently ticketed cars with New York plates.[54]

The schools themselves functioned well. At first, the teachers mainly used newspapers in their classrooms because they did not have enough books; but later in the summer, likely after the program began receiving press, books came rolling in from donors.[55] Back in New York, the UFT used the press to raise awareness and to continue to solicit money and supplies.[56] The *New York Post* and *New York Times* both published stories on the Freedom Schools.[57] While Sandra Adickes felt that three weeks could not do much to overcome years of interrupted education,[58] the Freedom Schools helped give momentum to the Free Schools which the federal government opened in Prince Edward County later that fall.[59] One of the UFT teachers, Duane Jones, stayed to teach at the Free Schools.[60]

While teaching in Prince Edward County, two of the white UFT teachers, Sandra Adickes and Norma Becker, met Ivanhoe Donaldson, a Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee (SNCC) staff member who recruited them to come work in Mississippi the following summer in what would come to be known as the Freedom Summer campaign of the Council of Federated Organizations (COFO), a coalition of the Southern Christian Leadership Conference (SCLC), the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP), SNCC, and CORE.[61] Adickes and Becker met with the UFT Human Relations Committee in the fall of 1964 to get permission to recruit teachers and raise funds. They

[54] Ibid.

[55] Ibid.

[56] Press Release: Operation Freedom School Lift, 24 July 1963, box 21, folder 5, UFT Records.

[57] Why Harlem Teacher is Joining Task Force to Aid Negroes in Virginia, *New York Post*, 11 July 1963, box 21, folder 5, UFT Records; New York Teachers Instruct Virginia Negroes, New York Times, 1 August 1963, box 21, folder 5, UFT Records.

[58] Adickes, *Legacy of a Freedom School*, 30–31.

[59] Bonastia, "Black Leadership and Outside Allies in Virginia Freedom Schools," 555.

[60] Neil Vincent Sullivan, *Bound for Freedom; an Educator's Adventures in Prince Edward County, Virginia,* (Boston: Little, Brown, 1965), 172.

[61] Adickes, *Legacy of a Freedom School*, 32. For overviews of Freedom Summer: see Clayborne Carson, *In Struggle: SNCC and the Black Awakening of the 1960s* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1981). Charles M. Payne, *I've Got the Light of Freedom: The Organizing Tradition and the Mississippi Freedom Struggle* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1995). For a focus on the Freedom Schools, see Mary Aickin Rothschild, *A Case of Black and White: Northern Volunteers and the Southern Freedom Summers, 1964-1965* (Westport, Conn.: Greenwood Press, 1982). Jon N. Hale, *The Freedom Schools: Student Activists in the Mississippi Civil Rights Movement* (Columbia University Press, 2016).

expected resistance but got none.[62] With the support of Shanker, Parrish, and the Committee, Adickes and Becker worked throughout the school year to recruit teachers.[63]

While COFO had major hesitancies about the other white volunteers coming down to Mississippi to staff the Freedom Schools, they were enthusiastic for the expertise, legitimacy, and money the UFT could bring with them.[64] COFO encouraged individual UFT chapters to sponsor schools, which eight chapters did.[65] In addition to sending money and teachers, COFO hoped that UFT members could serve as observers to help gain knowledge and experience from the program to support future initiatives in Mississippi.[66] COFO also sought out information from the UFT about their experiences and pedagogy in Prince Edward County to inform the Mississippi Freedom Schools' planning.[67]

In March, COFO and the National Council of Churches held a planning conference in New York to develop the Freedom Schools' curriculum. In addition to Adickes and Becker, the attendants included: SCLC's Septima Clark and the Highlander School's Myles Horton, whose Citizenship Education Program shared a similar mission for adult students;[68] Rachel Weddington, who led the Queens College contingent in Prince Edward County; Noel Day, the former NYC teacher who started Freedom Schools in Boston; and Bayard Rustin. Adickes and Becker worked on the remedial and general course of studies materials that would be used.[69] They also made a trip to Jackson in the spring to meet with COFO and to help choose sites for the schools.[70]

The UFT focused its efforts on fundraising throughout the spring. They sought official sponsorship from the AFT and fundraising support from the NYC Labor Council of the AFL-

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[62] Adickes, *Legacy of a Freedom School*, 32–33.

