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**ORGANIZING FOR SOCIAL JUSTICE: RANK-AND-FILE TEACHERS'
ACTIVISM AND SOCIAL UNIONISM IN CALIFORNIA, 1948-1978**

A dissertation submitted in partial satisfaction
of the requirements of the degree of

DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

in

HISTORY

with an emphasis in FEMINIST STUDIES

by

Sara R. Smith

June 2014

The Dissertation of Sara R. Smith is approved:

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Abstract

Organizing for Social Justice: Rank-and-File Teachers' Activism and Social Unionism in California, 1948-1978

Sara R. Smith

From the 1940s to the late 1970s, rank-and-file teachers and elected leaders in California engaged in dynamic efforts to shape the American Federation of Teachers' political approach to unionism. This study considers organizing by rank-and-file teachers in this period, both inside the American Federation of Teachers and independently, to promote left-led social unionism. In contrast to a more politically moderate and narrow version of unionism (often referred to as business unionism), advocates of social unionism have sought to simultaneously improve workplace-based rights and benefits while also engaging in movements to challenge social injustice defined more broadly. More specifically, from the late 1940s to the late 1970s rank-and-file teachers in California made challenging various forms of discrimination central to their vision of social unionism.

This study examines four case studies that helped to determine the AFT's political approach to unionism. It begins with a discussion of AFT Local 430 in the late 1940s, a left-led teachers' union in Los Angeles that prioritized organizing against racism due to the involvement of Communist Party members in its leadership. In 1948 the national AFT leadership expelled AFT Local 430 on charges of communist domination, marking a political turning point within the AFT nationally; where once the AFT was left-led and strongly committed to anti-racism, the union

became more politically moderate and less committed to struggles against discrimination.

The next three case studies consider rank-and-file teachers' efforts to revive and redefine social unionism from the late 1960s to the late 1970s. Influenced by the new social movements of the period, rank-and-file teachers in California revived the AFT's earlier anti-racist tradition, but the new social unionism also challenged a wider range of oppressions. The new social unionism was aligned with advocates of Black Power and the Third World left, a resurgent feminism, and, for the first time in a significant way, gay and lesbian rights. Teachers' organizing also speaks to the relationship of the labor movement to social movements of people of color as they turned toward militancy in the late 1960s, the feminist movement of the late 1960s to early 1970s, and the gay and lesbian movement of the late 1970s.

Additionally, bottom-up democratic unionism was a defining feature of the new social unionism in the 1960s and 1970s. The self-organization of rank-and-file teachers and locally-based elected leaders, rather than national leaders, pushed the AFT to more forcefully take on racism, sexism, and homophobia. Organizing by rank-and-file teachers in California in the late 1960s and 1970s demonstrates that the AFT was not politically monolithic. The history of the AFT in California reveals a relatively politically progressive union engaged with social movements in an effort to generate social change on a broad scale.

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a deeper understanding of U.S. labor history, particularly the entwined histories of waged labor and slavery.

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Introduction

On September 20, 1948, claiming that the union local had fallen under the control of Communists, the national office of the American Federation of Teachers (AFT) revoked the charter of Local 430 in Los Angeles. The following year, officers of Local 430 attended the AFT's 1949 national convention to appeal the ruling. AFT Vice President, Arthur Elder, spoke in defense of the revocation:

We are here this afternoon deciding not only the future of the particular local in question...but I am sure I am still speaking for the [Executive] Council that...we are here this afternoon and this evening very largely shaping the future of our American Federation of Teachers. We are in a measure going to decide what kind of organization this American Federation of Teachers should be.¹

Local 430's appeal was unsuccessful, and the charter revocation remained in place. In October, 1948, immediately following the expulsion of Local 430, the AFT granted a charter to a new Los Angeles local, AFT Local 1021, to be led by more conservative members of Local 430 who had requested the AFT's investigation of Local 430. Rather than give up, the officers and members loyal to Local 430 decided to establish an independent left-led union, the Los Angeles Federation of Teachers. However, the Red Scare in full steam, beginning in 1950 and continuing through the decade, the leaders of the Los Angeles Federation of Teachers now found themselves subject to interrogation by local, state, and federal bodies on charges of subversion. Many of the union's leadership were ultimately blacklisted. Its energies sapped and much of its

¹ AFT Convention Proceedings 1949, American Federation of Teachers Collection, folder 14, box 24, Walter Reuther Library (hereafter referred to as Reuther Library), Wayne State University, Detroit, Michigan.

leadership fired from their teaching jobs, by the mid-1950s the left-led Los Angeles Federation of Teachers did not survive. The only teachers' union left standing in Los Angeles was AFT Local 1021.

The destruction of the left-led teachers' union in Los Angeles marked a turn towards conservatism in the AFT's politics in California and on a national level. Under a leftist leadership, AFT Local 430 had promoted a version of unionism—social unionism—that emphasized the importance of protecting and improving the working conditions and compensation of teachers, in combination with challenging social injustice more broadly. The expulsion of Local 430 not only represented the culmination of anti-communist purges within the AFT at the national level, but also the ouster of elected leaders of Local 430 whose commitment to racial equality was informed by their membership in the Communist Party. The outcome of this anti-communism was a political transition within the AFT from a social unionism inflected with anti-racism to a less socially engaged and more politically moderate, and in some ways quite conservative, unionism. The expulsion of the left-led AFT locals also reflected a decrease in the tolerance of dissent within the union, and therefore an overall weakening of democratic union practices.

The destruction of Local 430 also set the stage for the events of the 1960s and 1970s, when rank-and-file AFT members and elected leaders, inspired by the new social movements of the period, helped to revive and redefine social unionism. In San Francisco on January 6, 1969 AFT Local 1352, the union representing faculty at San Francisco State College, inaugurated a strike in solidarity with students. The student

strike had begun two months earlier, on November 6, 1968, and was to become the longest student strike in U.S. history until that point.² The students had gone on strike to demand the establishment of Black and Third World Studies departments; they were demanding an education relevant to the lives of students of color. AFT Local 1352's strike, the first higher education faculty strike in California's history, was to protest racism in higher education.

Three years later, in 1972, women in the AFT-affiliated California Federation of Teachers established the Women in Education Committee, which would serve as a catalyst for feminist organizing within the union. The committee, inspired by the burgeoning feminist movement at the time, infused the union with a new feminist militancy, as members of the group organized for the inclusion of women's issues in contract negotiations and confronted sexism in the school curriculum. Feminists within the California Federation of Teachers displayed a commitment to their students by calling for the elimination of sexist references to girls and women in textbooks and demanding the inclusion of women's history and literature.³

Then, on November 7, 1978, California's voters went to the polls to determine the fate of gay and lesbian teachers, as well as their straight supporters. Proposition 6, also known as the Briggs Initiative, read, in part,

² Daryl J. Maeda, *Chains of Babylon: The Rise of Asian America* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2009), 50.

³ "CFT Women's Committee Meets Next Month," *California Teacher*, June, 1972, Volume 23, No. 10, Arnold Collection, folder: CFT, 1971-72, box: Arnold/CFT, Labor Archives and Research Center (hereafter referred to as San Francisco Labor Archives), San Francisco State University, San Francisco, California.

the State finds a compelling interest in refusing to employ and in terminating the employment of a schoolteacher, a teacher's aide, a school administrator or a counselor...who engages in public homosexual activity and/or public homosexual conduct directed at, or likely to come to the attention of, school children or other school employees.⁴

Inspired by the newly galvanized anti-gay Christian Right, John Briggs, a Republican state senator from Orange County, California, had sponsored the measure. Lesbian and community-based activists led an enormous, grassroots campaign across California to defeat the initiative. Gay and lesbian teachers played a critical role in this campaign, forming their own independent groups and successfully organizing to pressure the teachers' unions to actively oppose Proposition 6. Their organizing paid off when California's voters decided against the initiative, with 59% voting against and 41% voting in favor.⁵

In this study I examine these four moments in the history of AFT teacher unionism in California that helped to, as AFT Vice President, Arthur Elder put it in 1949, "decide what kind of organization this American Federation of Teachers should be."⁶ I argue that the faculty strike at San Francisco State College in 1968-1969, the establishment of the Women in Education Committee in 1972, and the organizing efforts to defeat Proposition 6 in 1977-1978 represented, in addition to the earlier expulsion of Communists and other leftists from the AFT, another political turning point for the American Federation of Teachers. Taken together, these three case

⁴ "California Voters Pamphlet, General Election, November 7, 1978," http://librarysource.uchastings.edu/ballot_pdf/1978g.pdf.

⁵ "Edition-Time Ballot Returns in Statewide Voting: Prop. 6: 2,222,784 41% Yes; 3,203,076 59% No," *Los Angeles Times*, November 8, 1978.

⁶ AFT Convention Proceedings 1949, folder 14, box 24, Reuther Library.

studies consider the relationship between teacher unionism and the new social movements of the late 1960s through the late 1970s in California. I argue that rank-and-file AFT members and locally-based elected leaders, inspired by the new social movements of the period, helped to revive and redefine social unionism, in the process pushing some segments of the American Federation of Teachers to the left. This new social unionism harkened back to the social unionism of AFT Local 430; it revived the local's earlier anti-racist political tradition. But the new social unionism departed from its political forebear by challenging a wider range of oppressions. Influenced by the movement of the 1960s and 1970s, the new social unionism was aligned with advocates of Black Power and the Third World left, a resurgent feminism, and, for the first time in any significant way, gay and lesbian rights. Additionally, the social movements of the late 1960s through the 1970s influenced the new social unionism within the AFT in California to become more militant in its advocacy for students than it had been previously. Faculty at San Francisco State went on strike in 1968-1969 to establish a curriculum relevant to students of color; in the 1970s feminists in the California Federation of Teachers challenged sexism in the curricula; and in 1977-1978 gay and lesbian teachers insisted that they had the right to teach children, and could in fact serve as role models for their students.

Union democracy was a defining feature of the new social unionism in the 1960s and 1970s. Bill Fletcher, Jr. and Fernando Gapasin argue that in the contemporary labor movement, "too many unions either smash factions within the

union or otherwise undermine the ability the ability of members to express dissent.”⁷ In their examination of the influence of Communists on industrial unions in the 1930s and 1940s, Judith Stepan-Norris and Maurice Zeitlin stress that, contrary to the idea held by many labor leaders that internal union factions inhibit democracy and undermine unity, the existence of factions enhances political pluralism within unions, providing union members with a variety of perspectives and encouraging members to feel like they can hold dissenting views. This in turn serves to increase members’ enthusiasm about actively participating in union affairs.⁸ In each of the case studies under examination here, rank-and-file members and locally elected leaders led the organizing, often through committees or “factions.” It was this self-organization of rank-and-file teachers and locally-based elected leaders, rather than national leaders, that pushed the AFT to more forcefully take on racism, sexism, and homophobia.

I examine these latter three case studies because they represent the relationship between rank-and-file teacher unionists and the major social movements of the late 1960s and 1970s dedicated to challenging discrimination. Each case study considers a different kind of discrimination and a distinct struggle, helping to answer the question: how did the social movements of the late 1960s to the late 1970s against racism, sexism, and homophobia relate to and help shape teacher unionism in California? Though teachers became involved in civil rights struggles throughout the 1960s, in this study I focus on AFT Local 1352’s strike in solidarity with militant

⁷ Bill Fletcher and Fernando Gapasin, *Solidarity Divided: The Crisis in Organized Labor and a New Path Toward Social Justice* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2008), 205.

⁸ Judith Stepan-Norris, *Left Out: Reds and America’s Industrial Unions* (Cambridge; New York: Cambridge University Press, 2003), 67.

students of color at San Francisco State in 1968-1969, because the faculty strike underscores that segments of the labor movement worked alongside and in solidarity with movements of color as they became more militant in the late 1960s—even as many liberal unionists, including the AFT leadership, rejected Black Power and the Third World Left. I conclude with a discussion of gay and lesbian teachers’ activism in the late 1970s, because the campaign against the Briggs Initiative occurred at the tail end of a turbulent political period led by movements on the left, right before the Right rose to political power in the United States, best symbolized by the election of Ronald Reagan as U.S. president in 1980.

My aims in this study are multiple. First, this analysis contributes to the literature on the history of the American Federation of Teachers through a focus on the AFT in California, which has yet to be examined in depth. Further, my research moves beyond the AFT to consider the ways that workers have sought to define the political direction of the union movement. The rank-and-file teachers and elected leaders discussed here were attempting to revitalize the labor movement by challenging social injustice, and in the process linked labor organizing with social movement organizing. From the expulsion of the communists to the battles over women’s rights, the political profile of the AFT was an ongoing, contentious struggle. Ultimately, this study illustrates the limitations of a version of social unionism based in political liberalism, and argues that the growth of a rank-and-file movement among workers and union members 1960s and 1970s helped to revive and redefine a more militant social unionism that assertively confronted various forms of discrimination.

The ways in which race, gender, and sexuality intersect with class is a central theme running throughout this study. Some in the union movement have argued that class must serve as the unifying element of unionism, that other forms of oppression are important yet secondary concerns. When workers band together and fight for a higher wage, for example, everybody benefits regardless of race, gender, sexuality, disability, age, and other axes of oppression. For example, Dennis Deslippe argues that liberal unionists sympathetic to major issues of concern to female union members and workers of color supported certain affirmative action policies but “spent their lobbying resources on labor law reform and full employment legislation, not affirmative action.”⁹ I argue that this view of unionism leaves in place pre-existing structures of inequality. Fletcher and Gapasin convey the importance of centering struggles against discrimination in what they refer to as “social justice unionism”:

Reducing workers’ experiences to their economic reality in the workplace...can conceal the impact of other oppressions on their consciousness and reality. Workers can come to believe that by ignoring those other realities, they can all march of together. Such a view, as we have seen throughout U.S. history, is disastrous.¹⁰

According to Fletcher and Gapasin, “as part of its transformation, the union movement must become a vehicle through which oppressed groups, such as women and people of color, can advance their demands for freedom.”¹¹

The organizing efforts of rank-and-file teachers discussed in this study utilized, at least in part, their unions to challenge discrimination at work and in

⁹ Dennis Deslippe, *Protesting Affirmative Action: The Struggle Over Equality After the Civil Rights Revolution* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2012), 8.

¹⁰ Fletcher and Gapasin, *Solidarity Divided*, 181.

¹¹ *Ibid.*, 202.

society more broadly. Ultimately, the struggles by rank-and-file teachers discussed here provide a model for a social unionism that could resuscitate the labor movement in the present day.

The History of the American Federation of Teachers

This study engages with the literature on the history of the American Federation of Teachers. A number of books address the AFT's history by focusing on the AFT in Chicago and New York City until the late 1960s. I fill in a gap in the history by shifting our focus to the history of the AFT in California, as well as by extending this history into the 1970s to consider the relationship between the AFT and the feminist and the gay and lesbian movement. While much of the literature heavily focuses on the role played by national union leaders, I examine the history of the AFT through a discussion of rank-and-file teachers' and local elected leaders in order to provide a fuller picture of the AFT's history, in the process demonstrating that the AFT was not politically monolithic. Lastly, much of the literature highlights the AFT's moderate racial politics in New York; this study shows that many rank-and-file teachers in California held a more radical racial politics engaged not only with Black Power but also with the Third World Left.

Marjorie Murphy's *Blackboard Unions: the AFT and the NEA, 1900-1980*, a history I build on in a number of ways, provides one of the broadest treatments of the history of teacher unionism through an examination of both the American Federation of Teachers and the National Education Association. She focuses on the obstacles to

unionism among teachers in the twentieth-century U.S., arguing that the “ideology of professionalism in education grew into a powerful antiunion slogan that effectively paralyzed and then slowed the unionization of teachers.” Murphy also stresses that “recurrent seasons of redbaiting” were a significant obstacle to teacher unionism.¹²

While Murphy emphasizes the conservative political context as the primary driving force for redbaiting within the union, the AFT leadership began its drive to root out Communists from the union in 1941 with the purge of AFT locals in New York and Philadelphia, several years prior to the start of the Cold War and McCarthyism.¹³ In other words, the national AFT leadership was actively complicit in using anti-communism to transform the union into a politically less militant, more narrowly focused union. I add to Murphy’s argument by stressing that anti-communism within the AFT in California resulted in a union less committed to the pursuit of racial equality.

Murphy’s examination of the history of the AFT also provides insight into the ways that gender and race have impacted the union’s history. Murphy describes the female-led organizing in the teachers’ union in Chicago in the early twentieth-century as feminist. The involvement of women such as Margaret Haley and Catherine Cogen in the Chicago Federation of Teachers, for example, is a story of women empowering themselves, in standing up against the male-dominated school boards and city

¹² Marjorie Murphy, *Blackboard Unions: The AFT and the NEA, 1900-1980* (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 1990), 1, 2.

¹³ *Ibid.*, 6, 170-171.

government.¹⁴ Murphy also recounts how, in the 1930s and 1940s, women challenged marriage restrictions in the teaching profession stipulating that women, upon marriage, must quit teaching. Many teachers also participated in the movement for women's suffrage and fought for pay equity between female and male teachers in the early twentieth century.¹⁵

Here I elaborate and expand on Murphy's introduction to feminism in the AFT in the 1970s by showing how feminist organizing within the AFT nationally and in California during this period focused on challenging sexism in the school curriculum. This reflected their commitment to a version of social unionism steeped in a new feminist militancy dedicated not only to advancing the rights of women teachers on the job, but also to challenging sexism in society more broadly.

While Murphy provides a broad national survey of the history of the AFT, she pays disproportionate attention to the history of the union in Chicago and New York. Similarly, most scholars who have written about history of the AFT have largely focused on the history of the union in Chicago and New York, and California is nearly completely absent from their histories.¹⁶ This is somewhat understandable,

¹⁴ Ibid., 46.

¹⁵ Ibid., 74.

¹⁶ Robert J. Braun, *Teachers and Power: The Story of the American Federation of Teachers* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1972); Stephen Cole, *The Unionization of Teachers: A Case Study of the UFT* (New York: Praeger, 1969); Marshall O. Donley, *Power to the Teacher: How America's Educators Became Militant* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1976); William Edward Eaton, *The American Federation of Teachers, 1916-1961: A History of the Movement* (Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press, 1975); Dennis Gaffney, *Teachers United: The Rise of New York State United Teachers* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2007); Fred Glass, *A History of the California Federation of Teachers, 1919-1989* (South San Francisco: The Federation, 1989); Richard D. Kahlenberg, *Tough Liberal: Albert Shanker and the Battles Over Schools, Unions, Race, and Democracy* (New York: Columbia

because for many years the AFT locals in Chicago and New York City were the strongest in the union. Additionally, teacher unionism first took off in Chicago in the late 19th and early 20th centuries. Kate Rousmaniere has demonstrated importance of the history of the Chicago Teachers Federation, formed in 1897 under the leadership of Margaret Haley.¹⁷ Three Chicago teachers' unions and one teachers union from Gary, Indiana came together to form the AFT, the first national teachers union, in 1916.¹⁸ John Lyons has examined the history of the Chicago Teachers Union (CTU), founded in 1937 after the merger of several Chicago-based teacher unions. From 1937 until the 1960s, Chicago Teachers Unions was the largest and most influential local within the AFT.¹⁹

The significance of the Chicago and New York locals in the scholarship on the history of the AFT also stems from recurrent shifts in power at the national level

University Press, 2007); John F. Lyons, *Teachers and Reform: Chicago Public Education, 1929-1970* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2008); Dickson A Mungazi, *Where He Stands: Albert Shanker of the American Federation of Teachers* (Westport: Praeger, 1995); Marjorie Murphy, *Blackboard Unions: The AFT and the NEA, 1900-1980* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1990); Jonna Perrillo, *Uncivil Rights: Teachers, Unions, and Race in the Battle for School Equity* (Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 2012); David Selden, *The Teacher Rebellion* (Washington, D.C.: Howard University Press, 1985); Mayssoun Sukariah and Stuart Tannock, "American Federation of Teachers in the Middle East: Teacher Training As Labor Imperialism," *Labor Studies Journal* 35, no. 2 (June 2010): 181-197; Philip Taft, *United They Teach: The Story of the United Federation of Teachers* (Los Angeles: Nash Publishing, 1974); Clarence Taylor, *Reds at the Blackboard: Communism, Civil Rights, and the New York City Teachers Union* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2011); Wayne J Urban, *Gender, Race, and the National Education Association: Professionalism and Its Limitations* (New York: RoutledgeFalmer, 2000); Wayne J. Urban, *Why Teachers Organized* (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 1982); Celia Lewis Zitron, *The New York City Teachers Union, 1916-1964: A Story of Educational and Social Commitment* (New York: Humanities Press, 1969).

¹⁷ Kate Rousmaniere, *Citizen Teacher: The Life and Leadership of Margaret Haley* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2005), 44.

¹⁸ Eaton, *The American Federation of Teachers, 1916-1961*, 15.

¹⁹ Lyons, *Teachers and Reform*, 2.

within the AFT between the two locals. Murphy has shown that, prior to the 1930s, the Chicago local held power on the national union's executive board. With the onset of the Great Depression of the 1930s, and in part due to the influence of Communists and other leftists in building AFT Local 5 in New York, the center of power within the AFT shifted from Chicago to New York.²⁰ In his study of the AFT in Chicago, Lyons demonstrates that the Chicago local, the center of anti-communist activity within the AFT in the 1930s, consolidated its power in opposition to the New York Teachers Union. Drawing on broader anti-communist sentiment, the Chicago local and its allies in other AFT locals were ultimately successful beginning in 1939 and continuing through the 1940s, first, in taking back power in the AFT nationally, and, second, purging Communist and left-led locals in the American Federation of Teachers.²¹

The United Federation of Teachers in New York City, AFT Local 5, has drawn the attention of many historians because of its successful, and sometimes controversial, organizing.²² Teacher union activists established the UFT in 1960 as a merger of AFT Local 5, the Teachers Guild, with the High School Teachers' Association. The UFT then won a union election in 1961, establishing it as the union representing New York City school teachers, and in 1962 the UFT negotiated one of the first collective bargaining agreements for teachers in the country. In his 1974 history of the UFT, Philip Taft argues, "the formation of the UFT was the most

²⁰ Murphy, *Blackboard Unions*, 4.

²¹ Lyons, *Teachers and Reform*, 79.

²² Scholars who focus on New York exclusively include: Gaffney, *Teachers United*; Kahlenberg, *Tough Liberal*, 2007; Taft, *United They Teach*.

important event in the history of teacher unionism in the United States, and perhaps in the entire field of public employment.”²³ Though there were a handful of earlier examples of union contracts negotiated for teachers, the UFT was influential in large part because it won collective bargaining rights for teachers in the most populous city in the United States.²⁴ The victory in New York helped to catalyze the teacher union movement in large cities and states across the country in the 1960s and 1970s.²⁵

My analysis of the AFT’s history in California reveals another important side of its history. The AFT in California was often to the left politically of the union at the national level, and helped to push the AFT to become more engaged in the social movements of the 1960s and 1970s. Additionally, much of the history of the AFT either stops before the 1970s, or only briefly touches on the 1970s onward. A discussion of the AFT in California in the 1970s is essential to understanding the influence of the feminist and queer movements on the political trajectory of the AFT, as well as the history of the unionization of teachers in states such as California, which established collective bargaining rights for teachers in 1975.²⁶

²³ Taft, *United They Teach*, 80-81.