[63] Sandra Adickes, Oral History by Stephanie Scull Millet, 21 October 1999. University of Southern Mississippi Center for Oral History and Cultural Heritage, http://digilib.usm.edu/cdm/compoundobject/collection/coh/id/15256 (accessed March 21, 2018).

[64] Charles E. Cobb, Jr., "Organizing Freedom Schools," in *Teach Freedom: Education for Liberation in the African-American Tradition*, ed. Charles M. Payne and Carol Stills Strickland (New York: Teachers College Press, 2008), 69–74.

[65] John O'Neal to Norma Becker, 6 March 1964, Norma Becker Papers, Wisconsin Historical Society, Madison, http://cdm15932.contentdm.oclc.org.ezproxy.gc.cuny.edu/cdm/ref/collection/p15932coll2/id/44367 (Accessed March 21, 2018), (hereafter Becker Papers). Norma Becker to Pete Schnaufer, 17 January 1965, Becker Papers. The date is a typo, this letter was actually written in 1964.

[66] Robert Moses to Al Shanker, 10 March 1964, Becker Papers.

[67] Louis Chafee to Norma Becker, 2 March 1964, Becker Papers.

[68] Stephen Lazar, "Septima Clark: Organizing for Positive Freedom," *Souls* 9, no. 3 (August 2007): 243–252.

[69] Daniel Perlstein, "Teaching Freedom: SNCC and the Creation of the Mississippi Freedom Schools," *History of Education Quarterly* 30, no. 3 (1990): 310, https://doi.org/10.2307/368691. Adickes, *Legacy of a Freedom School*, 34–35.

[70] Sandra Adickes, Oral History by Stephanie Scull Millet.

CIO.[71] They solicited money, supplies, and volunteers from UFT members.[72] Adickes solicited press coverage as a method to increase the safety of the volunteers. Her hope was that the more people knew about the teachers' participation, the less likely that they would be targets.[73] *The New York Daily News, New York Journal-American, The New York World-Telegram and Sun*, and the *New York Times* all wrote stories about the UFT teachers going to Mississippi.[74] By May, the UFT had raised $1,600 (approximately $13,000 in 2020 dollars).[75]

Forty UFT teachers went down to Mississippi that summer. They first attended a training session in Memphis in July, where they learned that James Chaney, Andrew Goodman, and Michael Schwerner, three civil rights workers who would eventually be found murdered, were missing.[76] This did not deter any of the volunteers. The UFT teachers worked in Greenville, Gulfport, Hattiesburg, Holly Springs, Jackson, Meridian, and McComb.[77] Additionally, Robert Parrish made three trips to Mississippi to observe the schools, including one with A. Phillip Randolph.[78] UFT teachers focused their efforts on remediation for students who would be attending desegregated high schools in the fall.[79] Six of the teachers remained in Mississippi beyond the summer, and others arranged for students from Mississippi to come north to finish high school.[80]

The teachers faced harassment and intimidation efforts while in Mississippi. Adickes was arrested for vagrancy when she attempted to have lunch with a group of her students at the Kress Department Store.[81] She filed suit against the store later that year[82] and the case eventually made it to the Supreme Court, which found in Adickes' favor.[83]

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[71] Charles Cogen and Richard Parrish to Carl Megel, 23 April 1964, box 227, folder 40, UFT Records. The AFT would sponsor Freedom Schools in subsequent years. Charles Cogen to Harry Van Arsdale, 8 April 1964, Becker Papers.

[72] Charles Cogen and Dick Parrish to Colleagues, 20 April 1964, Becker Papers.

[73] Sandra Adickes to A.M. Rosenthal, 20 June 1964, Becker Papers.

[74] Becker Papers.

[75] Human Relations Committee — Minutes, 25 May 1964, box 20, folder 20, UFT Records.

[76] Sandra Adickes, Oral History by Stephanie Scull Millet.

[77] Adickes, *Legacy of a Freedom School*, 50.

[78] Richard Parrish Vice President Progress Report, 1965, box 1, folder 2, Parrish Papers

[79] Lois Chafee to Norma Becker, 26 April 1964, Becker Papers

[80] Dorris Davidson to Charles Cogen, September 12, 1964, box 1, folder 20, Parrish Papers (Additions 2).

[81] Sandra Adickes, Oral History by Stephanie Scull Millet.

[82] Civil Rights Worker Sues Kress For Arrest at Mississippi Store, New York Times, 14 November 1964, https://www.nytimes.com/1964/11/14/civil-rights-worker-sues-kress-for-arrest-at-mississippi-store.html.

[83] Adickes v. S.H. Kress & Co., 398 U.S. 144 (1970).

While there was tremendous criticism of the college student volunteers in the Freedom Schools at the time and by later historians,[84] the UFT component of the program was successful enough that their eight Freedom Schools continued, leading to a larger Freedom Schools program, which the AFT agreed to sponsor in January 1965.[85] The AFT Executive Council raised over $10,000 (approximately $80,000 in 2020 dollars) to run Freedom Schools in 1965 in Mississippi, Florida, and Alabama.[86] The AFT recruited teachers again in 1966 to spend their summer in the South in a Peace Corps-like program, living with local families, teaching in Freedom Schools and integrating with the larger community.[87]

## Supporting the Larger Movement

While Parrish organized and led the Prince Edward County initiative, in 1963 the UFT's top leadership began to encourage member's participation in the larger Civil Rights Movement. Despite the opposition of AFL-CIO president George Meany, Al Shanker, then assistant to the UFT president, and the UFT actively promoted the August 1963 March on Washington and offered subsidized travel to members.[88] The UFT activated schools' elected chapter leaders to get in touch with teachers during the summer recess to participate as marchers, placing the March in the larger context of the UFT's Prince Edward County program.[89] Shanker pushed the AFT to be more proactive in supporting the March as well.[90] Four busloads of UFT teachers went down to Washington on the UFT chartered buses.[91]

Perhaps it was participation in the March or meeting King at the UFT's Spring Conference in 1964 that encouraged Shanker to take a more proactive role in supporting the movement when he became UFT president in 1964. The UFT's most enthusiastic intervention came in the aftermath of the Bloody Sunday massacre at the Edmund Pettis Bridge in Selma on March 7, 1965. Soon after, Shanker met with the SCLC's Andrew Young at Bayard Rustin's house in Harlem about what the UFT could do to support the Selma

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[84] Rothschild, *A Case of Black and White: Northern Volunteers and the Southern Freedom Summers, 1964-1965*.

[85] Norma Becker to Pete Schnaufer, 17 January 1965, Becker Papers.

[86] Richard Parrish Vice President Progress Report, 1965, box 1, folder 2, Parrish Papers.

[87] "An Introduction to the Freedom School Project, 1966, box 3, folder 19, Parrish Papers.

[88] Kahlenberg, *Tough Liberal: Albert Shanker and the Battles over Schools, Unions, Race, and Democracy*, 55. Al Shanker to Carl Megel, 24 July 1963, box 16, folder 26, UFT Records.

[89] The UFT has a top-down organizational structure that relies on delegates to spread the union's positions to the full membership. Abe Levine to All UFT Delegates, 31 July 1963, box 21, folder 5, UFT Records. The letter also notes with pride that two UFT members were arrested in the Brooklyn demonstrations against racist hiring practices at the Downtown Medical Hospital construction site, which was organized by Brooklyn CORE and supported by Milton Galamison. Clarence Taylor, *Knocking at Our Own Door: Milton A. Galamison and the Struggle for School Integration in New York City* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1997), 117.