²⁴ Kahlenberg, *Tough Liberal*, 2007, 50.

²⁵ Murphy, *Blackboard Unions*, 218–219.

²⁶ In this dissertation, I use the word “queer” to refer to people who express their gender and sexuality in non-normative ways, but who do not necessarily identify as lesbian, gay, bisexual, or transgender. I also use the word “queer” as an umbrella term to refer lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and other-queer identified people. Usage of “queer” in the context of the 1970s is anachronistic—people in the 1970s usually used the word “queer” as a pejorative to express homophobia. But in the late 1980s people began to reappropriate “queer” to connote a positive identification with community and with a political identity. I use the word “queer” here, despite it being anachronistic, to be inclusive of a broad group of people who identify as lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, or otherwise queer. Additionally, at present people understand the word queer in academic writing about queer studies and queer history as not pejorative.

In addition to a focus on a new geography and time period, this study also provides a more holistic view of the AFT's history by examining rank-and-file teachers' organizing. This is in contrast to much of the literature, with some exceptions, which has emphasized the role of national union leaders in the history of the AFT. Scholars have placed an inordinate amount of attention on the role of one man, Albert Shanker, in the AFT's history. Shanker *was* an important figure; he served as president of the United Federation of Teachers beginning in 1964.²⁷ A few years later, in 1974, Shanker was elected president of the AFT. Richard Kahlenberg conveys the power Shanker held after his election as AFT president: "Shanker now found himself with four powerful platforms—president of the UFT, a leader of [New York State United Teachers], a vice president of the AFL-CIO, and now president of the AFT."²⁸ Shanker would serve as president of the AFT until his death in 1997.²⁹ Clearly Shanker's powerful and long-lasting role in the AFT merits attention, but because there is still often little focus on the crucial role local leaders and rank-and-file members played in the history of the AFT, a full picture of the AFT's history is still missing.

Some historians of the AFT have provided an overly sanguine view of Shanker, despite Shanker's role in pushing the AFT to the right politically, at times pitting the union against social movements on the political left.³⁰ Kahlenberg and Taft, in particular, portray Shanker in a positive light. In his history of the New York

²⁷ Kahlenberg, *Tough Liberal*, 59.

²⁸ *Ibid.*, 165.

²⁹ *Ibid.*, 374.

³⁰ Kahlenberg, *Tough Liberal*, 2007; Mungazi, *Where He Stands*; Taft, *United They Teach*.

AFT local, Taft, for example, writes, “as president of the union, Shanker earned the reputation of being tolerant, thoughtful, unobtrusive, friendly, albeit a bit reserved.”³¹ Missing is a critical analysis of Shanker’s power vis-à-vis local elected leaders and rank-and-file union activists within the AFT.

Kahlenberg’s biography of Shanker lends insight into Shanker’s important place in the AFT’s history, but in doing so also lionizes Shanker. He credits Shanker almost exclusively with the organizing successes of the UFT and the AFT, and makes the unsubstantiated claim that “Shanker was arguably the single individual most responsible for preserving public education in the United States during the last quarter of the twentieth century.”³² Kahlenberg also credits Shanker with the growth of the UFT and the AFT in the 1960s and 1970s, omitting the significant role that other elected leaders and rank-and-file union members played in the expansion of the union.³³

Kahlenberg’s examination of Shanker’s influence in the AFT’s history in part stems from his political agreement with what he terms Shanker’s “tough liberalism.” Kahlenberg appends “tough” to Shanker’s liberalism because Shanker held strong anti-communist views, disagreeing with liberal opponents of the Vietnam War in the 1960s, opposing the U.S. détente with the Soviet Union in the 1970s, and favoring U.S. government aid to the anti-communist Contras in Nicaragua in the 1980s. Additionally, Kahlenberg contends that, as an advocate of racial equality, Shanker

³¹ Taft, *United They Teach*, 232.

³² Kahlenberg, *Tough Liberal*, 2007, 7.

³³ *Ibid.*, 4–5.

was a supporter of the Civil Rights Movement. But Shanker’s racial politics set him apart from many in the movement. Kahlenberg asserts, Shanker “opposed certain extreme forms of bilingual education and multiculturalism, which he saw as separatist.”³⁴ Shanker vocally opposed many elements of affirmative action, most notably numerical goals, and Kahlenberg himself repeatedly uses the word “quotas” as a stand-in for affirmative action, a terminology common among opponents of affirmative action.³⁵ Shanker also opposed bilingual education, in part because he believed that immigrants should be assimilated into American society. According to Kahlenberg, then, Shanker was a liberal, but was a “tough liberal” unafraid to, at times, take political stands which had more in common with the Right than the Left. Kahlenberg portrays Shanker’s “tough liberalism” in a wholly uncritical light, even declaring, “Albert Shanker’s life reminds us that there is an alternative tough liberal tradition wholly worthy of reviving.”³⁶

In contrast to the studies that focus on the AFT’s national leadership, and overly credit one individual while homogenizing the politics of the union, John Lyon’s history of the AFT-affiliated Chicago Teachers Union examines the Chicago union’s leadership side by side with a consideration of rank-and-file organizing. By doing so, Lyons shows that teacher union activists have both embraced social reform, particularly in education, while simultaneously focusing on bread-and-butter issues.

³⁴ Ibid., 8.

³⁵ Ibid., 194–195; Richard D Kahlenberg argues against a race-based affirmative action in favor of affirmative action based on class status in *The Remedy: Class, Race, and Affirmative Action* (New York: BasicBooks, 1996).

³⁶ Kahlenberg, *Tough Liberal*, 11.

Lyons argues, “in periods of political and social upheaval, such as the 1930s and 1960s, more teachers wanted to use the union as a vehicle for social reform while others still argued that the proper role of a teachers’ union was to fight for better wages and conditions.”³⁷

Lyons’ inclusion of the rank-and-file in the history of the CTU is important not only because it gives rank-and-file members a place in the history of teacher unionism in Chicago, but also because it reveals a less politically monolithic union in the period after the Red Scare in the 1940s and 1950s. The blacklisting of communist and other leftist teachers, combined with AFT’s purging of left-led AFT locals, did result in the AFT turning inward to focus more of its attention on bread and butter concerns while often turning away from social reform efforts. However, as Lyons demonstrates, “there is a persistent tradition, although a minority one, in the history of teacher unionism in which teachers sought to use unions as vehicles to reform the school system and the wider society.”³⁸

This focus on rank-and-file organizing allows Lyons to show how race and gender influenced teachers’ attitudes toward educational reform.³⁹ He discusses how during the 1930s and continuing through World War II, many female elementary school teachers presented a rank-and-file challenge to the CTU leadership by demanding a single salary schedule, which would equalize pay between elementary and high school teachers—the former mainly women and the latter disproportionately

³⁷ Lyons, *Teachers and Reform*, 6.

³⁸ *Ibid.*, 4.

³⁹ *Ibid.*, 208.

men. This was essentially a fight for gender equity. Additionally, Lyons recounts black teachers' organizing in the late 1960s to pressure the leadership of the Chicago Teachers Union to address educational improvements in contract. The issue of educational improvements was particularly important to black children who were attending under-funded and lower-performing schools and were taught from a racially biased curriculum.⁴⁰ As a result of organizing by black teachers, the CTU became more responsive to addressing racial inequality in the schools. In the late 1960s and 1970s the Chicago Board of Education started to include African American history in the literature in the curriculum.⁴¹

As Lyons does for the history of the AFT in Chicago, through a discussion of rank-and-file teacher organizing in California I show that the history of the AFT is far from politically uniform. Unlike Lyons, who examines the history of the Chicago Teachers Union through the 1960s, I take the history of the AFT in California into the 1970s to illustrate how rank-and-file teachers established links between the feminist movement, the gay and lesbian movement and the AFT in California.

Finally, this study contributes to the literature on the AFT's racial politics by showing how rank-and-file teachers' organizing in California in the late 1960s and 1970s diverged from the AFT's liberal position on racial issues at the national level and in New York. Murphy's discussion of the AFT's orientation toward the Civil Rights Movement sheds light on the racial politics of the AFT in the 1950s and 1960s. Though the anti-communist purges within the AFT in the 1940s did moderate

⁴⁰ Ibid., 197.

⁴¹ Ibid., 204.

the union's commitment to anti-racist struggles, according to Murphy, the AFT leadership was still relatively liberal and thus went on record in support of the Civil Rights Movement and against segregation. In 1956, for example, the AFT voted to expel segregated locals, ultimately losing 4,000 members. In 1960, the AFT went on record supporting the sit-ins against segregation in the South, and in 1963 the AFT sent teachers to teach in the Civil Rights Movement's freedom schools.⁴²

There were limits to the AFT leadership's liberalism on racial matters, however. In the 1960s, the New York City-based UFT, under Shanker's leadership in, put forward a politically moderate racial politics. As Daniel Perlstein points out in *Justice, Justice: School Politics and the Eclipse of Liberalism*, the UFT leadership's supported a racial politics based on integration and assimilation, through opposition to discriminatory laws that perpetuated racial inequality in the schools as well as in society more generally. The UFT's politics on race were based on the liberal union leadership's belief that once formal discriminatory barriers were struck down, people of color would make progress based on merit.⁴³

The limits to the UFT's liberal racial politics became apparent in its opposition to some civil rights struggles in New York City. For example, as Perlstein and Jonna Perrillo have shown, the UFT leadership refused to endorse a 1964 school boycott to win integration in New York City. On February 3, 1964 over 450,000 of the students in the New York City public school system refused to attend school in an attempt to integrate the schools. In the 1950s and 1960s, few white liberals supported

⁴² Murphy, *Blackboard Unions*, 200, 207.

⁴³ Perlstein, *Justice, Justice*, 24, 5.

sending white children to inner-city schools, and the UFT and its predecessor, the Teachers Guild, representing the largely white teaching workforce, also refused to support the transfer of experienced, white teachers to under-funded schools attended largely by students of color. Due to its moderate racial politics, the UFT placed the interests of white teachers above the needs of communities of color who sought experienced teachers to work in their communities.⁴⁴ Perrillo argues that the UFT (and its predecessor the Teacher's Guild) made a "race neutral" argument that the main issue, rather than racial inequity in the schools, was one of workplace quality and the need to preserve teacher professionalism. Perrillo draws a contrast between the moderate social democratic leadership of the UFT with their rival, the communist-led Teachers Union, which had a more radical racial politics due to the influence of the Communist Party, and therefore supported the transfer of white teachers to under-funded schools attended by black and other students of color despite difficult conditions.⁴⁵

In the context of a shift toward racial militancy in the late 1960s, and in part due to the resistance of white liberals to support community demands for integration, organizing for racial equality in New York City shifted to neighborhood-based activism for Black Power. The limits of the UFT's racial politics once again became apparent when the union opposed community control, a political project supported by Black Power advocates and communities of color more generally. The union went on strike three times (the third time for a month) in 1968 and also lobbied the state

⁴⁴ Ibid., 3; Perrillo, *Uncivil Rights*, 12.

⁴⁵ Perrillo, *Uncivil Rights*, 85, 92-93.

legislature to vote against community control.⁴⁶ Perlstein stresses, “while the [UFT] saw this ‘community control’ of ghetto schools as a threat to due process, job security, and unbiased, quality education, black activists saw it as a prerequisite to democratizing school governance, to eliminating racism in education, and to opening jobs to African Americans.”⁴⁷

Though my focus in this study is on the history of the American Federation Teachers, historians have also examined the history of the National Education Association, a parallel organization for teachers. As Wayne J. Urban explains in *Gender, Race, and the National Education Association*, for much of its history prior to the 1960s the NEA eschewed unionism in favor of promoting itself as a professional organization inclusive of teachers and school administrators. For instance, prior to the 1960s the NEA declared strikes as unprofessional.⁴⁸ Urban traces the ebb and flow of the NEA’s approach to women teachers and black teachers from the late nineteenth to the late twentieth centuries. Urban argues that the NEA has a history of what he calls “courting the woman teacher” prior to the 1960s, while also acknowledging that the NEA depicted women in traditionally gendered ways. But it was not until the 1960s and 1970s that the NEA seriously addressed racial issues within the organization. Prior to the 1960s, argues Urban, the NEA’s commitment to black teachers was timid. In large part as a response to the AFT’s

⁴⁶ Perlstein, *Justice, Justice*, 25, 6.

⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, 1.

⁴⁸ Urban, *Gender, Race, and the National Education Association*, 158.

successful union campaigns, from 1960 to 1973, argues Urban, the NEA underwent a transformation, in essence becoming a union of teachers first and foremost.⁴⁹

My analysis of San Francisco State AFT Local 1352's support for the black and Third World student strike in 1968-1969 contributes to the literature on the AFT and race by demonstrating that rank-and-file teachers and elected leaders in California departed from the moderate liberalism on matters of race of much of the AFT leadership. Historians such as Murphy, Perlstein, Jerald Podair, and William Eaton focus exclusively on the civil rights movement and Black Power, with the latter discussion often centering on the conflict over community control in New York City.⁵⁰ A look at the faculty strike at San Francisco State College in 1968-1969 shows that AFT members also engaged with the Third World Left more broadly, not just Black Power advocates. In Cynthia Young's formulation, Third World leftism in the

⁴⁹ Ibid., 112, 160, 171; For more background on the NEA, see Stuart J Foster, *Red Alert!: Educators Confront the Red Scare in American Public Schools, 1947-1954* (New York: P. Lang, 2000); Carol F Karpinski, "A Visible Company of Professionals": *African Americans and the National Education Association During the Civil Rights Movement* (New York: Peter Lang, 2008); Murphy, *Blackboard Unions*; Liston F. Sabraw and William P. Bacon, "The California Teachers Association as a Legislative Lobby, 1955-1974," *California Journal of Teacher Education* 5, no. 1 (April 1978): 42-54; Michael John Schultz, *The National Education Association and the Black Teacher: The Integration of a Professional Organization* (Coral Gables: University of Miami Press, 1970); Wayne J Urban, *More Than the Facts: The Research Division of the National Education Association, 1922-1997* (Lanham: University Press of America, 1998); Urban, *Gender, Race, and the National Education Association*; Wayne J. Urban, "Courting the Woman Teacher: The National Education Association, 1917-1970," *History of Education Quarterly* 41, no. 2 (Summer 2001): 139-66; Edgar Bruce Wesley, *NEA: The First Hundred Years: The Building of the Teaching Profession*. (New York: Harper, 1957); Allan M. West, *The National Education Association: The Power Base for Education* (New York: Free Press, 1980).

⁵⁰ Maurice R. Berube and Marilyn Gittell, eds., *Confrontation at Ocean Hill-Brownsville: The New York School Strikes of 1968* (New York: Praeger, 1969); Eaton, *The American Federation of Teachers, 1916-1961*; Murphy, *Blackboard Unions*; Perlstein, *Justice, Justice*; Podair, *The Strike That Changed New York: Blacks, Whites, and the Ocean Hill-Brownsville Crisis* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2002); Perrillo, *Uncivil Rights*.

late 1960s and 1970s “melded the civil rights movement’s focus on racial equality, the Old Left’s focus on class struggle and anticolonialism, and the New Left’s focus on grassroots, participatory democracy.”⁵¹ AFT Local 1352 participated in a movement that challenged racism against African Americans, Chicanos and Latinos, and Asian Americans at San Francisco State College.

The Politics of Unionism and the Decline of the Labor Movement

In this study I discuss the struggle between different philosophies toward unionism in the AFT at two key moments—the expulsion of communists in the 1940s, and teachers’ participation in social movements in the 1960s and 70s. Competing philosophies toward unionism have characterized the history of the labor movement in the United States since its beginning. Founded in 1886, the American Federation of Labor (AFL) promoted a narrowly defined and exclusionary version of unionism. As scholars have shown, the AFL organized workers largely according to craft, excluding the mass of unskilled workers in favor of representing primarily white, skilled men. This translated into the exclusion of women, immigrants, and people of color from the AFL’s ranks. Additionally, the AFL promoted “pure and simple politics,” which Julie Greene defines as a manner of engagement in American electoral politics that was formally independent of the major political parties but in practice involved a “close but contingent partnership with the Democratic Party that hinged on the party’s responsiveness.” Through its political engagement, the AFL

⁵¹ Cynthia Ann Young, *Soul Power: Culture, Radicalism, and the Making of a U.S. Third World Left* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2006), 4.

sought only very modest goals within the existing political system, rather than seeking more ambitious social change.⁵²

Unionists in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries formed independent labor federations to offer an alternative to the conservative, craft-based unionism of the AFL. The Knights of Labor, for instance, vied with the AFL as the largest labor organization of the late nineteenth century. In contrast to the AFL, the Knights of Labor was much more inclusive; by the early 1880s it had organized

⁵² Julie Greene, *Pure and Simple Politics: The American Federation of Labor and Political Activism, 1881-1917* (Cambridge ; New York: Cambridge University Press, 1998), 11; Gwendolyn Mink, *Old Labor and New Immigrants in American Political Development* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1986). For the history of the American Federation of Labor, also see, Dorothy Sue Cobble, "Pure and Simple Radicalism: Putting the Progressive Era AFL in Its Time," *Labor* 10, no. 4 (Winter 2013): 61–87; Ileen A. DeVault, *United Apart: Gender and the Rise of Craft Unionism* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2004); Melvyn Dubofsky, *The State & Labor in Modern America* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1994); Glen A. Gildemeister, "The Founding of the American Federation of Labor," *Labor History* 22, no. 2 (1981): 262–68; Samuel Gompers, *Seventy Years of Life and Labor*. (New York: E.P. Dutton, 1925); Julie Greene, "Not So Simple: Reassessing the Politics of the Progressive Era AFL," *Labor* 10, no. 4 (Winter 2013): 105–10; Donna T. Haverty-Stacke and Daniel J. Walkowitz, eds., *Rethinking U.S. Labor History: Essays on the Working-Class Experience, 1756-2009* (New York: Continuum, 2010); Stuart Bruce Kaufman, *Samuel Gompers and the Origins of the American Federation of Labor, 1848-1896* (Westport: Greenwood Press, 1973); Michael Kazin, *Barons of Labor: The San Francisco Building Trades and Union Power in the Progressive Era* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1987); Bruce Laurie, *Artisans into Workers: Labor in the 19th Century America*. (Toronto: Hill and Wang, 1989); James R. Lawrence, "The American Federation of Labor and the Philippine Independence Question, 1920–1935," *Labor History* 7, no. 1 (1966): 62–69; Harold C Livesay, *Samuel Gompers and Organized Labor in America* (Boston: Little, Brown and Co., 1978); Lewis L. Lorwin, *The American Federation of Labor: History, Policies, and Prospects* (Augustus M. Kelley Publishers, 1972); Matthew M. Mettler, "AFL Community Unionism: The Des Moines Department Store Strike of 1939," *Labor* 11, no. 1 (Spring 2014): 77–102; David Montgomery, *The Fall of the House of Labor: The Workplace, the State, and American Labor Activism, 1865-1925* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1987); Craig Phelan, *William Green: Biography of a Labor Leader* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1989); Selig Perlman, *History of Trade Unionism in the United States* (New York: Macmillan, 1922); Luis Reed, *The Labor Philosophy of Samuel Gompers* (Port Washington, NY: Kennikat Press, 1966); Clayton Sinyai, *Schools of Democracy: A Political History of the American Labor Movement* (Ithaca: ILR Press, 2006); Philip Taft, *The A.F. of L: From the Death of Gompers to the Merger* (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1959).

workers regardless of skill on a mass basis, enrolling nearly one million members by 1886. The Knights of Labor, moreover, was more racially and ethnically inclusive than was the AFL, with the important exception that that on the West Coast the Knights were part of the larger anti-Chinese movement.⁵³ In the early twentieth-century the Industrial Workers of the World put forward a radical union philosophy; it organized poorly paid industrial, textile, lumber, and agricultural workers, many of them immigrants and workers of color. The IWW also ultimately sought the overthrow capitalism through the tactic of the general strike, and was very active until its destruction by governmental repression during World War I and the Red Scare of 1919-1921.⁵⁴

⁵³ Kim Voss, "Labor Organization and Class Alliance: Industries, Communities, and the Knights of Labor," *Theory and Society* 17, no. 3 (May 1988): 344; Leon Fink, *In Search of the Working Class: Essays in American Labor History and Political Culture* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1994); Joseph Gerteis, *Class and the Color Line: Interracial Class Coalition in the Knights of Labor and the Populist Movement* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2007); Matthew Hild, *Greenbackers, Knights of Labor, and Populists: Farmer-Labor Insurgency in the Late-Nineteenth-Century South* (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 2007); Gregory S. Kealey and Bryan D. Palmer, *Dreaming of What Might Be: The Knights of Labor in Ontario, 1880-1900* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1982); Susan Levine, *Labor's True Woman: Carpet Weavers, Industrialization, and Labor Reform in the Gilded Age* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1984); Richard Jules Oestreicher, *Solidarity and Fragmentation: Working People and Class Consciousness in Detroit, 1875-1900* (Champaign: University of Illinois Press, 1986); Craig Phelan, *Grand Master Workman: Terence Powderly and the Knights of Labor* (Westport: Greenwood Press, 2000); Kim Voss, *The Making of American Exceptionalism: The Knights of Labor and Class Formation in the Nineteenth Century* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1993); Robert E. Weir, *Beyond Labor's Veil: The Culture of the Knights of Labor* (University Park, PA: Pennsylvania State University Press, 1996).

⁵⁴ Paul Frederick Brissenden, *The IWW: A Study of American Syndicalism*, 2nd ed. (New York: Russell & Russell, 1957); Peter Cole, *Wobblies on the Waterfront: Interracial Unionism in Progressive-Era Philadelphia* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2007); Melvyn Dubofsky, *We Shall Be All: A History of the Industrial Workers of the World* (Chicago: Quadrangle Books, 1969); Greg Hall, *Harvest Wobblies: The Industrial Workers of the World and Agricultural Laborers in the American West, 1905-1930* (Corvallis: Oregon State University Press, 2001); Joyce L. Kornbluh, *Rebel Voices: An IWW Anthology* (Ann

After the onset of the Great Depression and influenced by the Left, particularly the Communist Party, social unionism once again became a significant counterweight to the more moderate unionism of the AFL. Many scholars associate the social unionism of the 1930s with the formation of the Congress of Industrial Organizations (CIO) in 1937. According to Robert Zieger, the CIO politicized organized labor, and helped to recast the “racial and ethnic dynamics of the labor movement.” In the late 1930s, the CIO led a surge of unionization in the industrial sectors of the U.S. economy, helped along by a willingness to use militant tactics—most notably the sit-down strike. The CIO was also open to the involvement and leadership of radicals on the left, including members of the Communist Party.⁵⁵

But the grassroots, bottom-up organizing by workers in the early 1930s, prior to the formation of the CIO, stands out for its social unionist character as well. Staughton Lynd, in his introduction to *We Are All Leaders*, argues that self-organizing of rank-and-file workers in the early 1930s “was at least as effective as the top-down efforts of the [CIO] a few years later.”⁵⁶ Rosemary Furer considers the grassroots, social movement nature of unionism in the early 1930s through a discussion of a strike in May of 1933 led by African American women in the nutpickers’ union, the Food Workers Industrial Union, in St. Louis. These women

Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1964); Fred Thompson, *The IWW: Its First Fifty Years, 1905-1955: The History of an Effort to Organize the Working Class* (Chicago: Industrial Workers of the World, 1955); Robert L. Tyler, *Rebels of the Woods: The IWW in the Pacific Northwest* (Eugene: University of Oregon Books, 1967).

⁵⁵ Robert H. Zieger, *The CIO, 1935-1955* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1995), 2.

⁵⁶ Staughton Lynd, ed., *“We Are All Leaders”: The Alternative Unionism of the Early 1930s* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1996), 3.

went on strike against low pay and race-based differentials, and won. Fuerer argues, “the nutpickers’ union was born of and sustained through community struggle that emerged outside the workplace.”⁵⁷ In her history of gender and the labor movement in Minneapolis, Elizabeth Faue examines community-based organizing of the labor movement to the 1930s. Fau argues that the abandonment of this women-led community organizing during World War II and afterward ultimately weakened the power of the labor movement to make change, resulting in the decrease in support for the labor movement.⁵⁸

Scholars have argued that World War II was a political turning point for the labor movement, as the Congress of Industrial Organizations formed a cooperative relationship with employers and the state in support of the U.S. war effort. In *An Injury to All*, Kim Moody argues that the decline of the labor movement from its height in the mid-1950s lies in the CIO’s abandonment of social unionism in favor of business unionism during World War II.⁵⁹ In his study of the labor movement during World War II, Nelson Lichtenstein asserts that the CIO’s institutional arrangements during World War II meant increased bureaucratic and top-down control within CIO unions and, consequently, the bargaining away of any shop-floor control over

⁵⁷ Rosemary Feurer, “The Nutpickers’ Union, 1933-1934: Crossing the Boundaries of Community and Workplace,” in Lynd, *We Are All Leaders*, 27.

⁵⁸ Elizabeth Faue, *Community of Suffering & Struggle: Women, Men, and the Labor Movement in Minneapolis, 1915-1945* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1991), xiv. For more on the CIO, see Barbara S. Griffith, *The Crisis of American Labor: Operation Dixie and the Defeat of the CIO* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1988); Nelson Lichtenstein, *Labor’s War at Home: The CIO in World War II* (Cambridge; New York: Cambridge University Press, 1982); Steven Rosswurm, ed., *The CIO’s Left-Led Unions* (New Brunswick, N.J: Rutgers University Press, 1992); Zieger, *The CIO, 1935-1955*.

⁵⁹ Kim Moody, *An Injury to All*, 20.

production processes. Though top labor leaders within the CIO hoped that that their seat at the table alongside industry and government in state agencies like the National War Labor Board would help further social reforms, in reality, according to Lichtenstein, the routinization of labor relations during the war “largely favored those social forces that stood in historic opposition to the industrial union movement.”⁶⁰

Anti-communism within the labor movement during the 1940s and 1950s also meant the repression of political pluralism within unions, resulting in a shrinking of the labor movement’s vision and ability to flexibly respond to changes in the economy.⁶¹ As scholars such as Robert Korstad, Lichtenstein, Rosemary Feurer, and Robin D.G. Kelley have shown, anti-communism further resulted in the expulsion of the unions and union leaders most committed to racial equality.⁶² The CIO’s

⁶⁰ Lichtenstein, *Labor’s War at Home*, 6-7. Also see Martin Glaberman, *Wartime Strikes: The Struggle Against the No Strike Pledge in the UAW During World War II* (Detroit, Michigan: Bewick, 1980).

⁶¹ Moody, *An Injury to All*, 33.

⁶² For more on the history of anti-communism within the labor movement, see Paul Buhle, *Taking Care of Business: Samuel Gompers, George Meany, Lane Kirkland, and the Tragedy of American Labor* (New York: Monthly Review Press, 1999); Robert W. Cherny, William Issel, and Kieran Walsh Taylor, eds., *American Labor and the Cold War: Grassroots Politics and Postwar Political Culture* (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 2004); Rosemary Feurer, *Radical Unionism in the Midwest, 1900-1950* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2006); Robin D. G. Kelley, *Hammer and Hoe: Alabama Communists During the Great Depression* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1990); Robert Rodgers Korstad, *Civil Rights Unionism: Tobacco Workers and the Struggle for Democracy in the Mid-Twentieth-Century South* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2003); Maurice Isserman, *Which Side Were You On?: The American Communist Party During the Second World War* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1993); Nelson Lichtenstein, *The Most Dangerous Man in Detroit: Walter Reuther and the Fate of American Labor* (New York: Basic Books, 1995); George Lipsitz, *Rainbow at Midnight: Labor and Culture in the 1940s* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1994); James J. Matles, *Them and Us: Struggles of a Rank-and-File Union* (Englewood Cliffs, N.J: Prentice-Hall, 1974); Steven Rosswurm, ed., *The CIO’s Left-Led Unions* (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 1992); Shelton Stromquist, ed. *Labor’s Cold War: Local Politics in a Global Context* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2008).

alignment with the Democratic Party, according to Kim Moody, was the last nail in the coffin of social unionism; the rejection of building a workers' party meant the abandonment of proposals for full employment, national healthcare, and affordable housing, thereby cementing the CIO's identity with business unionism.⁶³ Taken together, the developments during World War II and anti-communism within the labor movement served to weaken the social unionist vision within the labor movement that seemed so promising during the 1930s.

In the place of social unionism, many unions adopted a moderate, top-down and narrowly defined philosophy toward the labor movement, what many have referred to as business unionism. Business unionism meant that, instead of fighting for a more egalitarian society by struggling against various forms of social injustice, the labor movement turned toward organizing around bread and butter issues and tended to suppress member dissent against these policies. Labor unions often linked their own fortunes to the success of business. Moody eloquently describes the impact of this shift: "the perspective of business unionism has become a disabling myopia."⁶⁴ The labor movement was only able to maintain its strength in the post-war period as long as the economy was expanding.⁶⁵ By the 1970s and 1980s, as Jefferson Cowie, Judith Stein, and other scholars have shown, deindustrialization and the subsequent loss of manufacturing jobs, labor's traditional stronghold since the 1930s, combined

⁶³ Ibid., 39.

⁶⁴ Ibid., 15.

⁶⁵ Rick Fantasia and Kim Voss, *Hard Work: Remaking the American Labor Movement* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2004), 86.

with the labor movement's myopic vision and demobilized membership, have meant that the labor movement has been unable to stem its loss in power and influence.⁶⁶

Though much of the labor movement has hewed to a more conservative brand of business unionism from the 1940s onward, some unions have promoted a relatively more liberal philosophy toward unionism. In his study of the protest movement against affirmative action in the 1960s, for example, Deslippe distinguishes between who he refers to as "labor conservatives" and "labor liberals." Deslippe argues that labor conservatives, comprised most prominently of many labor leaders in the South and the skilled and construction trades, "recoiled at the social turmoil of the 1960s." Labor conservatives "looked with resentment on claims for racial and gender equality in the workplace, and they resisted ending exclusionary labor practices as required by the law." In contrast, labor liberals, many of whom are represented by the unions that formed the Congress of Industrial Organizations in the 1930s, were much more likely to back civil rights struggles and women's demands for equality.

⁶⁶ Barry Bluestone and Bennett Harrison, *The Deindustrialization of America: Plant Closings, Community Abandonment, and the Dismantling of Basic Industry* (New York: Basic Books, 1982); Jefferson Cowie, *Capital Moves: RCA's Seventy-Year Quest for Cheap Labor* (New York: New Press : Distributed by W.W. Norton, 2001); Jefferson Cowie, *Stayin' Alive: The 1970s and the Last Days of the Working Class* (New York: New Press, 2010); Jefferson Cowie and Joseph Heathcott, eds., *Beyond the Ruins: The Meanings of Deindustrialization* (Ithaca: ILR Press, 2003); Steven P Dandaneau, *A Town Abandoned: Flint, Michigan, Confronts Deindustrialization* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1996); Steven C High, *Industrial Sunset: The Making of North America's Rust Belt, 1969-1984* (Toronto; Buffalo: University of Toronto Press, 2003); Ruth Milkman, *Farewell to the Factory: Auto Workers in the Late Twentieth Century* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1997); Judith Stein, *Running Steel, Tinning America: Race, Economic Policy and the Decline of Liberalism* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1998); Judith Stein, *Pivotal Decade: How the United States Traded Factories for Finance in the Seventies* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2010).

Deslippe's categories are useful for understanding the major differences between conservative and liberal unions toward struggles for racial and gender equality.⁶⁷

In her study of labor feminism in the 1940s through the 1950s, *The Other Women's Movement*, Dorothy Sue Cobble argues that a liberal social unionism survived into the 1940s and 1950s. Cobble stresses, "this book thus converges with the work of historians who see the labor movement for a vehicle for social reform aspirations in the post-New Deal era rather than only an engine of reaction."⁶⁸ It was

⁶⁷ Deslippe, *Protesting Affirmative Action*, 7. For the history of labor's involvement in liberal political causes in the 1950s and 1960s, see, for example, Karen Brodtkin, *Caring by the Hour: Women, Work, and Organizing at Duke Medical Center* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1988); Cornelius L. Bynum, *A. Philip Randolph and the Struggle for Civil Rights* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2010); Dorothy Sue Cobble, *The Other Women's Movement: Workplace Justice and Social Rights in Modern America* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 2004); Alan Derickson, "Health Security for All? Social Unionism and Universal Health Insurance, 1935-1958," *The Journal of American History* 80, no. 4 (March 1994): 1333-1356; Deslippe, *Protesting Affirmative Action*; Victor G. Devinatz, "'To Find Answers to the Urgent Problems of Our Society': The Alliance for Labor Action's Atlanta Union Organizing Offensive, 1969-1971," *Labor Studies Journal* 31, no. 6 (2006): 69-91; Alan Draper, *A Rope of Sand: The AFL-CIO Committee on Political Education, 1955-1967* (New York: Praeger, 1989); Alan Draper, *Conflict of Interests: Organized Labor and the Civil Rights Movement in the South, 1954-1968* (Ithaca, N.Y.: ILR Press, 1994); Leon Fink and Brian Greenberg, *Upheaval in the Quiet Zone: A History of Hospital Workers' Union, Local 1199* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1989); Steve Fraser and Gary Gerstle, eds., *The Rise and Fall of the New Deal Order, 1930-1980* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1989); Michael K. Honey, *Southern Labor and Black Civil Rights: Organizing Memphis Workers* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1993); Audra Jennings, "'The Greatest Numbers...will Be Wage Earners': Organized Labor and Disability Activism, 1945-1953," *Labor: Studies in Working-Class History of the Americas* 4, no. 4 (Winter 2007): 55-82; Robert Korstad and Nelson Lichtenstein, "Opportunities Found and Lost: Labor, Radicals, and the Early Civil Rights Movement," *Journal of American History* 75, no. 3 (December 1988): 786-811; Korstad, *Civil Rights Unionism*; Lichtenstein, *The Most Dangerous Man in Detroit*; Bruce Nelson, *Divided We Stand: American Workers and the Struggle for Black Equality* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 2001); Zaragosa Vargas, *Labor Rights Are Civil Rights: Mexican American Workers in Twentieth-Century America* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2005); Charles Williams, "Americanism and Anti-Communism: The UAW and Repressive Liberalism Before the Red Scare," *Labor History* 53, no. 4 (November 2012): 495-515.

⁶⁸ Cobble, *The Other Women's Movement*, 7.

indeed the case that labor feminists organized—often successfully—for the rights of women workers from the 1940s-1960s, reflecting the persistence of some level of engagement in the labor movement with anti-discrimination struggles and social justice aims in society more broadly.

Scholars often point to the liberalism of the United Auto Workers (UAW) to argue against the idea that the labor movement had become tamed and conservative from World War II onward. In his study of the UAW's national political activism between 1945 and 1968, Kevin Boyle argues that the UAW maintained its commitment to the social democratic political and economic agenda throughout the 1960s and 1970s. Boyle further asserts that, in order to accomplish its aims, UAW President Walter "Reuther and his lieutenants attempted to build a cross-class, biracial reform coalition in the United States."⁶⁹ Some scholars, perhaps most prominently Nelson Lichtenstein, are critical of the UAW's brand of unionism after World War II, arguing that during the war the UAW leadership centralized and bureaucratized the union, largely disempowered rank-and-file union members, and deserted its previous commitments to a class-based politics. The UAW purged Communist members, aligning itself with the Cold War consensus and with the Democratic Party. Boyle, in contrast, argues that it was not the UAW's political orientation after World War II that crippled its reform agenda, but rather, "labor's failure...must be seen as grounded in the complex interaction between labor's goals and the context in which they were pursued, between what labor wanted and what it

⁶⁹ Kevin Boyle, *The UAW and the Heyday of American Liberalism, 1945-1968* (Ithaca, N.Y: Cornell University Press, 1995), 4-5.

could achieve.” In other words, in Boyle’s view, it was not so much the UAW’s abandonment of its social unionist politics born out of the worker militancy of the 1930s that was at issue, but rather a difficult political and economic context that should primarily shoulder the blame for setbacks to liberalism.⁷⁰

Social Unionism and the Social Movements of the 1960s and 1970s

The emergence of a new social unionism in the 1960s and 1970s I discuss here was a critical response to the limitations of liberal unionism in engaging with the social justice movements that emerged in the 1960s and 1970s. Liberal social unionists were sympathetic to the Civil Rights Movement, often endorsing major events such as the March on Washington, donating money to civil rights organizations and, at times, mobilizing rank-and-file members to participate in protests. As scholars have shown, however, this liberalism toward civil rights struggles often did not extend to adequately redressing racial and gender-based inequalities within the unions themselves or in the workplace. Additionally, as the black freedom movement became more militant in its advocacy of racial equality and black empowerment, many liberal labor leaders—largely white, but also black—conveyed their opposition to Black Power. Labor liberals’ opposition to Black Power also applied to some elements of the Third World Left. Rank-and-file members brought racial militancy into their unions and workplaces; as a result, many liberal labor leaders, attempting to retain tight control of their unions, actively suppressed

⁷⁰ Ibid., 8.

rank-and-file activism. Additionally, the limitations of liberal social unionism were on display during the early years of the movement against the war in Vietnam; due to their fervent anti-communism and their support of the Democratic Party, it took some time for even liberal labor leaders to join the movement against the war. However, the labor movement consists of much more than just its leadership, and the 1960s and 1970s witnessed a rank-and-file insurgency. Union members organized at the grassroots for democratic union reform, against racism, as part of the feminist movement and, to some extent, for the rights of queer workers.⁷¹

⁷¹ Frank Bardacke, *Trampling out the Vintage: Cesar Chavez and the Two Souls of the United Farm Workers* (London: Verso, 2011); Herman W Benson, *Rebels, Reformers, and Racketeers: How Insurgents Transformed the Labor Movement* (Brooklyn, NY: Association for Union Democracy, 2005); Aaron Brenner, Robert Brenner, and Calvin Winslow, eds., *Rebel Rank and File: Labor Militancy and Revolt from Below in the Long 1970s* (London; New York: Verso, 2010); Brodtkin, *Caring by the Hour*; Chris Carlsson, ed., *Ten Years That Shook the City: San Francisco 1968-1978* (San Francisco: City Lights Books, 2011); Jeffrey W. Coker, *Confronting American Labor: The New Left Dilemma* (Columbia: University of Missouri Press, 2002); Draper, *Conflict of Interests*; Max Elbaum, *Revolution in the Air: Sixties Radicals Turn to Lenin, Mao and Che* (London; New York: Verso, 2002); Fink and Greenberg, *Upheaval in the Quiet Zone: A History of Hospital Workers' Union, Local 1199*; Michael Flug, "Organized Labor and the Civil Rights Movement of the 1960s: The Case of the Maryland Freedom Union," *Labor History* 31, no. 3 (1990): 322–46; Joshua Freeman, "Hard Hats: Construction Workers, Manliness, 1970 Pro-War Demonstrations," *Journal of Social History* 26, no. 4 (Summer 1993): 725–44; Nancy Felice Gabin, *Feminism in the Labor Movement: Women and the United Auto Workers, 1935-1975* (Ithaca, N.Y: Cornell University Press, 1990); Marshall Ganz, *Why David Sometimes Wins: Leadership, Organization, and Strategy in the California Farm Worker Movement* (Oxford; New York: Oxford University Press, 2009); Matt García, *From the Jaws of Victory: The Triumph and Tragedy of Cesar Chavez and the Farm Worker Movement* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2012); Michael K. Honey, *Going Down Jericho Road: The Memphis Strike, Martin Luther King's Last Campaign* (New York: W.W. Norton & Co., 2007); William P. Jones, "The Unknown Origins of the March on Washington: Civil Rights Politics and the Black Working Class," *Labor: Studies in Working-Class History of the Americas* 7, no. 3 (October 7, 2010): 33–52, doi:10.1215/15476715-2010-008; William P. Jones, *The March on Washington: Jobs, Freedom, and the Forgotten History of Civil Rights* (New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 2013); Korstad and Lichtenstein, Nelson, "Opportunities Found and Lost: Labor, Radicals, and the Early Civil Rights Movement"; Korstad, *Civil Rights Unionism*; Clarence Lang, *Grassroots at the Gateway: Class Politics and Black Freedom*

The involvement of trade unionists in the organizing and financing of the famous March on Washington in 1963 highlights the politics of liberal social unionism toward the Civil Rights Movement. William P. Jones has revealed the largely “unknown origins” of the 1963 March on Washington in the union movement, arguing that African American trade unionists played a significant role in the planning of what was actually known as the March on Washington for Jobs and Freedom. African American trade union and civil rights leaders A. Philip Randolph and Maida Springer helped to establish the Negro American Labor Council in 1960 for the purposes of challenging racial discrimination within the AFL-CIO. The group began planning the March on Washington in 1961 initially as a protest at the AFL-CIO headquarters in Washington, DC, calling attention to racial discrimination within the labor federation, and only later decided to move the march to the National Mall.⁷² Jones argues that black trade unionists’ involvement in the March on Washington is significant because they helped ensure that “demands for employment and economic reform remained at the heart of the civil rights agenda.”⁷³

Struggle in St. Louis, 1936-75 (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2009); Peter B. Levy, *The New Left and Labor in the 1960s* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1994); Penny Lewis, *Hardhats, Hippies, and Hawks: The Vietnam Antiwar Movement as Myth and Memory* (Ithaca, N.Y: ILR Press, 2013); David M. Lewis-Colman, *Race Against Liberalism: Black Workers and the UAW in Detroit* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2008); Gregg Michel, “‘Union Power, Soul Power’: Unionizing Johns Hopkins University Hospital, 1959–1974,” *Labor History* 38, no. 1 (1996): 28–66; Ruth Needleman, *Black Freedom Fighters in Steel: The Struggle for Democratic Unionism* (Ithaca: ILR Press, 2003); Vargas, *Labor Rights Are Civil Rights*; Albert Vetere Lannon and Marvin Rogoff, “We Shall Not Remain Silent: Building the Anti-Vietnam War Movement in the House of Labor,” *Science & Society* 66, no. 4 (Winter /2003 2002): 536–44; Young, *Soul Power*.

⁷² Jones, “The Unknown Origins of the March on Washington,” 34, 41.

⁷³ *Ibid.*, 52; Cornelius L. Bynum, *A. Philip Randolph and the Struggle for Civil Rights* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2010); Jones, *The March on Washington*; Yevette

Jones and other scholars have also shed light on the sometimes supportive, but also fraught political orientation of some white labor leaders toward the March on Washington. For example, according to Jones, AFL-CIO President George Meany “refused to back the march...arguing that it would only bolster conservative charges that the civil rights and labor movements were controlled by communists.”⁷⁴ Though Meany represents the more conservative elements of the labor federation, the labor liberals who were supportive of the march did not back the mobilization until just two months prior to when it was to take place, though organizing for the march at the National Mall began in 1962. Ultimately, however, the march did receive the endorsements of seventeen international unions, several state and municipal labor councils, and the Industrial Union Department of the AFL-CIO, which was headed by Walter Reuther.⁷⁵ In his critical look at the UAW’s racial politics, Lewis Colman argues that Reuther and other liberals wanted to restrain the radicalism of the March on Washington. Colman explains that Reuther, along with other labor liberals, worked to prevent CORE and the Student Non-Violent Coordinating Committee from including non-violent civil disobedience as part of the march.⁷⁶ The labor movement’s involvement in the March on Washington simultaneously demonstrates the possibilities of liberal social liberalism while also conveying the limitations of liberal social unionists’ racial politics.

Richards, *Maida Springer: Pan-Africanist and International Labor Leader* (Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, 2000).

⁷⁴ Jones, “The Unknown Origins of the March on Washington,” 42.

⁷⁵ *Ibid.*, 43.

⁷⁶ Lewis-Colman, *Race Against Liberalism*, 79.

The limits of liberal social unionism were often most apparent with regard to the persistence of racial inequality in the workplace and within the liberal-led unions, such as the United Auto Workers. Job-based segregations in the auto plants in Detroit in the 1940s placed black workers in some of the most difficult and unhealthy jobs. Nelson Lichtenstein and Robert Korstad argue that the UAW in the 1940s was often the center of civil rights organizing by black workers and their allies, with UAW Local 600 at the Rouge Plant proving to be “a center of civil rights militancy and a training ground for black leaders.” The Rouge was also a center of Communist Party activity in the auto plants and in Detroit more generally.⁷⁷

When Walter Reuther won the UAW presidency in 1946, though he supported racial equality in general, he also consolidated control within the union, undermining independent activism by black workers. Lichtenstein argues,

The routinization of the postwar industrial relations system precluded efforts by black workers to mobilize a constituency independent of the leadership. Focusing on incremental collective bargaining gains and committed to social change only if it was well controlled, the big unions became less responsive to the particular interests of their union members.⁷⁸

Reuther, a fervent anti-communist, put Rouge Local 600, the center of black activism, under its direct administration in order to suppress the Communist opposition. Both Lichtenstein and David Lewis-Colman, in his critical study about race and the UAW, argue that in the post-war period under Reuther’s leadership, the suppression of black activism within the union resulted in black workers continuing to be underrepresented

⁷⁷ Korstad and Lichtenstein, Nelson, “Opportunities Found and Lost: Labor, Radicals, and the Early Civil Rights Movement,” 795.

⁷⁸ *Ibid.*, 801.

in the union leadership and to be overrepresented in the most difficult, lower-paid positions in the factories. Lewis-Colman asserts that many white UAW liberals “proved hostile to self-organization among African Americans, equating independent activism with the white racism that undermined class solidarity.”⁷⁹ Reuther, according to Lewis-Colman, used the decline in independent black activism to implement a more moderate civil rights agenda in the union, which emphasized challenging explicit discriminatory barriers in the workplace.⁸⁰ What an examination of the UAW makes clear is that, in addition to promoting a politically moderate orientation toward the civil rights movement, liberal social unionists’ penchant for structural centralization within their unions often restricted avenues for independent rank-and-file activism.