[90] Shanker to Megel, 24 July 1963, UFT Records.

[91] Kahlenberg, *Tough Liberal: Albert Shanker and the Battles over Schools, Unions, Race, and Democracy*, 55.

campaign. Young requested money, which Shanker suggested could be used for cars to help transport voters. Shanker and the UFT then began an emergency campaign to raise funds to buy station wagons.[92] George Altomare, who was the UFT's main strike organizer, activated his network to raise as much money as quickly as possible. Altomare organized telephone banks to call all chapter chairmen to collect from their members and tracked contributions on pledge cards from hundreds of schools.[93] The UFT raised over $14,000 (approximately $112,500 in 2020 dollars) in the first week of the campaign, allowing Shanker to drive the first station wagon down to Selma to deliver the car to King at the start of the Selma to Montgomery March on March 21.[94] King thanked Shanker for "the speed with which the teachers of New York answered our urgent plea" and added a handwritten postscript thanking Shanker for participating in the March. King also described both the UFT's and Civil Rights Movements' struggles as part of a larger trade union movement.[95]

At least a few teachers were not happy with the UFT's support for the civil rights campaign and wrote letters to the *New York World-Telegram & Sun* expressing their dismay that the UFT would focus on an issue beyond the bread and butter issues facing teachers, such as pay and working conditions.[96] Shanker responded with a letter to the editor which revealed much about his motivations for supporting the Civil Rights Movement as well as his larger views on teacher unionism. Shanker wrote:

> Teachers have involved themselves because the police brutality in Selma reminded them of Nazi Germany where millions were needlessly massacred largely because organized groups remained silent. Each group remained silent because the brutality of storm troopers was not something which related to the narrow purpose of its organization, and, in the end, each of these silent groups was itself destroyed. To remain silent about Selma is to abet immorality and invite ultimate self-destruction.

Shanker implied here that a society that will unleash stormtroopers on blacks would be likely to do the same against Jews. He continued:

> Our strength in realizing our goals is based upon solidarity with other unions and with other groups within the community which share our purposes. Teachers will earn the right to the support of the public only as they give leadership within the community on issues which go beyond narrow self-interest.[97]

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[92] Al Shanker to Chapter Chairmen, 15 March 1965, box 69, folder 23, UFT Records.

[93] George Altomare to All Telephone Volunteers, 16 March 1965, box 112, folder 2, UFT Records. The pledge cards are also in this folder.

[94] UFT Gives King 1st Station wagon for Alabama Registration Drive, box 69, folder 23, UFT Records.

[95] Martin Luther King, Jr. to Al Shanker, 2 April 1965, box 69, folder 23, UFT Records.

[96] Rachelle Horowitz, who worked as Bayard Rustin's aide during this period, said that there was always "some teacher out in Staten Island" complaining, but that they were outliers. Rachelle Horowitz, interview by the author, November 2017.

[97] Al Shanker to Editor, 5 April 1965, UFT, box 69, folder 23, UFT Records.

He also cited the UFT's support for other strikers and the UFT's call for support from others when they needed it. Shanker here is articulating a commitment to a broad trade unionism that extends well beyond the narrow craft unionism for which the UFT has been criticized.[98]

Shanker revealed a three-pronged defense for supporting the Civil Rights Movement. First and foremost, it was for moral reasons informed by the Jewish experience and memory of the Holocaust. Shanker believed the UFT to be a just organization, attempting to improve the lives of their teachers and the possibilities for their students. He believed the Civil Rights Movement shared these goals and he thought the union had a moral obligation to help advance them. Second, it was practical in building coalitions that could be used to support the UFT's objectives as a teachers union. Shanker knew that by offering to support to civil rights leaders during their campaigns, he could in the future solicit their support for teachers' efforts. Finally, it was strategic in building a larger trade union movement in the United States. Shanker articulated a commitment to a broad trade union movement, as opposed to a narrow craft-unionism focused only on the desires of teachers.