As a result of these limitations of liberal unions like the UAW and in part in response to the social movements of the period, black workers in the 1960s and 1970s began to form independent black-led organizations to contest racism at work and in the unions. For example, the Dodge Revolutionary Union Movement (DRUM), formed in the late 1960s, criticized the UAW for expressing support for the civil rights movement, according to Kieran Taylor, while doing “little to challenge the industry’s racist employment practices, which kept most black workers out of management and the skilled trades.” The leadership and organizing staff of the UAW, moreover, was overwhelmingly white, despite the fact that black workers made up a

⁷⁹ Ibid., 809; Lewis-Colman, *Race Against Liberalism*, 3.

⁸⁰ Lewis-Colman, *Race Against Liberalism*, 46, 53.

fourth of the workforce in the auto plants.⁸¹ The League of Revolutionary Black Workers, an umbrella group formed in 1969 to coordinate the organizing of various Revolutionary Union Movements at different auto plants, was an anti-capitalist group composed mainly of black workers, who the group viewed as the revolutionary vanguard to the liberation struggle.⁸² The formation of the League is significant because it represented the merging of Black Power with black worker activism; it also points to rank-and-file workers' discontent with the racial politics of labor liberalism more generally.⁸³

In addition to the literature on the relationship between the Black Power movement and black rank-and-file workers' activism, scholars have also examined the relationship between the New Left and the labor movement in the 1960s and 1970s more broadly. In *The New Left and Labor*, Peter Levy argues that the labor movement was, in the main, cooperative with the New Left for the first half of the 1960s, but confrontation became the main theme in the late 1960s. After 1970, "a synthesis or reconciliation of sorts appeared" between labor and the New Left. Levy attributes the confrontational nature of the late 1960s to three sources to the escalation of the Vietnam War, the rise of Black Power; and the growth of the counterculture. But even in the midst of this confrontation, certain elements of the labor movement

⁸¹ Kieran Taylor, "American Petrograd: Detroit and the League of Revolutionary Black Workers," in Brenner, Brenner, and Winslow, *Rebel Rank and File*, 311–312.

⁸² *Ibid.*, 318-320.

⁸³ Dan Georgakas and Marvin Surkin, *Detroit, I Do Mind Dying*, 2nd ed. (Cambridge, Mass: South End Press, 1998); James A. Geschwender, *Class, Race, and Worker Insurgency: The League of Revolutionary Black Workers* (Cambridge; New York: Cambridge University Press, 1977); Heather Ann Thompson, *Whose Detroit?: Politics, Labor, and Race in a Modern American City* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2001).

continued to work alongside social movement activists; “this was especially the case,” stresses Levy, “when labor organizations had an ‘independent’ or ‘social activist’ cast to them, or involved nonwhite workers.” Levy uses the term social activist unions to refer rather broadly to the core of the CIO unions, some public sector and service sector unions, and the unions with some affiliation with the Old Left, both within the AFL-CIO and independent of the federation. He points to the support lent to the United Farm Workers’ struggle in California in the late 1960s as perhaps the most prominent example of the continued cooperation between labor and the social movements of the late 1960s.⁸⁴

Scholars have examined two classic examples of the merging of the labor movement with the social movements in the late 1960s: the United Farm Workers’ struggle in California and the Sanitation Workers’ Strike in Memphis. As Matt Garcia and Frank Bardacke have recently shown, in the 1960s and 1970s the United Farm Workers’ fight against exploitative working conditions in the fields of California became a social movement. UFW emphasized that their struggle went beyond union recognition to seek social justice on a broader scale. The UFW strikes and boycotts became “la causa” and the UFW was part of the Chicano movement’s struggle on behalf of “la raza.” Bardacke is critical of the equation of the UFW with the work of one man, César Chávez, taking issue with the depiction of farmworkers as powerless until Chávez came along. Though Bardacke recognizes “the indispensable role” that

⁸⁴ Levy, *The New Left and Labor in the 1960s*, 4-6.

Chávez played in UFW history, he also criticizes Chávez's "disdain for rank-and-file power."⁸⁵

Bardacke's analysis informs my own; I also argue that the role played by rank-and-file workers in union struggles is fundamental to union struggles. Leaders are important as well, but when leaders, such as Chávez, hold onto an excessive amount of power, the disempowerment of rank-and-file workers can result in demobilization and the weakening of the struggle in the end, as Bardacke demonstrates is the case in the weakening of the United Farm Workers, a once influential union.

Labor historians, including Laurie Green and Michael Honey, have traced the history of interwoven labor and civil rights struggles that resulted in the now famous Memphis sanitation workers' strike in 1968. Though the sanitation workers in Memphis, Tennessee affiliated with the American Federation of State, County, and Municipal Employees (AFSCME) in 1964 and demanded union recognition, improved working conditions and better wages, by 1968 the city government had still refused to concede to their demands. When, on February 1, 1968, two sanitation workers were crushed to death while on the job, workers decided to strike. The strike by the mainly black workforce became the center of a movement in Memphis, with various civil rights organizations and labor unions coming to the workers' aid. Martin Luther King, Jr.'s arrival in Memphis helped to garner the strike national attention.

⁸⁵ Frank Bardacke, "The United Farm Workers from the Ground Up," in Brenner, Brenner, and Winslow, eds., *Rebel Rank and File*, 156. Also see Bardacke, *Trampling Out the Vintage*; Garcia, *From the Jaws of Victory*.

King was assassinated in Memphis in April, 1968 while organizing support for the strike, igniting large-scale riots in major cities across the country. The sanitation workers' strike, occurring as it did in 1968, was not immune from conflicts among Black Power advocates, civil rights organizations, and the labor movement. A group of militant black youth, the Invaders, feeling frustration at the slow pace of change in the civil rights movement and anger toward the white-dominated city government, came into conflict with civil rights leaders, including King, and union leaders during the strike.⁸⁶

While the United Farm Workers' struggle and Sanitation Workers' strike are the most often-referenced examples of labor's engagement with social movements, these are far from the only instances. Penny Lewis, in *Hardhats, Hippies, and Hawks*, explodes the myth that the movement against the U.S. war in Vietnam was largely comprised of protestors from middle-class and backgrounds, and that working-class people and labor unions uniformly supported the war. She argues that the stereotype of working-class hawkishness is based primarily on an assault by pro-war construction workers on antiwar protesters at a rally in New York City in May 1970, as well as the fervent anti-communism of the top brass of the AFL-CIO, which resulted in the labor federation's pro-war stance. Even liberal unions affiliated with the AFL-CIO took a while to publicly and actively oppose the war; Walter Reuther, for example, while critical of George Meany's hawkishness, did not come out in

⁸⁶ Laurie Boush Green, *Battling the Plantation Mentality: Memphis and the Black Freedom Struggle* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2007); Honey, *Going Down Jericho Road*.

opposition to the war until 1967, two years after the war had started. Once generated, as Lewis explains, the myth of working-class support for the war was perpetuated in popular culture, including many films, and college history textbooks.⁸⁷

However, Lewis argues that working-class opposition to the war and workers involvement in the anti-war movement, was in fact significant, with many left-led and liberal unions actively opposing the war. She writes, “the greatest *support* for the war came from the privileged elite, despite the visible dissention [sic] of a minority of its leaders and youth” (emphasis in original).⁸⁸ The first unions to take a public stance against the war tended to be leftist unions, which were, for the most part, independent of the AFL-CIO. These unions included the Drug and Hospital Employees Union Local 1199, which had an active rank-and-file and was engaged with the black freedom movement; the United Electrical, Radio and Machine Workers (UE); the International Fur and Leather Workers; the Mine, Mill, and Smelter Workers; and the International Longshoremen and Warehouse Union (ILGWU). The latter three unions survived the anti-communist years in the labor movement as left-led unions with a commitment to social justice. The Negro American Labor Council, under A. Philip Randolph’s leadership, also came out in 1965 against the war.⁸⁹ Other segments of the labor movement, including the liberal-led unions, gradually joined the anti-war forces, and by 1974 even AFL-CIO President George Meany had changed his mind and opposed the war. Anti-war labor activists formed Labor for Peace in the early

⁸⁷ Lewis, *Hardhats, Hippies, and Hawks*, 35, 41, 72.

⁸⁸ *Ibid.*, 5.

⁸⁹ *Ibid.*, 99, 103.

1960s as one of the earliest efforts to merge the union and anti-war movements. In 1966, unionists formed the Trade Union Division of the National Committee for a Sane Nuclear Policy (SANE). The first peace demonstration organized by the official labor movement took place in New York City in May, 1970.⁹⁰

Cynthia Young, in *Soul Power: Culture, Radicalism, and the Making of a U.S. Third World Left*, makes a unique contribution to the scholarship on movements of people of color in the 1960s and 1970s through her argument that Local 1199, the Hospital Workers' Union in New York City, was part of the Third World Left. Local 1199, comprised mostly of African American, Puerto Rican and white workers, enacted its Third World politics by mobilizing "antiracist and anti-imperialist critiques against the ills of inner-city life and workplace exploitation."⁹¹ Local 1199's political commitments stand out in the history of labor's relationship with the social movements of the 1960s and 1970s; according to Young, this in part stems from the union's formation as the Communist-led Retail Drug Employees Union in 1932. This Old Left influence fused with the Third World Left politics of many of the union members and leaders to produce a radical, anti-racist, social movement-oriented unionism.⁹² Local 1199 distinguished itself from the liberal wing of the mainstream labor movement; as the social movements of the late 1960s turned toward racial militancy, unlike many liberal unions, Local 1199 adapted quite well.

⁹⁰ Ibid., 102-103, 113.

⁹¹ Young, *Soul Power*, 56.

⁹² Ibid., 59; Fink and Greenberg, *Upheaval in the Quiet Zone: A History of Hospital Workers' Union, Local 1199*.

Additionally, in the late 1960s and 1970s, women in the labor movement merged an earlier labor feminism with the newly-emergent broader feminist movement. Feminists active in their unions in the 1970s could draw on the labor feminism of the 1940s through the 1960s that Cobble discusses in *The Other Women's Movement*. But the feminist union activists of the 1970s also transcended the early efforts by challenging rigid gender roles at work; they also greatly expanded the influence of labor feminism within the labor movement. As Dennis Deslippe, Nancy Gabin, Kathleen Barry, Nancy MacLean, and Cobble have demonstrated, feminist organizing within trade unions was extensive. Feminists formed caucuses within their unions to advance women's rights on the job, they challenged male dominance within their unions, and they became involved in larger feminist issues of the day, most prominently the Equal Rights Amendment. By and large, feminists made significant changes in the lives of working women, and in the process helped to push the union movement to the left politically.⁹³

While historians have begun to consider U.S. queer labor history, there is still very little has been written about the relationship between the queer movements of the late 1960s and the 1970s and the labor movement. Scholars such as Miriam Frank, Allan Bérubé, and Phil Tiemeyer have examined the ways certain kinds of labor are

⁹³ Kathleen M. Barry, *Femininity in Flight: A History of Flight Attendants* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2007); Dorothy Sue Cobble, *Dishing It Out: Waitresses and Their Unions in the Twentieth Century* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1991); Cobble, *The Other Women's Movement*; Dennis A. Deslippe, *Rights, Not Roses: Unions and the Rise of Working-Class Feminism, 1945-80* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2000); Gabin, *Feminism in the Labor Movement*; Nancy MacLean, *Freedom Is Not Enough: The Opening of the American Workplace* (New York : Cambridge, Mass: Russell Sage Foundation; Harvard University Press, 2006).

perceived as queer when performed by the “wrong” gender. Bérubé uses “queer work” to refer to this kind of work, as well as work performed disproportionately by queer people. Bérubé’s examination of the anti-racist, radical, and queer-inflected Marine Cooks and Stewards Union from the 1930s to the 1950s is a very early example of the fusing of queer and labor organizing. Nancy Wohlforth and Desma Holcomb have pointed out that queer labor organizing got off the ground in the 1970s, but really took off in the 1980s and 1990s through the gay and lesbian union caucus movement. A boycott of Coors beer in California in the 1970s, promoted by queer and labor activists due to the company’s homophobic and anti-union politics, is perhaps the most prominent example in the literature of the relationship between queer activism and the labor movement. My analysis of gay and lesbian teachers’ organizing against the Briggs Initiative will thus be a significant addition to the current literature on queer labor history.⁹⁴

The immensity of the political moment of the 1960s and 1970s also gave rise to a rank-and-file insurgency in the 1970s. In *Rebel Rank and File*, Aaron Brenner argues that worker militancy of the 1970s “exhibited a sustained rebelliousness not seen since the 1930s.” Influenced by the radicalism of the period, according to

⁹⁴ Allan Bérubé, *My Desire for History: Essays in Gay, Community, and Labor History* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2011); Monica Bielski Boris and Gerald Hunt, in “The Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, and Transgender Challenge to Labor,” in Dorothy Sue Cobble, ed., *The Sex of Class: Women Transforming American Labor* (Ithaca: ILR Press, 2007); Miriam Frank, “Hard Hats and Homophobia: Lesbians in the Building Trades,” *New Labor Forum* no. 8 (Spring-Summer 2001); Desma Holcomb and Nancy Wohlforth, “Fruits of Our Labor: Pride at Work,” *New Labor Forum* no. 8 (Spring-Summer 2001); Kitty Krupat and Patrick McCreery, eds., *Out at Work: Building a Gay-Labor Alliance* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2001); Phil Tiemeyer, *Plane Queer: Labor, Sexuality, and AIDS in the History of Male Flight Attendants* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2013).

Brenner, workers “advocated a more aggressive, inclusive, democratic, and politicized union movement that they believed could win greater rights for workers both on and off the job.”⁹⁵ Rank-and-file organizations like Miners for Democracy, Teamsters for a Democratic Union, and Steel Workers Fight Back organized against union corruption and for rank-and-file empowerment.⁹⁶ Rank-and-file workers led much of the organizing within the labor movement. In the late 1960s and 1970s, for example, wildcat strikes called by the rank and file comprised more than one third of all strikes in the U.S.⁹⁷ Cal Winslow argues that the union leadership was “disinterested in the great social issues of the day: racism, sexism, poverty, unemployment, and the concentration of economic and political power.” Winslow further argues that the unions resisted change, and that the labor movement as a

⁹⁵ Aaron Brenner, “Preface,” in Brenner, Brenner, and Winslow, *Rebel Rank and File*, xi-xii.

⁹⁶ For more on the history of union reform movements, see Frank Bardacke, *Trampling out the Vintage: César Chavez and the Two Souls of the United Farm Workers* (London: Verso, 2011); Benson, *Rebels, Reformers, and Racketeers*; Brenner, Brenner, and Winslow, *Rebel Rank and File*; Steve Early, *The Civil Wars in U.S. Labor: Birth of a New Workers’ Movement or Death Throes of the Old?* (Chicago: Haymarket Books, 2011); Georgakas and Surkin, *Detroit, I Do Mind Dying*; Geschwender, *Class, Race, and Worker Insurgency*; George W. Hopkins, “The Miners for Democracy: Insurgency in the United Mine Workers of America, 1970-1972” (PhD diss., University of North Carolina, 1976); Dan La Botz, *Rank and File Rebellion: Teamsters for a Democratic Union* (London; New York: Verso, 1990); Kim Moody, *An Injury to All: The Decline of American Unionism* (London; New York: Verso, 1988); [n.a.], *Steelworkers Fight Back: Inland’s Local Union 1010 and the Sadlowski/Balanoff Campaigns: Rank and File Insurgency in the Calumet Region During the 1970s* (Gary: Indiana University Northwest, 2000); Needleman, *Black Freedom Fighters in Steel*; Paul Nyden, *Black Coal Miners in the United States* (New York: American Institute for Marxist Studies, 1974); Philip W. Nyden, “Democratizing Organizations: A Case Study of a Union Reform Movement,” *American Journal of Sociology* 90, no. 6 (Spring 1985): 1179–1203; Calvin Winslow, *Labor’s Civil War in California: The NUHW Healthcare Workers’ Rebellion* (Oakland: PM Press, 2010).

⁹⁷ Cal Winslow, “Overview: The Rebellion from Below, 1965-1981,” in Brenner, Brenner, and Winslow, *Rebel Rank and File*, 1.

whole maintained union membership totals only by virtue of the rapid unionization of public sector workers in the 1960s and 1970s.⁹⁸

This study, then, contributes to the literature on the relationship between the social movements of the 1960s and 1970s and the labor movement. From the 1940s to the 1960s, unions such as the UAW, which promoted a liberal variation of social unionism, were somewhat supportive of the Civil Rights Movement. But this liberal social unionism had severe limitations; liberal union leaders often suppressed independent rank-and-file activism and refused to adequately confront racial inequality in the unions and at work. As a result, rank-and-file workers and local elected leaders organized themselves to push their unions to become more engaged in the social movements of the 1960s and 1970s.

My examination of rank-and-file teachers' organizing in California in the late 1960s and 1970s shows that the American Federation of Teachers, like the rest of the labor movement, was not monolithic in its approach to the social movements of the day. Even when major liberal labor leaders distanced themselves from the movements of people of color as they turned toward racial militancy, the activism of elected leaders and rank-and-file teachers in California and elsewhere pointed to a different way forward. Rank-and-file workers and some of the union leadership continued to push their unions to the left politically, to make alliances with social movements and function in a more democratic manner.

⁹⁸ Ibid., 3.

By supporting black and other students of color at San Francisco State in 1968-1969, AFT Local 1352 set itself apart politically from the AFT nationally. In the late 1960s, the AFT-affiliated local in New York City, the United Federation of Teachers, organized in opposition to advocates of racial militancy calling for community control of the schools. Under the leadership of Albert Shanker, who would become president of the AFT in 1974, the UFT sought to protect white teachers transferred out of the Ocean Hill-Brownsville school district, the site of a community control experiment.⁹⁹ In doing so the UFT essentially engaged in a strike against communities of color; the UFT's actions reflected the limitations of the union's racial politics. While partially supportive of civil rights struggle, the UFT and the national AFT largely opposed movements of color as they became more militant in the late 1960s and 1970s. AFT Local 1352's strike, on the other hand, highlights that the AFT was not politically uniform. In supporting the Black Students Union and the Third World Liberation Front, the striking faculty at San Francisco State were promoting a version of social unionism with a more militant racial politics than the AFT and a willingness to take radical action in support of its politics. Additionally, rank-and-file leftist faculty formed an independent group, the Ad Hoc Faculty Committee, to encourage the union to officially go on strike in support of the students.

An examination of feminist organizing in the AFT and the California Federation of Teachers highlights the evolution of a working-class based version of

⁹⁹ Perlstein, *Justice, Justice*; Podair, *The Strike That Changed New York Blacks, Whites, and the Ocean Hill-Brownsville Crisis*.

feminism within the union, which simultaneously challenged male supremacy and employer power. Feminists in the AFT helped to revitalize a version of social unionism influenced by a previous generation of labor feminists, the new feminist movement of the late 1960s, and their own experiences as teachers. This new labor feminism confronted sexist curricula, including gender-based tracking in school counseling and degrading references to girls and women in textbooks. By doing so, feminists in the AFT not only made clear their commitment to social justice more broadly but also made the struggle against sexism in education central to their union organizing—defining features of the new social unionism.

Lastly, gay and lesbian teachers' organizing against the Briggs Initiative, including their efforts to persuade the AFT and the CFT to participate in the anti-Briggs campaign, marked perhaps the most significant element of a revitalized social unionism. In the late 1960s and through the 1970s, queer activists gave birth to gay liberation, lesbian feminism, and transgender liberation. By the late 1970s, the backlash led by the anti-gay Christian Right nationally instilled fears of political regression. When the Christian Right's anti-gay crusade arrived in California in 1978 in the form of the Briggs Initiative it galvanized a new coalitional movement among LGBT people who organized to defeat the measure. For the first time, due to the efforts of rank-and-file gay and lesbian teachers, social unionism became infused with a new sexual politics in favor of gay and lesbian rights. Through the anti-Briggs campaign, the California Federation of Teachers and AFT locals in California became some of the first unions in the country to advocate for gay and lesbian rights.

Social Movement Unionism

In 2013, the percentage of unionized workers in the United States was 11.3 percent. Of this percentage, only 6.7 percent of private sector employees were unionized, while 35.3 percent of all public sector workers were union members.¹⁰⁰ Union density—the percentage of the workforce who are members of unions—has been on the decline for several decades, from a high of 35% in 1955 to its current low of 11.3 percent. The impact of this decline in union power has been devastating for American workers, as economic inequality has skyrocketed and wages have plummeted.¹⁰¹ Though the decline of manufacturing in the U.S., the labor movement’s traditional stronghold, as well as the rightward turn in American politics and the employer assault on union labor in the 1970s and the 1980s, played absolutely critical roles in the decline of labor’s power, organized labor’s tepid response, derived directly from its philosophy toward unionism, clearly played an important role as well. As Rick Fantasia and Kim Voss remark, “at the edge of the precipice, pondering their own mortality, the labor bureaucrats fell silent.”¹⁰²

This study is in conversation with two bodies of literature, history and sociology. While historians have generally used the terminology “social unionism” to refer to a philosophy toward unionism which has simultaneously prioritized

¹⁰⁰ United States Bureau of Labor Statistics, “Union Members Summary,” January 24, 2014, <http://www.bls.gov/news.release/union2.nr0.htm>, accessed March 2, 2014.

¹⁰¹ Between 1968 and 2000, the US minimum wage lost over 35% of its value while corporate profits rose more than 158% (Vanessa Tait, *Poor Workers’ Unions: Rebuilding Labor From Below*, Cambridge: South End Press, 2005, 3.)

¹⁰² Fantasia and Voss, *Hard Work*, 77.

workplace-based organizing with a commitment to advancing social justice more broadly, labor sociologists (as well as labor movement activists) have used different terminology—most commonly “social movement unionism” or “social justice unionism.” Advocates of social movement unionism have recognized that the labor movement must adopt a philosophy toward unionism to not only stem the decline of union power but also revitalize the labor movement. They call for the rejection of business unionism as a model that has proven itself not to work.¹⁰³

Fletcher and Gapasin call for the labor movement to adopt what they term social justice unionism, which calls for labor unions to shift their politics to the left, because “the Left embraces a critique of capitalism that recognizes the system’s inability to meet the objectives of human rights, workers’ rights, environmental justice, and other issues.”¹⁰⁴ Social justice unionism also calls for centering race and gender in labor organizing, because “race and gender are not sideshows to the alleged

¹⁰³ Dan Clawson, *The Next Upsurge: Labor and the New Social Movements* (Ithaca: ILR Press, 2003); Steve Early, *The Civil Wars in U.S. Labor: Birth of a New Workers’ Movement or Death Throes of the Old?* (Chicago, Ill.: Haymarket Books, 2011); Rick Fantasia, *Cultures of Solidarity: Consciousness, Action, and Contemporary American Workers* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1988); Fletcher and Gapasin, *Solidarity Divided*; La Botz, *Rank and File Rebellion*; Steven Henry Lopez, *Reorganizing the Rust Belt: An Inside Study of the American Labor Movement* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2004); Staughton Lynd and Mike Konopacki, *Solidarity Unionism: Rebuilding the Labor Movement from Below* (Chicago, Ill.: Charles H. Kerr Pub., 1992); Gregory Mantsios, *A New Labor Movement for the New Century* (New York: Monthly Review Press, 1998); Ruth Milkman and Kim Voss, *Rebuilding Labor: Organizing and Organizers in the New Union Movement* (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 2004); Kim Moody, *An Injury to All: The Decline of American Unionism* (London ; New York: Verso, 1988); Tait, *Poor Workers’ Unions*; Ray M. Tillman and Michael S. Cummings, eds., *The Transformation of U.S. Unions: Voices, Visions, and Strategies from the Grassroots* (Boulder: Lynne Rienner Publishers, 1999); Lowell Turner, Harry Charles Katz, and Richard W. Hurd, eds., *Rekindling the Movement: Labor’s Quest for Relevance in the Twenty-First Century* (Ithaca: ILR Press, 2001); Fantasia and Voss, *Hard Work*.

¹⁰⁴ Fletcher and Gapasin, *Solidarity Divided*, 198.

real story of class.” Fletcher and Gapasin call for the labor movement to prioritize solidarity and labor-community alliances in order to build the power necessary to create social change. Labor unions must challenge empire, they argue, and, in the face of neoliberal globalization, organize internationally if they want to remain relevant. Finally, unions must be internally democratic to maximize rank-and-file empowerment and participation.

Though certain defining characteristics of social justice unionism—challenging empire and neoliberalism—are beyond the scope of this study, other key elements of social justice unionism are reflected in the organizing by rank-and-file teachers in California from the late 1940s to the late 1970s. The rank-and-file teachers in the case studies explored here were attempting to revitalize the labor movement by pushing the AFT in California to engage with social movements and challenge various forms of discrimination. Their efforts were part of the broader labor insurgency of the 1960s and 1970s, which also sought to make the labor movement a relevant and powerful political force in U.S. society. The rank-and-file teachers discussed here offer important lessons for the labor movement today.

Chapter Overview

My first chapter considers the blacklisting of communist and leftist teachers in Los Angeles in the late 1940s and 1950s, and the expulsion of AFT Local 430 from the AFT on charges that the local was dominated by Communists. I argue that the expulsion of AFT Local 430 in 1948, in conjunction with the blacklisting of teachers—many of whom were union leaders—resulted in the destruction of left-led

teacher unionism in Los Angeles. The expulsion of Local 430, moreover, marked the culmination of anti-communism within the AFT at the national level, influencing the AFT's approach toward teacher unionism to become more moderate politically and less committed to racial equality. Additionally, the AFT's expulsion of left-locals represented an increased intolerance for dissent, and therefore a weakening of democratic practices within the union.

The following three chapters consider the relationship between the labor movement and the social movements of the late 1960s and 1970s by focusing on rank-and-file teachers' organizing in California. Chapter Two examines the faculty strike at San Francisco State College in 1968-1969 in solidarity with black and other Third World students. A subset of leftist faculty at San Francisco State were instrumental in pushing the faculty union, AFT Local 1352, to join the student-led strike to demand the establishment of Black and Ethnic Studies departments at San Francisco State. I argue that the faculty strike set AFT Local 1352 apart from the national AFT; by allying with student advocates of Black Power and Third World leftism, the union activists in AFT Local 1352 were not only reviving but also redefining social unionism by pushing the union to the left and promoting racial militancy.

Chapter Three tells the history of feminism within the California Federation of Teachers in the 1970s. I argue that, by establishing the Women in Education Committee at the state level, women within the CFT were infusing the new social unionism with a feminist sensibility, simultaneously advancing the rights of female

teachers at work and challenging sexism in the school curricula—the latter efforts underscore that feminists within the CFT, like the faculty in AFT Local 1352, placed the concerns of their students at the center of their organizing.

The fourth, and final, chapter examines gay and lesbian teachers' organizing against the Briggs Initiative in 1977 and 1978. Rank-and-file teachers influenced the CFT and various AFT locals in California to actively oppose the initiative, marking a turning point in the relationship between the labor movement and the gay and lesbian movement of the late 1970s. Through the campaign against the Briggs Initiative, the AFT in California became one of the earliest unions to merge queer rights with the union movement. I argue that this organizing by gay and lesbian rank-and-file teachers, for the first time, helped to redefine the new social unionism by infusing it with a new sexual politics. Taken together, these latter three chapters underscore that the American Federation Teachers was not monolithic in its politics, and that the AFT in California often distinguished itself from its parent union by allying with the social movements of the late 1960s and 1970s in an effort to revive the labor movement.

Chapter 1: The Red Schoolteacher: Anti-Communism in the AFT Local 430 and the Blacklisting of Teachers in Los Angeles, 1946-1955

“Only the members of our teachers’ union concerned ourselves very deeply and passionately with the burning questions of poverty and unemployment and racism and the quality of life for many Americans that we felt had to be improved.”¹

- Frances Eisenberg, Blacklisted Teacher and AFT Local 430 Union Officer, [1977?].

On the evening of November 20, 1952, Jean Wilkinson and Frances Eisenberg read in a local newspaper that the Los Angeles Board of Education had fired them from their teaching positions. They had been called to testify before California’s Un-American Activities Committee on October 28, 1952 on charges of subversion; both Wilkinson and Eisenberg refused to answer the committee’s questions about their political affiliations, and for this the school board fired them.² The two women justified their refusal by citing their rights under the First and Fifth Amendments to the U.S. Constitution. The First Amendment, they argued, protected their right to freedom of speech and association, while the Fifth Amendment protected them from self-incrimination. Eisenberg explained: “To be compelled by subpoena to give public testimony as ‘evidence’ sensationally headlined and distorted was completely

¹ Frances Eisenberg, Interview with Greg Goldin, n.d., Greg Goldin Collection (Interviews): Blacklisted Teachers in Los Angeles, 1977 (hereafter Goldin Collection), tape 1, box 2, Southern California Library for Social Studies and Research (hereafter Southern California Library), Los Angeles, California.

² Martha Kransdorf, *A Matter of Loyalty: The Los Angeles School Board vs. Frances Eisenberg* (San Francisco: Caddo Gap Press, 1994), 28.

repugnant to my definition of American citizenship.” Eisenberg further responded to her firing in the newsletter of the Los Angeles Federation of Teachers:

For the last twenty years, I have taught in the Los Angeles City Schools and have endeavored to exemplify in my own life in this community the educational philosophy in which I believe. I have helped train young people to know and respect their Constitution, to participate in their own student body government and school press, to examine critically issues of concern to themselves and their families, to their community, nation, and the world. I have taught them to respect the democratic rights of all persons—of every race, religion and color.³

While both were fired over a somewhat narrow technicality—their refusal to answer the committee’s questions—they were called before the committee for their political activism. Both were active members of the Los Angeles Federation of Teachers, a left-led union expelled from the American Federation of Teachers in 1948 because of accusations that the union’s leadership was associated with the Communist Party, USA. Wilkinson was a former officer of the teachers’ union, while Eisenberg had been the long-time editor of its newsletter as well as a member of the union’s executive board. Jean Wilkinson, moreover, was married to Frank Wilkinson, who had himself just recently been fired from his job with the Los Angeles Housing Authority for refusing to testify about his political affiliations. The local press vilified Frank Wilkinson for promoting communism because of his work to expand integrated public housing in Los Angeles.⁴ Both Jean Wilkinson and Eisenberg had written

³ *The L.A. Teacher*, November 1952 XIII, no. 3, L.A. Teachers Union Collection 1946-1951, folder 3, box 2, Southern California Library.

⁴ Don Parson, “Los Angeles’ ‘Headline-Happy Public Housing War’,” *Southern California Quarterly* 65, no. 3 (Fall 1983): 267; Josh Sides, *L.A. City Limits: African American Los*

letters to the Housing Authority in support of public housing. The subpoenas from the California Senate Fact Finding Committee on Un-American Activities to Jean Wilkinson and Eisenberg, then, were issued because of the women's link to Los Angeles Federation of Teachers and their support for integrated public housing in Los Angeles. The firing of Wilkinson and Eisenberg marked the beginning of renewed attacks on supposedly subversive teachers in the Los Angeles public school system.

The blacklisting of teachers in Los Angeles was part of a national effort to root out leftist teachers from the public school system. Jean Wilkinson and Frances Eisenberg were among tens of thousands of teachers across the U.S. investigated during the McCarthy era, and two of approximately 500 teachers who were forced to resign or fired and blacklisted.⁵ Historian Ellen Schrecker argues that McCarthyism should be viewed as a “process” and underscores that economic sanctions were an essential element of the Red Scare from the 1940s through the early 1960s. This process began with governmental bodies—at the federal, state, and local levels—identifying individuals suspected of subversion and subpoenaing them to testify about their connections to the Communist Party. Sometimes people were sentenced to prison, but more often the second step resulted in people being fired from their jobs for refusing to testify. This process also resulted in the blacklisting of people from

Angeles from the Great Depression to the Present (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2003), 116–117.

⁵ Griffin Fariello, *Red Scare: Memories of the American Inquisition: An Oral History* (New York: Norton, 1995), 426.

being able to work in the same industry for many years.⁶ The teachers fired from their jobs in Los Angeles were blacklisted from being able to teach in the Los Angeles public school system for several decades, and thus were forced to find jobs in other industries. For many, this meant a demotion in their financial situation, and for all the experience of being forced out of teaching for their political convictions took an emotionally toll still felt decades later.

In this chapter I examine the two related historical events, the blacklisting of teachers in Los Angeles during the late 1940s and 1950s and the expulsion of American Federation of Teachers (AFT) Local 430 from the American Federation of Teachers in 1948. The blacklisting of teachers converged with the expulsion of Local 430 to destroy the left-led teachers' union in Los Angeles. During its lifetime AFT Local 430, which would become the independent Los Angeles Federation of Teachers after its expulsion from the AFT, promoted social unionism. The union put its organizing energies toward protecting and improving the working conditions and compensation of teachers, but it also was engaged politically in the larger social issues of the day, including civil rights struggles in Los Angeles. The union joined with the civil rights movement taking shape in Los Angeles by organizing for the inclusion of African American history in the curriculum of the public school schools, as well as calling for the hiring of more African American teachers. The union leadership focused on larger social issues because of its commitment to racial

⁶ Ellen Schrecker, *No Ivory Tower: McCarthyism and the Universities* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1986), 5.

equality, which was informed by the fact that at least some of the leaders of the union were members of the Communist Party.

When the AFT revoked Local 430's charter because of the union's link with the Communist Party, the AFT simultaneously chartered AFT Local 1021, which it intended to eventually replace Local 430. AFT Local 1021 eschewed Local 430's broad focus, choosing instead to adopt a narrowly defined philosophy toward unionism. Local 1021 promoted its image as a union of professionals concerned primarily with advancing a more limited set of goals relating to the working conditions and compensation of teachers in Los Angeles. I argue that the expulsion of Local 430 and the chartering of Local 1021 in Los Angeles were part of a rightward turn in the American Federation of Teachers, and the American labor movement more broadly, resulting in the widespread adoption of philosophy toward unionism less engaged in larger struggles against social injustice. This set back the struggle against racism in the both the union movement and the public school system in the United States.

Though Local 430 maintained its existence as the independent Los Angeles Federation of Teachers for several years, it ultimately ceased to exist in the late 1950s. The Los Angeles School Board, alongside state investigating committees, sought to drastically decrease the influence of leftist teachers on children in the public school system through the blacklist. The blacklist specifically targeted the leaders of the independent Los Angeles Federation of Teachers in an attempt to finally put an end to left-led teacher unionism in the city of Los Angeles. The blacklist resulted in

the firing of some of the most active leaders of the union. Additionally, the union leaders targeted by the blacklist found their attention necessarily diverted from the issues they normally organized around as they focused their energies on defending fired teachers. The union participated in both legal and grassroots efforts to expose the political nature of the targeting of leftist teachers. The blacklisting of leftist teachers in Los Angeles, then, combined with the expulsion of Local 430 and the chartering of Local 1021, put an end to teacher social unionism in Los Angeles in the 1950s.

Little has been written about the blacklisting of teachers in Los Angeles, but what has been written about the impact of anti-communism on teachers' unions in New York City in the 1940s and 1950s illustrates that a similar pattern took shape elsewhere.⁷ Clarence Taylor, in *Reds at the Blackboard: Communism, Civil Rights, and the New York City Teachers Union*, recounts how the AFT revoked the charter of AFT Local 5, the New York City Teachers' Union, at its convention in 1941 on similar charges of Communist Party influence. The Teachers' Union in New York was an independent union only for a short period of time, however; in September of 1943 it joined the United Public Workers of America (UPWA) as the Teachers Union

⁷ For anti-communism within the teachers' unions, see William Edward Eaton, *The American Federation of Teachers, 1916-1961: A History of the Movement* (Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press, 1975); John F. Lyons, *Teachers and Reform: Chicago Public Education, 1929-1970* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2008); Marjorie Murphy, *Blackboard Unions: the AFT and the NEA, 1900-1980* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1992); Philip Taft, *United They Teach: The Story of the United Federation of Teachers* (Los Angeles: Nash Pub., 1974); Clarence Taylor, *Reds at the Blackboard: Communism, Civil Rights, and the New York City Teachers Union* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2011); Celia Lewis Zitron, *The New York City Teachers Union, 1916-1964: A Story of Educational and Social Commitment* (New York: Humanities Press, 1969).

of New York, Local 555, an affiliate of the Congress of Industrial Organizations.⁸ While the Los Angeles Federation of Teachers never joined the ranks of the United Public Workers of America, the AFT—an affiliate of the CIO’s rival, the American Federation of Labor—did charge Local 430 with sympathizing and organizing in conjunction with the United Public Workers of America against the interests of the AFT and the AFL as one of the reasons for Local 430’s expulsion from the AFT.⁹

The link between the left-led AFT locals and the United Public Workers of America points to a pattern on the part of the Communist Party’s (CP) involvement in the labor movement. Though members of the CP were active in the AFL-affiliated American Federation of Teachers, politically they were much more sympathetic toward CIO-affiliated unions. In fact, as historian Marjorie Murphy has shown in *Blackboard Unions: The AFT and the NEA, 1900-1980*, though the members of the CP were involved in the CIO in much larger numbers than in the AFL, the CP strategically utilized its involvement in the AFT “as a needed foot in the door of the AFL.”¹⁰

Scholars including Murphy, Taylor, William Eaton, Jonna Perrillo and Philip Taft have focused on the history of the AFT’s purging of the New York Teachers Union, but have said little about the effects of anti-communism in California. The AFT’s revocation of Local 430’s charter, however, marked the culmination of efforts

⁸ Taylor, *Reds at the Blackboard*, 73.

⁹ “Summary of A.F. of T. Council Action in Connection with Revocation of Charter Local #430 Los Angeles,” American Federation of Teachers Collection, series IV, Defunct Locals, (hereafter AFT Collection), folder: Data Re: Revocation of Local 430, box 10, Walter P. Reuther Library (hereafter Reuther Library), Wayne State University, Detroit, Michigan.

¹⁰ Murphy, *Blackboard Unions*, 159.

within the AFT to remove the influence of left-led AFT locals.¹¹ The history of the AFT in Los Angeles, then, is significant because it marks a political transition within the AFT at the national level. Clarence Taylor shows in *Reds at the Blackboard* that the New York City Teachers Union advocated an anti-racist inflected version of social unionism because of the influence of the Communist Party. Taylor argues that the New York Teachers' Union advocated social movement unionism, establishing alliances with civil rights groups and organizing alongside black and Latino parents to challenge racial inequality in the schools and in the community.¹² As did Local 5 in New York, the Los Angeles-based Local 430 also advocated a version of social unionism shaped by a commitment to anti-racism. What started with the purging of the New York Teachers Union from the AFT in 1941, then, concluded in 1948 with the ouster of the Los Angeles-based teachers' union, AFT Local 430. While both unions attempted to maintain their existence independent of the AFT, the intense anti-communism of the boards of education in both cities proved to be too devastating. This resulted in the demise of a variety of social movement unionism in the American Federation of Teachers that prioritized the struggle against racism within the union movement and in the public schools.

Marjorie Murphy, in *Blackboard Unions* (1990), primarily focuses on the various obstacles to unionization for public school teachers. She points out that

¹¹ Eaton, *The American Federation of Teachers, 1916-1961*; Murphy, *Blackboard Unions*; Jonna Perrillo, *Uncivil Rights: Teachers, Unions, and Race in the Battle for School Equity* (Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 2012); Taft, *United They Teach*; Taylor, *Reds at the Blackboard*.

¹² Taylor, *Reds at the Blackboard*, 3.

“recurrent seasons of red-baiting” were an important obstacle to unionization. Murphy argues, “they created an atmosphere of fear that destroyed militant teacher activity and stifled teacher advocacy.”¹³ In this chapter I argue, like Murphy, that red-baiting was indeed an important obstacle to public sector unionism, particularly among public school teachers in Los Angeles. I also agree that McCarthyism helped to decrease teacher union militancy. However, Murphy also maintains that teachers’ unions became increasingly concentrated on the “narrow self-interest” of teachers “because that is all our conservative society has allowed.”¹⁴ On the contrary, I argue that though the anti-communist leadership of the AFT was of course influenced by the arguably hysterical anti-communism prevalent in the 1940s and the 1950s, the leadership of the AFT was actively complicit in the transformation of the AFT into a less militant, more narrowly focused union beginning in 1940, several years before the Red Scare took off.

One clear contributing factor to the redbaiting of Local 430 in Los Angeles was the advocacy by some union members that the union should act more professionally by eschewing any focus on larger political issues and focusing almost exclusively on the interests of teachers. One of Murphy’s central arguments in *Blackboard Unions* is that “the ideology of professionalism in education grew into a powerful antiunion slogan that effectively paralyzed and then slowed the unionization of teachers.”¹⁵ Murphy also describes how a younger generation of teacher union

¹³ Murphy, *Blackboard Unions*, 2.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, 6.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, 1.

activist in the 1930s, particularly members of the Communist Party and other leftists, gained a foothold in the American Federation of Teachers. Murphy writes that the “old-timers in the union had uncomfortably clung to professionalism in asserting the meaning of teacher autonomy, while the younger generation cared little for the promised rewards of professionalism in a time of few jobs, little money, and the threat of no future.”¹⁶ My research on teacher unionism in Los Angeles adds to Murphy’s argument; supporters of unionization within the Los Angeles Teachers’ Union advocated for what they called a more “professional” version of teacher unionism as opposed to the unionism supported by the leftist leaders and members of AFT Local 430. Thus, this ideology of professionalism informed the shape that teacher unionism would take during McCarthyism, helping in the political transformation of teacher unionism in Los Angeles in the 1940s through the 1950s from a radical, anti-racist social unionism to a more politically moderate unionism.

William Eaton, in *The American Federation of Teachers, 1916-1961: A History of the Movement* (1975), discusses the expulsion of left-led locals from the AFT, but does not consider how the CP’s commitment to anti-racism influenced the AFT’s racial politics. For example, in his discussion of the Communist Party’s politics Eaton does not mention the CP’s commitment to black civil rights struggles.¹⁷ Additionally, in his discussion of New York’s left-led AFT Local 5, Eaton mentions the union’s formation of the Harlem Committee in 1935, explaining that the committee provided curricular materials to teachers about African American history.

¹⁶ Ibid., 151.

¹⁷ Eaton, *The American Federation of Teachers, 1916-1961*, 105.

But what Eaton does not mention is that AFT Local 5's establishment of the Harlem Committee stemmed largely from local union leadership's affiliation with the CP, which prioritized anti-racism in its organizing. Because Eaton does not consider the influence of the CP's racial politics on the AFT's commitment to racial equality, he also does not acknowledge that the AFT's expulsion of left-led unions resulted in the AFT becoming less politically committed to the civil rights struggle. As a result, Eaton is overly sanguine about the AFT's racial politics during the 1940s and 1950s, even arguing, "at no time, however, is there any evidence that the American Federation of Teachers was anything but unified in its strong advocacy for the black American."¹⁸ By contrast, I argue that the AFT's expulsion of left-led unions influenced a political transition in the union from a racial politics based in radicalism to one based in liberalism. As a consequence, the AFT became not only less militant in its advocacy of racial equality but less committed to the civil rights struggle as a whole.

The expulsion of AFT Local 430 from the American Federation of Teachers represents the weakening of democratic practices within the union. The anti-communist crusade within the AFT clearly represented antagonism toward political dissent, setting the stage for the further strengthening of centralization in the affairs of the AFT. However, my research shows that democratic practices within the communist-led Local 430 could have been improved as well, evidenced by the complaints of more politically conservative union members that the leftist leadership

¹⁸ Ibid., 64, 71.

of Local 430 often displayed intolerance toward them. Judith Stepan-Norris and Maurice Zeitlin argue that because communist-led unions in the CIO had “an intense commitment to confront a broad range of public issues...transcending the matters dealt with in collective bargaining,” it was “likely that conflicts would arise over these issues in the unions they led; this, in turn, encouraged organized opposition to them and, consequently, factionalism and democracy.”¹⁹ This was certainly true in Local 430’s case, as seen in both the formation of a dissident caucus within the local in the late 1940s which protested the local’s focus on broad social issues. While the democratic practices within Local 430 are open to critique, the ultimate result of expelling Local 430 and other communist-led locals from the AFT was a decrease in the tolerance of dissent, and therefore an overall weakening of democracy.

Numerous historians, including Ellen Schrecker, Nelson Lichtenstein, Michael Honey, Robin Kelley, Maurice Isserman, Ronald Filippelli, George Lipsitz, and Rosemary Feurer, have shown how anti-communism weakened the labor movement from the 1930s to the 1950s, both by reshaping the politics of unionism and by shifting the labor movement’s focus from expanding unionism to infighting to root out leftists.²⁰ Schrecker, in the anthology *American Labor and the Cold War*, writes

¹⁹ Judith Stepan-Norris, *Left Out: Reds and America’s Industrial Unions* (Cambridge; New York: Cambridge University Press, 2003), 85.

²⁰ See, for example, Paul Buhle, *Taking Care of Business: Samuel Gompers, George Meany, Lane Kirkland, and the Tragedy of American Labor* (New York: Monthly Review Press, 1999); Robert W. Cherny, William Issel, and Kieran Walsh Taylor, eds., *American Labor and the Cold War: Grassroots Politics and Postwar Political Culture* (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 2004); Rosemary Feurer, *Radical Unionism in the Midwest, 1900-1950* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2006); Robin D. G. Kelley, *Hammer and Hoe: Alabama Communists During the Great Depression* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press,

of the anti-communist crusade within labor in the 1940s and 1950s, “if nothing else, McCarthyism tamed American labor and brought it into the Cold War political consensus.”²¹ Anti-communism within the labor movement resulted in the destruction of many left-led unions, and even those that did ultimately survive, like the International Union of Electrical, Radio, and Machine Employees (UE), maintained their existence in a much weakened state.²²

In his history of the Communist Party, the labor movement, and anti-racism in the Alabama in the 1930s, Robin D.G. Kelley shows that the anti-communism in the South was often a veil for racism. The Communist Party of Alabama in the 1930s, composed largely of poor black workers, actively challenged racism in the South by organizing black workers and sharecroppers, denouncing lynchings, organizing for voting rights, and calling attention to police brutality, among other issues. Kelley argues, “Communist led rank-and-file committees were the only organized voices within the labor movement to consistently fight against racial discrimination and to

1990); Robert Rodgers Korstad, *Civil Rights Unionism: Tobacco Workers and the Struggle for Democracy in the Mid-Twentieth-Century South* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2003); Maurice Isserman, *Which Side Were You On?: The American Communist Party During the Second World War* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1993); Nelson Lichtenstein, *The Most Dangerous Man in Detroit: Walter Reuther and the Fate of American Labor* (New York: Basic Books, 1995); George Lipsitz, *Rainbow at Midnight: Labor and Culture in the 1940s* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1994); James J. Matles, *Them and Us: Struggles of a Rank-and-File Union* (Englewood Cliffs, N.J: Prentice-Hall, 1974); Steven Rosswurm, ed., *The CIO's Left-Led Unions* (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 1992); Shelton Stromquist, ed. *Labor's Cold War: Local Politics in a Global Context* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2008).