## The UFT and the 1964 NYC Student Boycott for Integration

In between the March on Washington and the Selma campaign, the single largest action of the entire movement occurred: the February 3, 1964, New York City student boycott for integration. As much has been made of the UFT's refusal to formally endorse this boycott, it is worth analyzing this event in some depth to determine whether there were limits to the UFT's support for civil rights.[99]

New York City schools were more segregated in the mid-1960s than they had been in 1954.[100] The primary driving force behind the boycott was Milton Galamison, a Brooklyn minister who helped form and became president of the Parents Workshop for Equity of NYC Schools in 1960.[101] In 1963, the NAACP, Urban League, and CORE joined

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[98] Brier, "The Ideological and Organizational Origins of the United Federation of Teachers' Opposition to the Community Control Movement in the New York City Public Schools, 1960–1968." This letter strongly challenges Stephen Brier's analysis of the UFT and Shanker as being committed to sectarian craft unionism.

[99] Clarence Taylor criticizes the UFT for failing to endorse the strike but offers no explanation for why they did not. Daniel Perlstein uses the lack of endorsement as evidence for the UFT's lack of commitment to civil rights in New York City. On the other hand, Richard D. Kahlenberg claims that the UFT was very supportive of the strike even without the official endorsement. Jonna Perrillo cites the UFT's stance in the 1964 boycott as a sign of collaboration with the black community. Taylor, *Knocking at Our Own Door*, 137. Daniel Perlstein, *Justice, Justice: School Politics and the Eclipse of Liberalism* (New York: Peter Lang, 2004), 25; Kahlenberg, *Tough Liberal: Albert Shanker and the Battles over Schools, Unions, Race, and Democracy*, 57. Perrillo, *Uncivil Rights*, 116.

[100] Podair, *The Strike That Changed New York: Blacks, Whites, and the Ocean Hill-Brownsville Crisis*, 22.

[101] Taylor, *Knocking at Our Own Door*, 92–93.

with the Parents' Workshop and the Harlem Parents Committee to form the New York Citywide Committee for Integrated Schools, with Galamison as its leader.[102] The group decided to call a one-day boycott to demand that the Board of Education produce a plan for integration. Galamison brought on Bayard Rustin to organize it.[103] The initial boycott was called off when the Board committed to coming up with a plan, but after a deadline passed, Galamison initiated efforts to organize the boycott again.[104] Velma Hill, at the time a CORE field organizer, recalled a meeting between CORE and Shanker where they discussed the boycott strategy and Shanker offered suggestions for how the boycott could be used most effectively.[105] Galamison went to the UFT Executive Board on December 18, 1963, to ask teachers to join the boycott.[106] Galamison also issued a press release calling on teachers to respect the boycott, but the UFT chose not to formally endorse it, as doing so would have meant calling for their teachers to strike. Rather, the UFT committed to protecting individual teachers who chose not to work that day.[107]

Many criticized the UFT's decision not to formally endorse the boycott. Galamison is said to have been angered by the UFT's refusal.[108] During the Ocean Hill-Brownsville conflict in 1968, black community leaders used the UFT's failure to endorse as evidence that an alliance between blacks and the UFT was impossible.[109] Some historians have also been critical of the decision and used it as evidence that the UFT resisted efforts to promote racial equality in the North.[110]

The context of that decision is more complex than critics acknowledge. On January 27, the UFT called for renewed negotiations to help avoid the boycott and said they were considering ways to help support the boycott.[111] The UFT held a special delegates meeting on January 29 to address the issue.[112] Leading up to the meeting, there were teacher groups

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[102] Taylor, 120–21.

[103] Taylor, 123.

[104] Taylor, 124–25.

[105] Velma Hill Oral History Transcript, box 1, folder 24, United Federation of Teacher Oral History Collection, Tamiment Library & Wagner Labor Archive, New York. Hill would later work for the UFT.