²¹ Ellen Schrecker, “Labor and the Cold War: The Legacy of McCarthyism,” in Robert W. Cherny, William Issel, and Kieran Walsh Taylor, eds., *American Labor and the Cold War*, 7.

²² *Ibid.*, 10. For what happened to the UE, see Ronald Filipelli, *Cold War in the Working Class: The Rise and Decline of the United Electrical Workers* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1995).

build alliances between strikers in different issues.”²³ Kelley further draws out the link between anti-communism and racism in the South, “anti-Communist propaganda, rooted in popular myths and indisputably couched in the language of race, proved a mighty deterrent to Southern white support for the CP.”²⁴ Though the anti-communism in the South was inflected with a much more virulent racism, it is also the case that anti-communism in the public schools and AFT Local 430 ultimately weakened the struggle against racism in Los Angeles, just as it did in the South.

As Michael Honey has shown, anti-communism within the CIO facilitated the defeat of unionization in the South in the late 1940s, demonstrating how the Red Scare within the labor movement reduced the ability of the union movement to expand to unorganized sectors of American society. Honey argues that anti-communism helped to facilitate the failure of the CIO’s Operation Dixie, the CIO’s attempt to unionize the South. Organizing the South, according to Honey, “required a deep commitment to struggling for black civil rights” in part because black workers held a large proportion of the jobs in most of the non-union sectors of the economy, with the exception of textiles. Honey argues, “to organize them would require breaking down the racism of white workers and resisting the paternalistic ideology and racism of owners.”²⁵ But anti-communism within the CIO led to the purging of the left-led unions most committed to the struggle for racial equality. Consequently, instead of organizing unions with a significant number of black workers, the CIO

²³ Kelley, *Hammer and Hoe*, 76.

²⁴ *Ibid.*, 43.

²⁵ Michael Honey, “Operation Dixie, the Red Scare, and the Defeat of Southern Labor Organizing,” in Cherny, Issel, and Taylor, *American Labor and the Cold War*, 221.

concentrated its energies on organizing the white-dominated textile industry, an ultimately unsuccessful effort. The CIO, moreover, hired conservative white male organizers in order to “belie the image of the CIO as a radical outsider.”²⁶

Considering that the vast majority of unionized industries were in the private sector prior to the 1960s, with important exceptions, little has been written about the link between the Communist Party and public sector workers. Joshua Freeman’s history of the Transportation Workers Union of America (TWU) is one such exception. Because it was not until 1958 that the New York City government agreed to bargain with government employees, the TWU was unable to establish contracts for transportation workers in New York. Freeman shows, however, how the Communist Party’s influence on the TWU was a significant factor in the union’s militancy and growth in the 1930s. However, in the larger context of the Cold War, anti-communism also impacted the TWU: Freeman explains that in early 1948, a year-long factional fight ensued, ending in the expulsion of Communists from positions of power within the union.²⁷ With the defeat of the Communists, a political

²⁶ Ibid., 226; Also see, Alan Draper, *Conflict of Interests: Organized Labor and the Civil Rights Movement in the South, 1954-1968* (Ithaca, N.Y: ILR Press, 1994); Barbara S. Griffith, *The Crisis of American Labor: Operation Dixie and the Defeat of the CIO* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1988); Michael K. Honey, *Southern Labor and Black Civil Rights: Organizing Memphis Workers* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1993); Kelley, *Hammer and Hoe*; Robert Rodgers Korstad, *Civil Rights Unionism: Tobacco Workers and the Struggle for Democracy in the Mid-Twentieth-Century South* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2003); Timothy J. Minchin, *The Color of Work: The Struggle for Civil Rights in the Southern Paper Industry, 1945-1980* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2001); Timothy J. Minchin, *Fighting Against the Odds: A History of Southern Labor Since World War II* (Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 2005); Robert H. Zieger, ed., *Life and Labor in the New South* (Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 2012).

²⁷ Joshua B. Freeman, *In Transit: The Transport Workers Union in New York City, 1933-1966* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1989), 286.

transition ensued within the TWU, including the drastic centralization of power in the hands of the president and the union's executive board.²⁸

I argue here that anti-communism within the American Federation of Teachers redirected the energies of leaders of the teacher union movement from expanding teacher unionism toward rooting out leftists. As a result, the cause of teacher unionism, and public sector unionism in general, was weakened in the 1940s and 1950s. As Schrecker observes, the destruction of left-led unions “disrupted their organizing campaigns in the service sector and among white collar and professional workers, as well as their efforts to bring in women and people of color whom traditional unions had largely ignored.”²⁹ The rise of the public sector union movement, at least in part as a consequence of anti-communism, was delayed until the 1960s and 1970s.³⁰

²⁸ Ibid., 317.

²⁹ Shrecker, “Labor and the Cold War,” in Cherny, Issel, and Taylor, *American Labor and the Cold War*, 16.

³⁰ For more on the history of public sector unionism in the United States, see Stanley Aronowitz, *From the Ashes of the Old: American Labor and America's Future* (Boston, Mass.: Houghton Mifflin Co., 1998); Aaron Brenner, “Striking Against the State: The Postal Wildcat of 1970,” *Labor's Heritage*, no. 7 (April 1996): 4–27; Ralph J. Flynn, *Public Work, Public Workers* (Washington: New Republic Book Co, 1975); Steve Fraser and Joshua B. Freeman, “In the Rearview Mirror: A Brief History of Opposition to Public Sector Unionism,” *New Labor Forum* 20, no. 3 (Fall 2011): 93–96; Freeman, *In Transit*; Joseph C. Goulden, *Jerry Wurf: Labor's Last Angry Man* (New York: Atheneum, 1982); Paul Johnston, *Success While Others Fail: Social Movement Unionism and the Public Workplace* (Ithaca, NY: ILR Press, 1994); Leo Kramer, *Labor's Paradox: the American Federation of State, County, and Municipal Employees, AFL-CIO* (New York: Wiley, 1962); Joseph A. McCartin, “‘A Wagner Act for Public Employees’: Labor's Deferred Dream and the Rise of Conservatism, 1970–1976,” *The Journal of American History* 95, no. 1 (June 2008): 123–48; Joseph A. McCartin, *Collision Course: Ronald Reagan, the Air Traffic Controllers, and the Strike That Changed America* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2011); Philip F. Rubio, *There's Always Work at the Post Office: African American Postal Workers and the Fight for Jobs, Justice, and Equality* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2010); Francis

The Red Scare

With the end of the Second World War in 1945, the tentative alliance between the Soviet Union and the United States came to end, marking the beginning of the Cold War. Internationally, the United States sought both to stamp out the influence of the Soviet Union and to weaken the efforts of countries to adopt policies resembling socialism, particularly in the Third World.³¹ Domestically, the late 1940s brought immense repression against the Communist Party and others marked as “subversives,” harkening back to the days of the first Red Scare after World War I. This period of repression became known as McCarthyism, after U.S. Senator Joseph McCarthy who infamously oversaw investigations into supposed communist infiltration of the government. McCarthyism had devastating impact on American society. It legitimized what became known as “witch hunts” against current and past members of the Communist Party and other leftists, slowing down, altering or halting grassroots efforts to create social change. McCarthyism’s goal to stamp out leftist dissent also had a clear chilling effect on freedom of speech and the freedom of

Ryan, *AFSCME’s Philadelphia Story: Municipal Workers and Urban Power in the Twentieth Century* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 2011); Robert Schaffer, “Where Are the Organized Public Employees? The Absence of Public Employee Unionism from U.S. History Textbooks, and Why It Matters,” *Labor History* 43, no. 3 (August 2002): 315–34; Joseph E. Slater, *Public Workers: Government Employee Unions, the Law, and the State, 1900-1962* (Ithaca, N.Y.: ILR Press, 2004); Leo Troy, *The New Unionism in the New Society: Public Sector Unions in the Redistributive State* (Fairfax: George Mason University Press, 1994); “Bringing the State’s Workers In: Time to Rectify and Imbalanced Labor Historiography,” *Labor History* 47, no. 1 (2006): 73–94.

³¹ See the recently published book by Robert J. McMahon, *The Cold War in the Third World* (Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 2013) for an analysis of the U.S. efforts to contain communism in the Third World.

political association, both rights protected under the First Amendment to the U.S. Constitution. Many people were fired and blacklisted from their jobs, which often took a heavy emotional and financial toll. The government targeted the labor movement during the Red Scare, and the labor movement staged its own anti-communist campaign in its own ranks. McCarthyism had many targets, but the Red Scare in education was particularly virulent. Anti-communists at the federal, state, and local levels targeted public school teachers, resulting in many teachers being fired or resigning. Like the situation in New York, the Red Scare had a particularly negative impact on education in California.³²

The domestic Cold War after World War II was galvanized on March 22, 1947 when Democratic president Harry Truman issued Executive Order 9835. Establishing a loyalty-security program for federal workers, Executive Order 9835 barred communists, fascists, other “totalitarians”, and anybody guilty of “sympathetic associations” with such people or their organizations from working for the federal government. Schrecker argues that the Executive Order had more to do with the

³² For histories of McCarthyism, see Edward Alwood, *Dark Days in the Newsroom: McCarthyism Aimed at the Press* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 2007); Bob Blauner, *Resisting McCarthyism: To Sign or Not to Sign California's Loyalty Oath* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2009); David Caute, *The Great Fear: The Anti-Communist Purge Under Truman and Eisenhower* (London: Secker and Warburg, 1978); Phillip Deery, *Red Apple: Communism and McCarthyism in Cold War New York* (New York: Fordham University Press, 2014); Thomas Patrick Doherty, *Cold War, Cool Medium: Television, McCarthyism, and American Culture* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2003); Colleen Doody, *Detroit's Cold War: The Origins of Postwar Conservatism* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2013); Fariello, *Red Scare*; M. J. Heale, *American Anti-Communism: Combating the Enemy Within, 1830-1970* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1990); Joel Kovel, *Red Hunting in the Promised Land: Anti-Communism and the Making of America* (New York: Basic Books, 1994); Ellen Schrecker, *Many Are the Crimes: McCarthyism in America* (Boston: Little, Brown, 1998).

Democratic Party protecting itself against claims by the Republican Party that it was soft on communism than with actually rooting out communists from the federal government. Thus, Truman's executive order was "superfluous, except as a political gesture." It nonetheless "succeeded in establishing anti-Communism as the nation's official ideology, and, several years before Senator McCarthy entered the scene, it laid the foundations for the movement we now call McCarthyism." Despite efforts to prove their anti-communist credentials, Democrats were unable to hold onto power for long. Republican president Dwight D. Eisenhower became president in 1953, defeating Democrat Adlai Stevenson by a landslide.³³

The Red Scare's impact on the Communist Party cannot be understated. One of the earliest and most influential events of the Red Scare occurred during the summer of 1948 when the Truman administration prosecuted the top leadership of the Communist Party under the Smith Act. The Smith Act, passed in 1940, made it a crime to "teach and advocate the overthrow and destruction of the Government of the United States by force and violence."³⁴ Those convicted could serve ten years in prison and pay a \$10,000 fine.³⁵ Prosecution resulted in the jailing of the top CP leadership, and redirected the CP's energies toward self-defense, thereby helping to cripple the party. The Smith Act trial, according to Schrecker, also provided the government with a "way to publicize the menace of communism."³⁶ Even during the 1930s, the peak of the Communist Party's influence in the U.S., membership in the

³³ Schrecker, *No Ivory Tower*, 4-5.

³⁴ *Ibid.*, 6.

³⁵ Fariello, *Red Scare*, 18.

³⁶ Schrecker, *No Ivory Tower*, 6.

party was not huge.³⁷ McCarthyism took a strong toll on membership in the party. In 1950 Party membership was at 43,000, and just one year later total membership dropped to 32,000, a clear result of the intensification of the Red Scare.³⁸

Truman's Executive Order targeting of federal employees points to a major aspect of McCarthyism—those accused of disloyalty would be fired from their jobs in large numbers. During the Red Scare, only two people were killed and a few hundred ended up spending some time in prison, but many more lost their livelihoods.

Schrecker shows that McCarthyism consisted of a two-stage process. As a first step, people were subpoenaed to testify about their politics. In the second step, if they were uncooperative by refusing to answer questions, they were often fired from their jobs. “The bifurcated nature of this process,” writes Schrecker, “diffused responsibility and made it easier for each participant to dissociate his or her action from the larger whole. Rarely did any single institution handle both stages of McCarthyism. In most cases, it was a government agency which identified the culprits and a private employer which fired them.”³⁹ This second step in the process—being fired—was the punishment faced by public school teachers when they refused to answer questions about their politics, and it had a devastating effect on teachers.

Through the Taft-Hartley Act of 1947, the business community joined with the federal government in order to try to rid the labor movement of communists. The National Association of Manufacturers, taking advantage of public opinion upset at

³⁷ *Ibid.*, 4.

³⁸ Stephen J. Whitfield, *The Culture of the Cold War*, 2nd ed. (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1996), 4.

³⁹ Schrecker, *No Ivory Tower*, 9.

the disruptions caused by a strike wave in 1946, helped to draft an amendment to the 1935 National Labor Relations Act, the Taft-Hartley Act. The Act put into place a series of controls on labor unions; its most prominent provisions included the outlawing of the closed shop (which prohibited hiring non-union workers), and a provision allowing states to outlaw union shops. It allowed the government to obtain an 80-day “cooling off” period for strikes, and made secondary boycotts illegal. Among its most important provisions, the Taft-Hartley Act stipulated that top union officers had to sign an affidavit affirming that they were not members of the Communist Party.⁴⁰ Unions that refused to comply with this anti-communist provision would be denied the services of the National Labor Relations Board, which could have a potentially debilitating effect on both unionization efforts as well as efforts to hold employers legally accountable for violations of labor law.⁴¹

The proactive cooperation of major labor leaders with the Taft-Hartley Act would have a lasting impact on the politics and, arguably, strength of the labor movement. Indeed, the cooperation of both major labor federations—the American Federation of Labor (AFL) and the Congress of Industrial Organizations (CIO)—with McCarthyism in the 1940s and early 1950s helped to drastically weaken and, in many cases, destroy left-led unions. The CIO expelled eleven Communist-led unions between 1949 and 1950, including the United Public Workers of America (UPWA).⁴² The AFT, an affiliate of the AFL, was actively attempting to rid the union of

⁴⁰ Cherny, Issel, and Taylor, *American Labor and the Cold War*, 2–3.

⁴¹ Schrecker, “Labor and the Cold War,” in *Ibid.*, 11.

⁴² Taylor, *Reds at the Blackboard*, 161.

communists beginning in the early 1940s. The expulsion of left-led unions from the CIO and the AFL was just the beginning. Both the AFL and CIO created competing labor unions, which aggressively raided the left-led unions in an attempt to siphon off their union members.⁴³ By the mid-1960s, after the brunt of the Red Scare had passed, only two left-led unions remained in tact, the International Longshore and Warehouse Union (IWLU) and the United Electrical Workers Union (UE), the latter in a much weakened state.⁴⁴

Soon after he was elected president, in 1953 Dwight Eisenhower intensified the Red Scare by issuing Executive Order 10450. It revoked Executive Order 9835 issued under Truman's administration, and expanded the circumstances under which federal employees could be investigated and fired. Previously, the federal government could fire federal employees proved of "disloyalty" because of their present or past affiliations with the Communist Party or other subversive organizations. With Executive Order 10450, federal employees could be fired if they proved to be "security risks." The order states, in part, that "all persons privileged to be employed in the departments and agencies of the Government, shall be reliable, trustworthy, of good conduct and character, and of complete and unswerving loyalty to the United States."⁴⁵ It mandated immediate suspension without pay for people accused of disloyalty or being security risks, and, at first, left it to the discretion of each

⁴³ Schrecker, "Labor and the Cold War," in Cherny, Issel, and Taylor, eds., *American Labor and the Cold War*, 11.

⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, 14.

⁴⁵ National Archives, "Executive Order 10450—Security Requirements for Government Employment," <http://www.archives.gov/federal-register/codification/executive-order/10450.html>, accessed July 25, 2013.

department head in the federal government to determine how to comply with this order. But just a few months later a provision was added stating that employees would be fired for pleading the Fifth Amendment before a congressional committee.”⁴⁶

Scholars of queer history have shed light on the ways in which homophobia was also an important, but not widely recognized, component of the Red Scare. Historian David K. Johnson reveals the impact of Executive Order 10450 on gay people employed by the federal government. By November of 1950, the federal government’s purge of queer employees had resulted in the dismissal of nearly six hundred people. Johnson writes, “in the State Department alone, security officials boasted that on average they were firing one homosexual per day, more than double the rate for those suspected of political disloyalty.”⁴⁷ Over the course of the 1950s and 1960s, approximately 1,000 people were dismissed from the State Department due to the suspicion that they were gay.⁴⁸ Whereas communists were labeled “loyalty risks,” gay people in the federal government were “security risks,” because they were supposedly weak and liable to be blackmailed into revealing information to enemies of the U.S. government.⁴⁹

The federal government’s persecution of gay people during the Red Scare filtered down to state and local levels, as seen in Florida’s assault on gay teachers

⁴⁶ Fariello, *Red Scare*, 40.

⁴⁷ David K. Johnson, *The Lavender Scare: The Cold War Persecution of Gays and Lesbians in the Federal Government* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2004), 2.

⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, 76.

⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, 31.

beginning in the late 1950s and through the mid-1960s. In 1956, Florida's Legislative Investigation Committee was established specifically to impede the NAACP's school desegregation efforts. The committee's attempt to link the NAACP with communism in order to prevent desegregation failed due to the organized opposition of civil rights activists. The committee then turned its sights on gay and lesbian teachers in 1959.⁵⁰ The persecution of gay and lesbian federal employees legitimated the harassment of gay and lesbian teachers. The investigation of gay and lesbian teachers ultimately resulted in the revocation of 98 teaching certificates between 1958 and 1964 on charges of "moral turpitude."⁵¹

The targeting of communist and gay and lesbian teachers during the Red Scare reveals the exceptional role that that the teaching profession holds in the perpetuation of dominant world views. According to those in power, teachers were in a unique position to mold children. In the case of communist teachers, politicians feared that they would indoctrinate children in anti-American ideologies. In other words, communist teachers would teach children to challenge capitalism as an inherently exploitative economic system. Members of the Communist Party would also teach children to confront racism in American society. Gay and lesbian teachers, on the other hand, were in a position not only to teach children to challenge gender norms and thus gender inequality, but also to "recruit" children to homosexuality. These

⁵⁰ Karen Graves, *And They Were Wonderful Teachers: Florida's Purge of Gay and Lesbian Teachers* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2009), xi.

⁵¹ *Ibid.*, 15.

factors led teachers to be particularly vulnerable to persecution during McCarthyism. As Karen Graves puts it, “to control teachers is to control the dominant ideology.”⁵²

The Red Scare of the 1940s and 1950s was not only conducted at the federal level; state and local governments also played an active role in persecuting communists and other leftists. Thirty-nine states passed laws making it a crime to advocate the violent overthrow of the government, or to join organizations so advocating. At local, state, and federal levels more than three hundred laws had been passed by the mid-1950s making “subversive” activities illegal.⁵³ These laws varied in severity. According to Griffin Fariello, in Texas, for example, simply being a member of the Communist Party could result in a twenty-year prison sentence, while in Michigan “writing or speaking subversive words” could result in being sentenced to life imprisonment.⁵⁴

During the 1940s, Jack B. Tenney, former leader of the musicians’ union, led California’s version of the Red Scare.⁵⁵ Tenney and anti-communist allies Sam Yorty and Hugh Burns were elected to the California Assembly in 1936 as New Deal Democrats, according to M.J. Heale, “when few local Democrats throughout the nation cared to be seen as anything other than New Dealers.”⁵⁶ Over the course of the 1930s, Tenney and his allies increasingly turned to the right politically as they sought

⁵² Ibid., xvii.

⁵³ Fariello, *Red Scare*, 1995, 40.

⁵⁴ Ibid., 41.

⁵⁵ M.J. Heale, “Red Scare Politics: California’s Campaign Against Un-American Activities, 1940-1970,” *Journal of American Studies* 20, no. 1 (April 1986): 14; Ingrid Winther Scobie, “Jack B. Tenney and the ‘Parasitic Menace’: Anti-Communist Legislation in California, 1940-1949,” *Pacific American Historical Review* 43, no. 2 (May 1974): 191.

⁵⁶ Heale, “Red Scare Politics,” 10–11.

to eradicate communist influence from various aspects of life in California. In 1941, Tenney was appointed to a newly established fact-finding committee on un-American activities in the California state legislature, which he would chair first as an assemblyman from 1941 to 1943, and then as a state senator from 1943 to 1949.⁵⁷ Hugh Burns, who served as vice-chair of the investigative committee throughout the 1940s, took over as chair upon Tenney's resignation in 1949.⁵⁸ In 1942, Tenney discontinued his membership in the Democratic Party and became a registered Republican, claiming that the Democratic Party had been "taken over lock, stock, and barrel by Sidney Hillman,⁵⁹ the C.I.O Political Action Committee and the Communist Party."⁶⁰ Before turning his attention in 1946 to rooting out subversives in education, Tenney targeted groups such as the Actors' Laboratory Theater, the Screen Writers Guild, the Congress of American Women, the Joint Anti-Fascist Committee, the Progressive Party, and the American Russian Institute.⁶¹ Tenney's anti-communist crusade came to an end at the tail end of the 1940s when he turned his attention to colleagues in the Senate.⁶² Only partially successful, Tenney's efforts would be expanded and intensified by others in the California legislature in the 1950s.

In the context of the global Cold War, within the borders of the United States proponents of the Red Scare, then, sought to root out the influence of communists and

⁵⁷ Kransdorf, *A Matter of Loyalty*, 30.

⁵⁸ Heale, "Red Scare Politics," 14; Kransdorf, *A Matter of Loyalty*, 33.

⁵⁹ Sidney Hillman was a long-time leader of the Almagamated Clothing Workers of America and one of the founders of the Congress of Industrial Organizations in the 1930s.

⁶⁰ Heale, "Red Scare Politics," 16.

⁶¹ Kransdorf, *A Matter of Loyalty*, 31.