[106] Perlstein, *Justice, Justice: School Politics and the Eclipse of Liberalism*, 87.

[107] Taylor, *Knocking at Our Own Door*, 137.

[108] Podair, *The Strike That Changed New York: Blacks, Whites, and the Ocean Hill-Brownsville Crisis*, 31. However, there is no reference to the UFT in any of the *New York Times* articles Podair cites; there is an article about Galamison's anger towards other civil rights groups who chose not to endorse his attempted second boycott later that year.

[109] Perlstein, *Justice, Justice: School Politics and the Eclipse of Liberalism*, 87.

[110] Taylor, *Knocking at Our Own Door*, 137. Perlstein, *Justice, Justice: School Politics and the Eclipse of Liberalism*, 24–25.

[111] Message Called in to Press, 27 January 1964, box 243, folder 2, UFT Records.

[112] Reuben Gordon to Charles Cogen, 28 January 1964, box 130, folder 9, UFT Records.

on both sides of the boycott.[113] At the meeting, the UFT passed a resolution to support any teacher against reprisals who chose to boycott because of their "individual consciousness."[114] The key factor in the decision was that the UFT's contract had a no-strike clause, so the commitment to protect teachers who chose to strike was the most the UFT could do legally.[115] Furthermore, no work had been done to prepare and organize the union to strike, so there was a good chance that a small number of teachers participating in the boycott would have made both the UFT and integration efforts look weak.

Nonetheless, the union provided significant behind-the-scenes support for the boycott. George Altomare and other UFT leaders met with Bayard Rustin and his aide, Rachelle Horowitz, to help plan the boycott. At the meeting, Altomare shared not only how he organized the UFT's past strikes, but also the contact information for building representatives that Rustin and Horowitz could use to reach representatives in every school. Altomare also used the building representatives from his strike network to help set up and staff the Freedom Schools that opened in churches and other locations around the city for children who would need a place to go on the day of the boycott. In addition, he used his network to notify parents and children that these alternative schools would be available.[116] The City-Wide Committee for Integrated Schools' planning manual for the boycott also anticipated that Freedom Schools would be staffed by teachers.[117]

The boycott itself, the single largest action of the Civil Rights Movement, was a successful event. An estimated 464,361 students, which was 45% of the total public school population, did not go to school on February 3.[118] 8.03% of teachers did not work that day either, more the double the usual absence rate of 3%.[119] Parrish would cite teachers'

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[113] New York Teachers for Integrated Quality Education (TIQUE) Flyer, 29 January 1964, box 130, folder 9, UFT Records; Don't be a scab…, box 130, folder 10, UFT Records; David A Kimchi, No Boycott, box 130, folder 13, UFT Records. The opposition came from the Solidarity caucus within the UFT, which organized in opposition to "Cogen-Shanker" leadership. Caucuses function as political parties within the UFT.

[114] Kahlenberg, *Tough Liberal: Albert Shanker and the Battles over Schools, Unions, Race, and Democracy*, 57. The language of individual consciousness is significant in union decision-making processes; it is used to tell people to do the right thing at times when the union or its leadership feels they can't take a particular position.

[115] Horowitz, interview; Kahlenberg, 57.

[116] Horowitz, interview. George Altomare, interview by the author, February 2018. According to Altomare, he and Sandra Feldmen, a teacher and activist who was involved in CORE's Route 40 Freedom Rides and later would become president of the UFT and AFT, went to Galamison's church to assess the state of the boycott and saw that they were disorganized, so he then set up the meeting with Rustin and Horowitz. Altomare says that at this meeting, Rustin decided to just follow Altomare's plans rather than creating a whole new system.

[117] Manual for School Boycott, box 130, folder 13, UFT Records.

[118] Taylor, *Knocking at Our Own Door*, 141.

[119] Boycott Cripples City Schools, New York Times, 4 February 1964, https://www.nytimes.com/1964/02/04/boycott-cripples-city-schools.html; Taylor, 142. Podair, cites the same article as Taylor, but claims this is "only slightly above normal." Podair, *The Strike That Changed New*

participation in the boycott, along with the Prince Edward County Freedom Schools, as evidence of the unions' commitment to end both *de jure* and *de facto* segregation nationwide.[120] The UFT held true to its word, and successfully defended the teachers who faced disciplinary action or its threat.[121] While the UFT cannot claim credit for the boycott's success, they offered significant support within their legal means and they did not stand in its way.

## Transitions

In his 1965 essay "From Politics to Protest," Bayard Rustin called for a shift in the Civil Rights Movement. He argued that the struggle for equal opportunity, that was earned through protest, needed to shift to a focus on larger battles for social justice and economic equality to be achieved through politics. These politics would necessarily involve larger coalition building with organizations such as the UFT.[122] Shanker and the UFT supported this shift and played a significant role in helping Rustin to create the A. Phillip Randolph Institute to work towards these ends.[123] Nonetheless, 1965 marked the zenith of the UFT's involvement with the Civil Rights Movement. The coalition that worked together in 1964 to support integration would soon rupture, as CORE and other community groups began to support black power and community control of schools, putting them on a road toward conflict with the UFT and its support for race-blind policies.

Some historians have argued that there was an internal shift in the UFT around this time as well that explains the rupture to come. Jonna Perrillo argues that, as the UFT's membership grew in the 1960s, it changed the makeup of the union; previously, they were comfortably on the left, but as more teachers joined, there were more conservative

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*York: Blacks, Whites, and the Ocean Hill-Brownsville Crisis*, 31. Perlstein cites a *New York Journal-American* article saying there was a lower than normal teacher absence rate. Perlstein, *Justice, Justice: School Politics and the Eclipse of Liberalism*, 188-189n51. This citation references an article by Alfred Robbins and Donald Flynn entitled "School Boycott Peaceful: Many Teachers Absent, Most Teachers In" on page 1 of the February 3 edition. However, Robbins and Flynn's article on the boycott is entitled "A Peaceful Boycott: 364,000 Out; Called 'Fizzle' By Donavan." In this article, there is a quote from superintendent, Calvin Gross, "It was gratifying to me that most teachers were on the job." The article continues, "Comparatively few of the city's 40,000 public school teachers honored the picket lines." Neither of these support the claim Perlstein made. I read what seems to be the final "Sports Complete" edition of the paper in the New York Public Library on March 3, 2018. It is possible that Perlstein read an earlier version of the paper that was subsequently corrected. Alfred Robbins and Donald Flynn, A Peaceful Boycott: 364,000 Out; Called 'Fizzle' By Donavan, 3 February 1964, 1.

[120] AFT Vice President's Report July 1963 - July 1964, box 1, folder 16, Parrish Papers (Additions 2).

[121] The End of a Blacklist, 26 February 1964, box 130, folder 13, UFT Records.

[122] Bayard Rustin, "From Protest to Politics: The Future of the Civil Rights Movement," *Commentary Magazine*, February 1965, https://www.commentarymagazine.com/articles/from-protest-to-politics-the-future-of-the-civil-rights-movement/.

[123] Kahlenberg, *Tough Liberal: Albert Shanker and the Battles over Schools, Unions, Race, and Democracy*, 63–65.

elements that increasingly voiced opposition to the UFT's commitment to civil rights.[124] Jerald Podair claims that there was a key turning point in 1966 when Shanker and the Executive Board sought to come out strongly in support of a proposed Civilian Review Board to investigate complaints against the New York Police Department. While the General Assembly voted in favor of the measure, it only passed by a slim margin. Podair argues that this taught Shanker the lesson that he was far out in front of the membership on racial issues, a mistake he would rarely make again.[125]