⁶² Scobie, "Jack B. Tenney and the 'Parasitic Menace,'" 191.

anybody guilty of “sympathetic associations” at federal, state and local levels. Additionally, while communists and other “subversives” were targeted on charges of “disloyalty,” gays and lesbians were subject to being investigated, fired, and blacklisted from their jobs as “security risks.” The Taft-Hartley Act of 1947 fundamentally altered the labor movement as well, as the government sought to reduce the influence of leftists on unions and anti-communist labor leaders led their own witch hunt against communists within the union movement.

The Red Scare in Education

The late 1940s and early 1950s were a period of ideological conflict in the nation’s schools. Across the country governments passed laws obliging teachers to take loyalty oaths denying any association with the Communist Party or other “subversive” organizations. Hundreds of public school teachers and college faculty lost their jobs, either by being directly fired or resigning out of fear of being accused of subversion. Teachers were targeted because, as noted before, they seemed to be in a unique position to influence children, in the case of the public school system, and young adults, in the case of the colleges and universities. According to anti-communists, teachers should promote Americanism in the classroom, a task for which communists and leftists were supposedly unsuited. The proponents of the blacklisting of communist teachers were not solely concerned with the impact of these teachers on the classroom, but also sought to weaken teacher unionism. In Los Angeles, teachers active in the left-led teachers’ union—AFT Local 430, which would become the

independent Los Angeles Federation of Teachers in 1948—were the main targets of the Red Scare in the schools. The blacklisting of teachers in Los Angeles happened in waves and was conducted at the federal, state, and local levels. The Los Angeles Board of Education cooperated with both state and federal investigation committees to identify, investigate, question, fire, and ultimately blacklist communist and other leftist teachers from being able to teach in the public school system in Los Angeles, and in California more generally.

Faculty at colleges and universities across the U.S. also found themselves obligated to swear their loyalty to the state and deny political affiliations linked with subversion. In California, as Schrecker shows, the University of California (UC) fully cooperated with these efforts. Beginning in 1942, faculty at the UC were obligated to profess their allegiance to the nation. This loyalty oath was just the beginning. With the escalation of the Red Scare in the spring of 1949, the UC governing board—the Regents—amended the 1942 loyalty oath. To be hired and preserve their positions, faculty now had to swear, “I am not a member of the Communist Party, or under any oath, or a party to any agreement, or under any commitment that is conflict with my obligations under this oath.”⁶³ This loyalty oath was unique because it specifically targeted employees at the UC, rather than public employees in general. The imposition of this oath resulted in the dismissal of approximately thirty professors for their refusal to sign the oath.⁶⁴ Legal challenges to the UC-specific loyalty resulted in the California Supreme Court decision in November, 1952, which determined that the

⁶³ Schrecker, *No Ivory Tower*, 116.

⁶⁴ *Ibid.*, 117.

Levering Act superseded the UC loyalty oath. The decision also ordered the reinstatement of all non-signers.⁶⁵

In September of 1950 the California legislature passed the Levering Act, which replaced the UC-specific loyalty oath, and applied to all public sector workers and civil defense employees. It required affected workers to declare their loyalty to the government and the US Constitution. It also stipulated that workers must declare that they did not advocate or belong to organizations that advocated the violent overthrow of either the federal government or the state of California, and that they did not belong to said organizations for the past five years and would not join one as long as they were employed by the government or in civil defense work.⁶⁶ Though the Levering Act included no specific mechanism for the firing of employees, the Los Angeles School Board used it nonetheless to investigate and suspend several teachers accused of subversion.⁶⁷

Universities sought to decrease the influence of leftist dissent and radical intellectuals by targeting communist and other leftist faculty. During the Great Depression of the 1930s, organized left-wing movements became widespread, and for the first time this organizing thrived on college campuses. In the 1940s colleges were not immune to the mounting backlash against radicalism and liberalism, as college

⁶⁵ Ibid., 123.

⁶⁶ Ibid., 122; Ellen Chase Verdries, "Teaching With the Enemy: An Archival and Narrative Analysis of McCarthyism in the Public Schools" (Ph.D. diss., Claremont Graduate School, 1996), 116.

⁶⁷ Verdries, "Teaching With the Enemy," 116.

administrations across the country collaborated in persecuting leftists.⁶⁸ In their targeting of the Communist Party, in particular, college administrators argued that membership in the party disqualified faculty from the privileges of academic life. Members of the Communist Party, it was argued, followed the Communist Party line and thus “surrendered” their “intellectual freedom.” A second reason for the exclusion of CP members from college faculties was the “the seemingly conspiratorial nature of the Communist Party,” according to Schrecker. “Though the secrecy which surrounded Party membership was but one aspect of that membership,” argues Schrecker, “the academic anti-Communists were to fix upon it and establish it as perhaps the most important disqualification of an academic Communist.”⁶⁹ This active discouragement of dissent on college campuses had as its consequence the weakening of organized leftist organizing on college campuses until the 1960s as well as the promotion of ideological uniformity and bias against Marxism and other forms of radical intellectual thought.⁷⁰

The wave of teacher strikes in the years immediately following the end of World War II in 1945 contributed to persecution of communist and other leftist teachers. By the winter of 1947 teachers had struck in twelve states. The reasons for these strikes were in part economic. While the average wage of an industrial worker rose 80 percent between 1939 and 1946, the average teacher’s salary dropped 20

⁶⁸ Schrecker, *No Ivory Tower*, 24.

⁶⁹ *Ibid.*, 105.

⁷⁰ For more on the student movement of the 1930s, see Robert Cohen, *When the Old Left Was Young: Student Radicals and America’s First Mass Student Movement, 1929-1941* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1993).

percent.⁷¹ The AFT local in St. Paul, Minnesota led a five-week teacher strike in 1946, while teachers in San Francisco, Jersey City, and Chicago all won pay raises. Even the National Education Association, a professional organization for teachers and administrators which did not promote labor militancy or unionism, led a strike in Norwalk, Connecticut in 1946 in which the teachers refused to return to work until they were granted a pay raise and recognition. In Minneapolis, Minnesota striking teachers in 1948 were able to win an increase in their pay. Though strikes by other workers were widespread in the post-war period, these teacher strikes were particularly unusual given the history of the professionalization of teaching and the lack of collective bargaining rights for teachers. Additionally, the national policy of the American Federation Teachers, as was common for public sector unions at the time, had a policy against strikes, while the National Education Association did not define itself as a union until the 1960s. While the teacher strikes were atypical and many were at least partially successful in achieving their demands, there were also negative impacts. State legislatures began passing anti-strike laws for public employees. Boards of education, state legislatures, and the federal government directed their anti-communism toward public school teachers.⁷²

The Red Scare affected teachers across the country. More than 60,000 teachers were investigated and approximately 500 teachers were either forced to resign or were fired. At the federal level, the House Un-American Activities Committee (HUAC) conducted its own investigations into subversion in the public

⁷¹ Murphy, *Blackboard Unions*, 182.

⁷² *Ibid.*, 183–184.

school system, most prominently under Harold Velde who chaired the committee in the mid-1950s. State governments and local school boards also produced their own committees to root out communists from the schools. In Detroit, in the early 1940s, HUAC publicized charges against ten teachers in the city's public schools and colleges.⁷³ In Pennsylvania in the fall of 1953 forty teachers were called before HUAC, and the Philadelphia Superintendent of Schools Louis B. Hoyer immediately suspended 30 teachers.⁷⁴

The targeting of communist and other leftist teachers in New York City during the 1940s and 1950s was perhaps the most extensive blacklisting of teachers in the nation. It was not a coincidence that, alongside the teachers' union in Chicago, the teachers' union in New York City had one of the largest memberships compared to teachers' unions in other areas of the country.⁷⁵ The New York Teachers' Union, first as Local 5 of the AFT and then as Local 555 of the United Public Workers of America, was a left-led union with much of the leadership having had some affiliation with the Communist Party, either past or present. As early as 1940, the New York State Legislature established a special investigation committee, known as the Rapp-Coudert Committee, to expose communist teachers and professors.⁷⁶ But it was not until the late 1940s that the blacklisting of teachers became really successful. The New York City Board of Education launched a considerable campaign, in cooperation

⁷³ Schrecker, *No Ivory Tower*, 171.

⁷⁴ Murphy, *Blackboard Unions*, 193. Also see Harold Velde Committee Hearings (Un-American Activities Committee), 1954-1955 Collection, National Archives, College Park, Maryland.

⁷⁵ *Ibid.*, 4.

⁷⁶ Schrecker, *No Ivory Tower*, 76.

with various civic groups, to both stamp out the left-led Teachers' Union and to dismiss communist and other leftist teachers. Taylor explains, "although the Teachers Union mounted a painstaking fight against the campaign, the prevailing Cold War atmosphere assured the success of its opponents. In the resulting purges close to four hundred TU members were fired, forced to resign, or compelled to retire."⁷⁷

Additionally, the New York City Board of Education passed the Timone Resolution in 1950, barring the left-led Teachers Union from negotiating or filing grievances on behalf of teachers. The blacklisting of New York City teachers and the Timone Resolution, in conjunction with the purging of Local 5 from the AFT (and the simultaneous chartering of a competing teachers' union), served to destroy left-led teacher unionism in New York City in the 1950s.⁷⁸

The blacklisting of teachers and college faculty in the 1940s and 1950s was a defining characteristic of the Red Scare. The attempted blacklisting began as early as the 1940, but really intensified and was much more successful in the late 1940s and the early to mid-1950s. While the international and domestic context of McCarthyism made the blacklisting possible, public school teachers and college professors were subject to the Red Scare for particular reasons. They were in a unique position to shape young minds; thus, proponents of anti-communism in education felt that communists and other leftists posed a unique threat to the reproduction of mainstream ideologies. The teachers targeted were, for the most part, either members of teachers' unions or elected leaders in left-led teacher unions. In 1955 the U.S. Senate Interim

⁷⁷ Taylor, *Reds at the Blackboard*, 104.

⁷⁸ *Ibid.*, 176–177.

Committee on Education remarked upon the success of blacklisting teachers, reporting that it was “deeply gratified” at the mass firing of teachers who refused to answer questions about their political affiliations.⁷⁹

The Canoga Park Case: The Commencement of the Blacklist in Los Angeles

Efforts to root out communist public school teachers in Los Angeles began in 1946 with the attempted blacklisting of two high school teachers at Canoga Park High School: Frances Eisenberg and Blanche Bettington. The Tenney Committee’s early efforts to root out communist influence in the schools were largely unsuccessful; the committee wanted to conduct a search for communist teachers throughout California’s public schools as well as change textbooks to eliminate any subject matter that could be interpreted as communist-oriented.⁸⁰ Though the attempt to fire Eisenberg and Bettington was ultimately unsuccessful, the state learned from its mistakes and would find more success in later efforts to blacklist teachers in Los Angeles in the early to mid-1950s.

The investigation of high school teachers Eisenberg and Bettington originated with the Tenney Committee’s efforts to investigate subversion in California’s schools in the early 1940s. Though an earlier investigation in 1941 disclosed no evidence of subversive teaching, Jack Tenney, along with his anti-communist colleague in the state legislature, Nelson Dilworth, refused to concede on the issue.⁸¹ Aside from

⁷⁹ Heale, “Red Scare Politics,” 26.

⁸⁰ Kransdorf, *A Matter of Loyalty*, 32.

⁸¹ Verdries, “Teaching With the Enemy,” 66.

searching for communist teachers, the Tenney Committee also sought changes in school textbooks in order to eradicate any anti-American or subversive information. For example, one textbook was edited because of an “un-American” reference to the fact that “one-third of our people are poorly housed.”⁸² The Tenney Committee, according to Heale, also “inveighed against...some sex education texts which were held to follow ‘the Communist Party line for the destruction of the moral fibre of American youth.’”⁸³

Conservative parents in Canoga Park attracted the Tenney Committee’s attention to Eisenberg and Bettington at Canoga Park High School. Lyn Nofziger,⁸⁴ a student in Eisenberg’s journalism class, came from a conservative family concerned with any evidence of subversion at Canoga Park High School; it also wholeheartedly supported Tenney’s campaign against communists. According to Eisenberg, Nofziger, upset that Eisenberg and the rest of the journalism class refused to allow him to write a gossip column for the school newspaper, refused to complete school work for the final section of the class. When Eisenberg gave what she calls a “courtesy B” to him, on the last day of school Nofziger’s mother, Rosalind Nofziger, came to school to confront Eisenberg about what she felt was a low grade. Eisenberg recalled,

⁸² Kransdorf, *A Matter of Loyalty*, 32.

⁸³ Heale, “Red Scare Politics,” 18.

⁸⁴ Lyn Nofziger would go on to have a career in Republican Party politics, assisting Ronald Reagan in his campaigns for governor of California and for the United States presidency. Nofziger would also serve as President Reagan’s press secretary, before leaving to found a political consulting firm (Kransdorf, *A Matter of Loyalty*, 50.)

I remember that I had my door propped open because it was such a hot day. Then I heard a click, click, click of heels in the empty hallway. It stopped at the door. A voice said, 'Are you Mrs. Eisenberg?' I said, 'yes, come in.' 'I don't want to come in. I'm Lyn's mother. I have his report card in my hand. How dare you give my son a B? That's a disgrace in my family, you dirty Jew, I'll get even with you!'⁸⁵

In an oral history, Eisenberg contends that conservative community members, including the Nofzigers, tipped off Tenney to "subversive" teaching at Canoga Park High School during Tenney's stop in Canoga Park as part of his campaign for the state Senate.⁸⁶

The Tenney Committee questioned Eisenberg and Bettington at a hearing at Canoga Park High School in October, 1946 in an attempt to link the two teachers to the Communist Party and teaching un-American doctrines to their students. On October 2, 1946, the principal of Canoga Park High School called Eisenberg and Bettington out of their classrooms. At the principal's office the two found the county Sheriff, who served them with subpoenas to appear as witnesses before the Tenney Committee the following Wednesday.⁸⁷ He provided no information about the nature of the charges.⁸⁸ Tenney claimed that Eisenberg was associated with the Peoples' Educational Center, which the committee maintained was linked with the Communist Party. Eisenberg informed the Tenney Committee that she served as the delegate to

⁸⁵ Fariello, *Red Scare*, 1995, 460.

⁸⁶ Fariello, *Red Scare*, 60.

⁸⁷ Frances Eisenberg, Draft narrative about experiences with the Tenney Committee, Frances R. Eisenberg Los Angeles City Schools Loyalty Oath Collection, ca. 1946-1958, folder 9, box 1.

⁸⁸ "Special Newsletter to all Members," October 14, 1946, Eisenberg Collection, folder 9, box 1.

the center on behalf of the Teachers' Union, AFT Local 430.⁸⁹ J. Paul Elliott, president of the Los Angeles Board of Education, appeared at the hearing and agreed that the Board would take charge of the investigation, stating that a public hearing would take place at Canoga Park High School on October 14-17, 1946.⁹⁰ The Board of Education charged Eisenberg and Bettington with teaching subversive doctrines to their students. An old student of Bettington's, a graduate of Canoga Park High School in 1941, accused Bettington of undermining the American government by comparing the United States to the Soviet Union and, in the process, of consistently defending the Soviet Union. Another student, the sister of a student of Bettington's who had never been in classes taught by either teacher, accused both Eisenberg and Bettington of using communist newspapers in their teaching.⁹¹

Bettington and Eisenberg had taught for many years before they were called before the Tenney Committee. Eisenberg had been teaching at Canoga Park High School for ten years, while Bettington had been a teacher for 23 years. Eisenberg taught Senior Problems and Journalism courses at the school, while Bettington was the head of the Social Studies Department. Bettington also was the "Lieutenant Governor" of the State Federation of World Friendship Clubs and adviser to the

⁸⁹ Frances Eisenberg, Draft narrative about experiences with the Tenney Committee, Eisenberg Collection, folder 9, box 1.

⁹⁰ Citizens Committee for Better Education, "The Canoga Park Investigation," Eisenberg Collection, folder 9, box 1.

⁹¹ Frances Eisenberg, Draft narrative about experiences with the Tenney Committee, Eisenberg Collection, folder 9, box 1.

student body government.⁹² Eisenberg helped her students win twelve consecutive national journalism awards for one of the best student newspapers in the country.⁹³

An important factor that helps to explain why Eisenberg and Bettington were subject to an investigation stemmed from conservative influences on Canoga Park High School. Located in the San Fernando Valley just outside the city of Los Angeles, in the 1940s Canoga Park was rural and agricultural, and included, remembers Eisenberg, many Mexican immigrant workers, as well as southern white people who had come to California looking for an improved standard of living.⁹⁴ Another teacher at Canoga Park High School who would face the blacklist just a few years later, Jean Wilkinson, remembers that the elementary schools were segregated between white children and Mexican children until they came to high school, and that there were “strong feelings against migratory workers, agricultural workers of all kinds. The Associated Farmers, a conservative grower group in the area, also had a strong presence and significant political influence in the area.”⁹⁵

It was clear that the Tenney Committee targeted Eisenberg due to her activism in AFT Local 430. Eisenberg was a very active union member with the Teachers’ Union, American Federation of Teachers, Local 430. Not only was she the editor of the union’s newsletter for many years, but Eisenberg remembered that she was the

⁹² “Special Newsletter to all Members,” October 14, 1946, Eisenberg Collection, folder 9, box 1.

⁹³ Greg Goldin, Term Papers, 8, Goldin Collection, folder 2, box 1.

⁹⁴ Kransdorf, *A Matter of Loyalty*, 46.

⁹⁵ Jean Wilkinson, Interview in Verdries, “Teaching With the Enemy,” 208–209. Verdries’ dissertation contains long segments of interviews she conducted with blacklisted teachers. She often referred to the teachers using just first or last names or, possibly, pseudonyms

first union member at Canoga Park High School when she started teaching there in 1936, and that by the time she left in 1949 to teach at Fairfax High School “almost every teacher in the Social Studies department and the English department,” as well as some of the language teachers and teachers in other departments, had become union members.⁹⁶ Additionally, for the five years prior to Tenney’s investigation Eisenberg had been an officer of the AFT Local 430.⁹⁷ Though this was not public, Eisenberg had also joined the Communist Party in 1936.

It is less clear why Bettington was the target of an investigation. She had worked at Canoga Park for 23 without suspicion and, according to Eisenberg, Bettington “fundamentally would never, never be a member of the Communist Party.”⁹⁸

Overall, then, active engagement of some conservative parents and community members with the work of the Tenney Committee, in conjunction with Eisenberg’s activism with the Local 430, contributed to the choice that the Tenney Committee made to make Eisenberg and Bettington the very first teachers targeted during the Red Scare in education in the 1940s.

Community members, alumni, current students at Canoga Park High School, members of the Los Angeles labor movement, and AFT Local 430 all came to the defense of Eisenberg and Bettington in 1946. AFT Local 430 established a Teachers

⁹⁶ Kransdorf, *A Matter of Loyalty*, 16; Frances Eisenberg, Interview with Greg Goldin, n.d., Goldin Collection, tape 1, box 2.

⁹⁷ Francis Eisenberg to “Friends,” November, 1946, Eisenberg Collection, folder 9, box 1.

⁹⁸ Kransdorf, *A Matter of Loyalty*, 18; Francis Eisenberg, Interview in Verdries, “Teaching With the Enemy,” 194.

Defense Fund, which solicited contributions from community members interested “in defense of academic freedom and the public schools.”⁹⁹ The union also conducted political education about the case in order to increase support for the teachers, with Harold Orr, the president of Local 430, speaking before the Board of Education on October 14, 1946 and the union issuing statements and soliciting “financial and moral support” from the national office of the American Federation of Teachers.¹⁰⁰

The national office of the American Federation of Teachers supported Eisenberg and Bettington, while at the same time condemning advocates of communism. An AFT statement issued on November 30, 1946 noted that the national union “has been deeply interested in opposing classroom teaching which is contrary to the fundamental principles of American democracy.” After noting that the AFT constitution prohibited union membership to members of the Communist Party, the AFT statement referred to the “unsubstantiated” charges against the two teachers, arguing that the investigation itself—rather than the two teachers—was a “subversive and un-American practice of the worst kind.”¹⁰¹

In contrast to the AFT statement, the CIO-affiliated and left-led United Public Workers of America issued a statement on November 19, 1946 in support of Eisenberg and Bettington, finding no need to indicate its opposition to communism.

⁹⁹ “Special Newsletter to all Members,” October 14, 1946, Eisenberg Collection, folder 9, box 1.

¹⁰⁰ “Statement of President Orr to Board of Education, October 14, 1946,” Eisenberg Collection, folder 10, box 1; “Special Newsletter to all Members,” October 14, 1946, Eisenberg Collection, folder 9, box 1.

¹⁰¹ American Federation of Teachers to “Dear Sir,” November 30, 1946, Eisenberg Collection, folder 2, box 1.

Rather, Harry Jung, the UPWA's regional representative, asserted that not only were the two teachers "preaching no doctrine" but they were "building better citizens by guiding their students to independent thinking and training them to investigate impartially all doctrines and opinions and to reach their own conclusions in a truly American and democratic spirit." In the statement Jung recommended "complete vindication" of the teachers, a "disavowal of the charges made before the Tenney Committee," and called for the Board to issue a statement "specifically forbidding interference with the right of teachers to present every side of any moot question."¹⁰² The difference in how the AFT and the UPWA expressed their support perhaps stemmed from the AFT's anti-communist campaign, beginning in the early 1940s, to remove communists from its ranks, while the CIO, the parent union of the UPWA, would, just a couple of years later, kick the UPWA out on charges of communism. UPWA, like Local 430, was a left-led union.¹⁰³

The organized support of students, parents, alumni, and other community members may have helped to delegitimize the Tenney Committee's investigation into Eisenberg and Bettington's teaching. Eisenberg remembers that "so great was the indignation" at the hearings that a "West Valley Fair Action Committee of parents and concerned citizens was organized in two days." About 150 people "descended upon the Board of Education demanding an immediate and fair investigation." During the October, 1946 hearing at the High School, Eisenberg remembers that over 100

¹⁰² Harry S. Jung, Regional Representative of United Public Workers of America to Mr. Verling Kersey, Superintendent of Schools, Board of Education, Los Angeles, November 19, 1946, Eisenberg Collection, folder 2, box 1.

¹⁰³ Taylor, *Reds at the Blackboard*, 171.

people testified, mostly in favor of the teachers.¹⁰⁴ In October, teachers at John Marshall High School signed a petition in support of the teachers, while the Southland Jewish Organization sent a letter signed by 48 people expressing their “full support” in the fight against the “unjust accusations.”¹⁰⁵ Students and parents also “bombarded” the Board of Education with supportive letters throughout October.¹⁰⁶ “Mrs C.,” a science teacher retired from Canoga Park High School who had also been a member of the Communist Party (but always hid this fact), organized alumni support in the leadup to the October hearings. “We had this throng of alumni supporting us,” stresses Eisenberg.¹⁰⁷ The support both teachers received surpassed the ability of the anti-communists to drum up support for dismissing the two teachers, indicating perhaps that the atmosphere of rabid anti-communism present in the early to mid-1950s had not quite grown to a large enough extent in 1946 to really kick start a widespread witch hunt in the Los Angeles schools.