Perhaps more important than rising conservative voices within the UFT was the emergence of racial divisions in the union that mirrored the concurrent shifts within the black freedom struggle nationally. In December 1966, the AFT held a Racism in Education conference in Washington, DC. Richard Parrish marked this as the key turning point in racial relations within the union, later recalling that black representatives at the conference "let it be known that they were tired of letting the white power structure set standards for them, to name them and to arrange black folks' agenda."[126] This came a month after Shanker expressed his commitment to race-blindness in response to the crisis at I.S. 201. Just as Parrish, like blacks nationwide who embraced calls for black power, became more race-conscious, Shanker doubled down on his commitment to maintain his direction. While it is outside the bounds of this paper, there is clearly a need for a deeper analysis of the UFT's relationship to the black freedom struggle from 1965-1967 to fully understand what changed and why. This also raises questions about previous interpretations of the 1968 Ocean Hill-Brownsville strike. One must wonder if the UFT's race-blind commitment offers a potential explanation for their actions during the late 1960s as well.

The conflict of the late sixties notwithstanding, the UFT did accomplish meaningful civil rights work in the early 1960s. While the support offered for the March on Washington and the Selma campaign are not unique amongst unions, the UFT's use of their expertise around organizing greatly assisted the 1964 boycott and their expertise and commitment as teachers brought the Freedom Schools to the south. Richard Parrish, in particular, deserves more recognition both from historians and within the UFT. While he never crossed the picket-line, Parrish's public criticism of the UFT during the Ocean Hill-Brownsville strikes made him persona non-grata within the union. However, he was a core member of the leadership in the first years of the union's existence and did more than any other person to develop the UFT's support for a civil rights agenda, which followed the impactful work he did for racial justice within the AFT in the 1950s. His entire life's work deserves more attention from historians as well, given his range of efforts over four decades in both labor and civil rights movements. His life captures the ebbs and flows of black life in New York from the 1940s through the 1970s.

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[124] Perrillo, *Uncivil Rights*, 121–34.

[125] Podair, *The Strike That Changed New York: Blacks, Whites, and the Ocean Hill-Brownsville Crisis*, 46.

[126] Richard Parrish, "A Brief History of the AFT Black Caucus Draft Copy," 1974?, box 3, folder 15, Parrish Papers.

The UFT's civil rights efforts of the early 60s occurred at the zenith of the New Deal coalition between labor, liberals, and blacks. Shanker and the UFT's commitment to a race-blind position places them in line with the socialist left during the mid-twentieth century. Moreover, their views tracked those of the key black leaders from the old left, Rustin and Randolph, not to mention Martin Luther King, Jr., all of whom would continue to support the UFT through the late 1960s. During the UFT's 1967 strike, King telegrammed Shanker to "enthusiastically endorse" the teachers' strike and praise "the majestic courage of the teachers of New York" for being "an inspiration to all people of humanitarian concern.[127] Rustin and Randolph both publicly supported the UFT during the 1968 Ocean Hill-Brownsville strike.

However, the development of Shanker's commitment to color-blindness raises ominous notes as well. By the 1970s, color-blindness emerged as a weapon that conservatives wielded against both compensatory and corrective civil rights agendas, such as affirmative action.[128] Existing explanations place the development of this within the rising conservative movement of the late 60s and 70s as it grows in southern suburbs.[129] Shanker, however, articulated a militant commitment to this ideal in 1966 in a northern city. This ideology, now associated with reactionary right-wing voices, emerged earlier from self-identifying well-intentioned allies of the black community.

[127] Martin Luther King, Jr. to Albert Shanker, 13 September 1967, Box 69, Folder 23, UFT Records.

[128] Daniel T. Rodgers, *Age of Fracture* (Cambridge, Mass.: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2011), 129–34. Jacquelyn Dowd Hall, "The Long Civil Rights Movement and the Political Uses of the Past," *The Journal of American History* 91, no. 4 (March 2005): 1233–1263.

[129] For example, see Matthew D. Lassiter, "The Suburban Origins of 'Color-Blind' Conservatism: Middle-Class Consciousness in the Charlotte Busing Crisis," *Journal of Urban History* 30, no. 4 (May 2004).