As a result of the hearing at Canoga Park High School on October 15-18, 1946, the Los Angeles Board of Education decided in December, 1946 that no disciplinary measures would be taken against either Eisenberg or Bettington. The board found that neither teacher “imposed Communistic doctrines upon students in their classes, or that they ‘slanted’ or improperly influenced the policy or articles of

¹⁰⁴ Frances Eisenberg, Draft narrative about experiences with the Tenney Committee, Eisenberg Collection, folder 9, box 1.

¹⁰⁵ Petition signed by faculty at John Marshall High School in support of Eisenberg and Bettington; Members of the Southland Jewish Organization to Mrs. Eisenberg, October 19, 1946, Eisenberg Collection, folder 1, box 1.

¹⁰⁶ Frances Eisenberg, Interview with Greg Goldin, n.d., Goldin Collection, tape 2, box 2.

¹⁰⁷ Frances Eisenberg, Interview in Verdries, “Teaching With the Enemy,” 212.

the school newspaper, 'The Hunter's Call.' The Board's report indicates that both teachers "denied sympathy with or approval of Communism" and that they "asserted approval of" "our capitalistic system of free enterprise." However, the board did assert that both teachers used practices "which could reasonably be expected improperly to influence or slant the thinking" of some students. The report also stated that both teachers "actively and conspicuously have taken partisan positions in the community on highly controversial, political, economic, or social issues." While Eisenberg and Bettington had expressed their opinions in the classroom, however, the board of education found that the two teachers "granted the students the right to differ, to express their own opinions, and to read source material of every nature." The board concluded that Bettington and Eisenberg had not intentionally sought to indoctrinate their students. Thus, though the Board had some questions with regard to their teaching, it did not recommend disciplinary action.¹⁰⁸

Happy that they did not face disciplinary charges, the two teachers issued a statement indicating that they were nonetheless dissatisfied that they were not completely cleared of all charges. Their reply declared that the Board's findings, "denies the rights of teachers as citizens to participate in community."¹⁰⁹ On the other hand, the Tenney Committee called the Board's investigation a "complete whitewash," asserting, in contrast,

¹⁰⁸ "Report from the Committee of the Whole and Superintendent to the Board of Education," Subject: "Review of Evidence and Findings in the Canoga Park Inquiry," December 30, 1946, Eisenberg Collection, folder 4, box 1.

¹⁰⁹ "Analysis of Board's Review by Mrs. B and Mrs. E," Eisenberg Collection, folder 4, box 1.

This committee finds that Mrs. Eisenberg and Mrs. Bettington slanted their teachings and discussions at the Canoga Park High School for the purpose of indoctrinating its students with Communist philosophy, disrespect for the capitalist system of the government of the United States and for the further purpose of building respect and reverence for the cruel dictatorship of the Soviet Union.¹¹⁰

Without the cooperation of the Los Angeles School Board, however, the teachers could not face disciplinary action.

The Tenney Committee, by 1946, had years of experience making exaggerated claims about communist influence in California. It would take the Los Angeles Board of Education a few more years before it, like the Tenney Committee, would fully partake in the anti-communist hysteria that resulted in the blacklisting of “subversive “ teachers. This investigation of Eisenberg and Bettington marked just the beginning of the Red Scare in education in California. It reveals, first, that in 1946 anti-communism in California had not become sufficiently hysterical to make the firing of leftist teachers a widely accepted practice. Secondly, it demonstrates, through the targeting of teacher union activist Eisenberg, the anti-union nature of the persecution of communist and other leftist teachers.

Anti-Communism and American Federation of Teachers Local 430

The history of teacher unionism in Los Angeles is fundamentally linked with the history of the Communist Party and anti-communism in Los Angeles. Prior to being purged from the American Federation of Teachers in 1948, AFT Local 430 was a left-led union that promoted what labor historians refer to as social unionism. In

¹¹⁰ Cited in Kransdorf, *A Matter of Loyalty*, 60.

contrast to advocates of business unionism, a philosophy toward unionism narrower in its political scope, advocates of social unionism had an expansive vision of social and economic justice.¹¹¹ AFT Local 430's version of social unionism most clearly revealed itself in the union's organizing for racial justice and its organizing alongside community-based groups. The Communist Party membership of many of the elected leaders of Local 430 shaped the union's politics, but because of the anti-communism of the AFT's national office Local 430's link with the CP also contributed to the union's downfall. When members dissatisfied with the leadership of Local 430 unsuccessfully attempted to unseat the leadership in a union election, they turned to the national office of the American Federation of Teachers to investigate Local 430 on charges of communism.

The history of the American Federation of Teachers in Los Angeles began, according to Roger Lynn Clancy, in 1919 with the founding of AFT Local 77. However, Local 77 was short-lived and unsuccessful in achieving its aims or recruiting many members. After Local 77 expired in 1923, the AFT would not charter another union local in Los Angeles until 1935, when several teachers successfully established AFT Local 430.¹¹² Though many teachers belonged to well-established professional associations in Los Angeles, and were leery of joining a teachers' union, AFT Local 430 experienced slow but steady growth over its lifetime. From a membership of 22 teachers in 1936, by the time it was purged from the American

¹¹¹ Kim Moody, *An Injury to All: The Decline of American Unionism* (London; New York: Verso, 1988), xv.

¹¹² Lynn Roger Clancy, Jr., "The History of the American Federation of Teachers in Los Angeles, 1919-1969" (Ph.D. diss., University of California, Los Angeles, 1971), 1.

Federation of Teachers in 1948 Local 430 had 736 members.¹¹³ This was not a particularly impressive number, however. The Los Angeles School District, after all, had approximately 10,500 teachers in the late 1940s, meaning at its height Local 430's membership comprised less than one percent of the total number of teachers in Los Angeles. However, in the 1940s public school teachers did not have the legal right to collective bargaining, decreasing the potential influence the union could have on the working conditions and compensation of teachers in Los Angeles. AFT Local 430, like teachers' unions elsewhere, tended to have lower membership in the absence of collective bargaining rights.¹¹⁴

AFT Local 430 and its predecessor, the Los Angeles Federation of Teachers, organized around a multiplicity of issues relating to teachers' working conditions and compensation, including, for example, salary increases for teachers. In 1948 the Los Angeles Federation of Teachers recommended to the Los Angeles School Board an across-the-board raise of \$42 a month, a minimum annual salary of \$3,100 and a maximum annual salary of \$6,000.¹¹⁵ In order to convince the Board of Education of the necessity for the salary increase the union gathered 10,000 taxpayer signatures in just three weeks to combat the notion that people would refuse to vote in favor of a

¹¹³ Ibid., 178.

¹¹⁴ "AFT Convention Proceedings, 1948, Abridged," AFT Collection, part II, series VIII, folder 1, box 23.

¹¹⁵ "Teachers Ask Pay Rise Top Budget Allotment," June 8, 1948, *Los Angeles Times*; "AFT Convention Proceedings, Abridged, 1948," AFT Collection, part II, series VIII, folder 1, box 23.

tax to increase school funding, and teachers salaries in particular.¹¹⁶ Another major campaign in the early 1950s was to decrease class size as well as a reduction in teachers' workloads. The union directed its demand for smaller classes to the state legislature.¹¹⁷ In the mid-1940s to the mid-1950s the union also organized in support of academic freedom, advocated for the rights of substitute teachers, demanded improved instructional facilities, called for a free lunch hour, carried teachers' grievances to the school board, and advocated for the protection of teacher tenure rights, among other issues.¹¹⁸

Local 430 was also committed to anti-racism, in large part because many of the union's leaders were members of the Communist Party, USA (CP). The CP, beginning in the late 1920s, followed the Soviet Union's line which defined African Americans in the United States as an oppressed nation with a right to self-determination. Mark Naison writes that this new line, adopted in 1928, "endowed the black struggle with unprecedented dignity and importance." The CP defined black people in the South, in particular, as a "revolutionary force," making it necessary for the U.S.-based CP to prioritize organizing among African Americans in the South, particularly to organize the rural black population for control of the land, against Jim

¹¹⁶ "AFT Convention Proceedings, Abridged, 1948," AFT Collection, part II, series VIII folder 1, box 23.

¹¹⁷ *The Los Angeles Teacher* XI, no. 5, February 1951, L.A. Teachers Union Collection, folder 3, box 2.

¹¹⁸ *Ibid.*; Charles E. Ham, "Union Carries Fight For Substitutes to Higher Court," *The Los Angeles Teacher* 6, no. 6, September-October 1945, AFT Defunct Locals Collection, folder: #430 L.A. Federation of Teachers, box 10.

Crow segregation, and lynching.¹¹⁹ Across the U.S. the CP organized not only to stamp out any anti-black racism among white Party members, but actively engage in the black freedom.¹²⁰ In 1935 the Communist Party abandoned what it called “self-determination in the Black Belt” as part of its organizing program in favor of a Popular Front, a political line it held until 1945. This new organizing program promoted alliances with liberals, socialists, established trade unions, and others in order to fight world fascism.¹²¹ The CP did, however, continue to organize against racism, focusing on such issues as voting rights, employment discrimination and the denial of civil rights.¹²²

More concretely, the Communist Party’s anti-racist organizing in Los Angeles and elsewhere helped to attract African Americans and other people of color to the

¹¹⁹ Mark Naison, *Communists in Harlem During the Depression* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1983), 18.

¹²⁰ *Ibid.*, 19.

¹²¹ *Ibid.*, 170.

¹²² *Ibid.*, 173. For histories of the Communist Party in the United States, particularly the CP and race, see Dayo F. Gore, *Radicalism at the Crossroads: African American Women Activists in the Cold War* (New York: New York University Press, 2011); Harry Haywood and Gwendolyn Midlo Hall, *A Black Communist in the Freedom Struggle: The Life of Harry Haywood* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2012); Dorothy Healey and Maurice Isserman, *Dorothy Healey Remembers a Life in the American Communist Party* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1990); Gerald Horne, *Black Liberation/Red Scare: Ben Davis and the Communist Party* (Newark: University of Delaware Press, 1993); Hosea Hudson and Nell Irvin Painter, *The Narrative of Hosea Hudson: The Life and Times of a Black Radical* (New York: Norton, 1994); Maurice Isserman, *Which Side Were You On?: The American Communist Party During the Second World War* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1993); Kelley, *Hammer and Hoe*; Lipsitz, *Rainbow at Midnight*; Naison, *Communists in Harlem During the Depression*; Fraser M Ottanelli, *The Communist Party of the United States: From the Depression to World War II* (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 1991); Kate Weigand, *Red Feminism: American Communism and the Making of Women’s Liberation* (Baltimore, Md.: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2001); Jeff Woods, *Black Struggle, Red Scare: Segregation and Anti-Communism in the South, 1948-1968* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University, 2004).

party. Most prominently, the International Labor Defense (ILD), an organization established by the CP, worked vigorously in behalf of the so-called “Scottsboro boys.” The case involved nine African American teenagers accused of raping a white woman in Alabama in 1931, with all but the one thirteen-year-old being sentenced to death in a rushed trial with poor defense counsel and an all-white jury. The Communist Party came to their defense, not only legally through the ILD but also via an enormous political defense campaign. The CP’s work on the Scottsboro case attracted the involvement and participation of many African Americans, in particular.¹²³

Though the CP’s organizing paid disproportionate attention to black struggles for equality, the party in Los Angeles also organized against discrimination faced by people of Mexican and Latin American origin and Asian Americans. A well-known leader in the Los Angeles CP, Dorothy Healey remembered, “the fight against

¹²³ Sides, *L.A. City Limits*, 32; *Bridges of Reform: Interracial Civil Rights Activism in Twentieth-Century Los Angeles* (Oxford ; New York: Oxford University Press, 2011), 41. For more on the Scottsboro case and the International Labor Defense, see James R. Acker, *Scottsboro and Its Legacy: The Cases That Challenged American Legal and Social Justice* (Westport: Praeger, 2008); Erin Royston Battat, *Ain’t Got No Home: America’s Great Migrations and the Making of an Interracial Left* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2014); Dan T. Carter, *Scottsboro: A Tragedy of the American South*, rev. ed (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1979); Glenda Elizabeth Gilmore, *Defying Dixie: The Radical Roots of Civil Rights, 1919-1950* (New York; London: W. W. Norton, 2009); James E. Goodman, *Stories of Scottsboro* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1994); Haywood and Midlo Hall, *A Black Communist in the Freedom Struggle*; Horne, *Black Liberation/Red Scare*; Gerald Horne, *Black Revolutionary: William Patterson and the Globalization of the African American Freedom Struggle* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2013); Walter T. Howard, ed., *Black Communists Speak on Scottsboro: A Documentary History* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 2007); Hosea Hudson and Nell Irvin Painter, *The Narrative of Hosea Hudson*; Kelley, *Hammer and Hoe*; Erik S. McDuffie, *Sojourning for Freedom: Black Women, American Communism, and the Making of Black Left Feminism* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2011); James A. Miller, *Remembering Scottsboro: The Legacy of an Infamous Trial* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2009).

racism...was the central question as far as we were concerned. There was nothing that had a higher priority.”¹²⁴ Before the Red Scare crippled the work of the party, in Los Angeles the CP was one of the main vehicles for civil rights activism, especially in years immediately following WWII. Only second in size nationally to the CP in New York, the Los Angeles Communist Party was known for organizing direct action protests against police brutality and against discrimination in employment and housing. The party also prioritized political education.¹²⁵ The Communist Party organized demonstrations in support of striking Mexican Imperial Valley farm workers. According to Shana Bernstein, it also demonstrated against anti-alien fishing laws, a particular concern of the Japanese community.¹²⁶ The Sleepy Lagoon Defense Committee, a multiracial alliance formed to defend seventeen Mexican-American teenage boys incarcerated on murder charges in 1943, included a cross-section of people with a variety of politics, including people affiliated with the Communist Party and the CP-associated International Labor Defense.¹²⁷ Sides argues that the African American community’s collaboration with the Communist Party strengthened in the late 1940s and early 1950s, prompted by the organizing of the CP-affiliated

¹²⁴ Sides, *L.A. City Limits*, 141–142.

¹²⁵ *Ibid.*, 142–143.

¹²⁶ Bernstein, *Bridges of Reform*, 41.

¹²⁷ *Ibid.*, 65, 87–88; For more on the Sleepy Lagoon case and the Zoot Suit Riots, see Luis Alvarez, *The Power of the Zoot: Youth Culture and Resistance During World War II* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2008); Kevin Allen Leonard, *The Battle for Los Angeles: Racial Ideology and World War II* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 2006); Eduardo Obregón Pagán, *Murder at the Sleepy Lagoon: Zootsuits, Race, and Riot in Wartime L.A.* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2003); Catherine Sue Ramírez, *The Woman in the Zoot Suit: Gender, Nationalism, and the Cultural Politics of Memory* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2009); Mark A. Weitz, *The Sleepy Lagoon Murder Case: Race Discrimination and Mexican-American Rights* (Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 2010).

Civil Rights Congress in response to the police murder of African American Herman Burns in 1948.¹²⁸

Though the CP in Los Angeles was actively engaged in anti-racist organizing, it never quite managed to become a truly multiracial alliance, according to Bernstein. By the late 1940s, Jewish and white people still predominated as CP members and leaders in Los Angeles, though African American membership had increased by then, making up about ten percent of the local membership, while there were about 300 to 400 Mexican American members. The exact number of Japanese American CP members was hard to come by, but, as Bernstein explains, CP member Karl Yoneda's memoir makes clear that Japanese Americans joined the Communist Party earlier in the twentieth-century and remained members through the 1940s. Total Party membership in Los Angeles reached a high point in 1949, with 5,000 members.¹²⁹

One way that AFT Local 430 incorporated anti-racism into its organizing was through its efforts to incorporate the histories of people of color—particularly African American history—into the school curricula. A blacklisted teacher and union activist, who Verdries only refers to as “Muriel,” recalled that she joined a union subcommittee that prepared materials on black history and “put it into the schools.”¹³⁰ Another teacher and union activist, Arlene Shepro, remembered that she was teaching at a school in the San Fernando Valley with approximately one-quarter Mexican-

¹²⁸ Sides, *L.A. City Limits*, 140.

¹²⁹ Bernstein, *Bridges of Reform*, 113. Bernstein writes that Los Angeles had the highest proportion of Japanese American Party members, numbering about 60 to 100, “according to one estimate” (Bernstein, 42).

¹³⁰ Quoted in Verdries, “Teaching With the Enemy,” 196.

American students. Shepro made sure to teach her fourth grade students about the contributions of Mexicans during her unit about early California history.¹³¹ During World War II, Local 430 went before the Los Angeles School Board to advocate for the inclusion of multiracial subjects into the school system's curricula. Local 430 linked its rationale for diversifying the curricula to the U.S. involvement in the war, arguing that "addressing race relations in the schools would help counter Fifth Column agents' attempts to propagate 'anti-Mexicanism, anti-Semitism, and anti-Negroism.'"¹³²

Abraham Minkus, Vice President of Local 430, paid a particularly prominent role in Local 430's anti-racist organizing by promoting intercultural education in the Los Angeles school system during the mid-1940s.¹³³ Intercultural education, as a precursor to multicultural education, stressed the contributions of people of various ethnicities and races to the culture and history of the U.S. Rachel Davis DuBois, a Quaker born in 1892, was prominent promoter of intercultural education. According to Taylor, DuBois' programs "went beyond tolerance, wanting instead to develop 'sympathetic attitudes toward various races and nations.'"¹³⁴ Local 430, as well as the New York Teachers Union, advocated intercultural education as a way to combat discrimination in the schools. Taylor writes of the New York Teachers' Union's support of intercultural education: "this civil rights effort was just as important as the

¹³¹ Arlene Shepro, Interview with Greg Goldin, n.d., Goldin Collection, tape 1, box 2.

¹³² Bernstein, *Bridges of Reform*, 87.

¹³³ "Abe and Libbie," Interview in Verdries, "Teaching With the Enemy," 187.

¹³⁴ Taylor, *Reds at the Blackboard*, 88-90.

right to vote because it attempted to put an end to the systematic psychological destruction of children.”¹³⁵

Minkus and Local 430 prioritized intercultural education, viewing a more racially and ethnically inclusive school curriculum as a key component to the larger civil rights struggle. Minkus and the union influenced the Los Angeles Board of Education to set up a Committee on Intercultural Education. Beginning in 1943 or 1944, Local 430 initiated the fight for intercultural education when it helped to enlist the support of 86 organizations to go before the Board of Education to advocate for intercultural education. As a result of this mobilization at the Board’s meeting, the Superintendent issued a directive in 1945 to “all principals, directives, and supervisors” on “Principles, Policies, and Procedures for the Development of Tolerance within the Student Body.”¹³⁶ In the mid-1940s Minkus served on a Committee on Intercultural Education, alongside Carey McWilliams, a journalist, author and activist focused heavily on labor and anti-racism, and Revels Cayton, Vice President of the California CIO Council and civil rights activist. Of his participation on the committee, Minkus recalled in an interview in the late 1970s, “the orientation was that, here, we have children of all kinds of different ethnic backgrounds,” that education was too “one-sided:

there isn’t enough understanding of blacks...of Chicanos, and yet they are an immediate and important part of our community. To go by the

¹³⁵ Ibid., 245.

¹³⁶ Harold Orr, “President Reviews Accomplishments of Teachers’ Union”; Abraham Minkus, “The Huge Demonstration for Racial Equality Points to an Intercultural Education Need,” *The Los Angeles Teacher* 6, no. 6, Oct.-Sept. 1945, both citations from AFT Collection, series IV, AFT Defunct Locals, folder: #430 LA fed of teachers, box 10.

curriculum in effect at that time, one would never dream that there were blacks in the American population or that Chicanos had a great deal to do with the development of this part of our country.¹³⁷

Though Local 430 did address the need to incorporate the histories of various people of color, the union focused much more on African American history, particularly in the pages of its newsletter. Like the left-led Teachers Union in New York City, Local 430 advocated for the inclusion of “Negro History Week” in the curriculum. Historian Carter G. Woodson, the director of the Association for the Study of Negro Life and History, established “Negro History Week” in 1926 as the second week of February. Taylor explains that Woodson promoted black history because it “would be used to oppose the myths of black inferiority propagated by white America. Negro history could also help bolster black esteem, which was constantly under attack by the dissemination of racist lies.”¹³⁸ After years of promoting black history, Local 430 wrote in its 1951 newsletter that the schools in Los Angeles had adopted Negro History Week. The newsletter read, “Crispus Attucks, Frederick Douglass, Sojourner Truth, George W. Carver and others need to be known and remembered as American heroes along with other heroes and patriots commonly studied.”¹³⁹ During its February, 1953 membership meeting, Local 430 held an event to mark Negro History Week, which was “always the principal event of

¹³⁷ Abraham and Libbie Minkus, Interview with Greg Goldin, n.d., Goldin Collection, tape 2, box 2. For information on Revels Cayton, see Sides, *L.A. City Limits*, 51, 63.

¹³⁸ Taylor, *Reds at the Blackboard*, 251.

¹³⁹ “Observe Negro History,” *The Los Angeles Teacher* XI, no. 5, February 1951, L.A. Teachers Union Collection 46-51, folder 3, box 2.

the February membership meeting,” according to the union’s newsletter.¹⁴⁰ During the February, 1954 membership meeting the president of the Los Angeles NAACP, Dr. Claude Hudson, gave a speech, asserting that Negro History Week was necessary because African American history had been purposely deleted from the teaching of American history.¹⁴¹

In addition to its work promoting black history and intercultural education, AFT Local 430 challenged racial discrimination in the Los Angeles School system in a multiplicity of ways. For example, in 1948, Local 430 brought charges against an elementary school principal, Nell Haas, for being anti-Semitic, anti-union and for showing “contempt toward professional Negro people” to the School Board. Though the School Board ultimately dismissed most of these charges, this demonstrates the union’s commitment to challenging discrimination.¹⁴² The union also organized to demand the hiring of more African American teachers in Los Angeles Schools in the 1940s and 1950s. Florence Sloat, a union activist who helped to found Local 430, contends that when the union was first formed in 1936 “there were no black teachers hired.”¹⁴³ Eisenberg recalls that the union actively worked to recruit black teachers, remarking that the union’s committee to hire more black teachers was labeled

¹⁴⁰ “An Outstanding Negro History Week Presentation,” *The Los Angeles Teacher* XIII, no. 2, January 1953, L.A. Teachers Union Collection 46-51, folder 3, box 2.

¹⁴¹ *The Los Angeles Teacher* 14, no. 10, April 1954, L.A. Teachers Union Collection 46-51, folder 3, box 2.

¹⁴² “The HAAS Case: Principal of the 28th St. School,” *The Los Angeles Teacher* IX, no. 2, October 1948, L.A. Teachers Union Collection 46-51, folder 3, box 2.

¹⁴³ Florence Muriel Sloat, Interview with Greg Goldin, n.d., Goldin Collection, tape 1, box 2.

communist.¹⁴⁴ Another union activist, “Margaret,” recalled that the union knew that there were no black teachers hired at all-white schools, saying that it was “an unwritten policy.” Since the data did not exist, at some point in the mid- to late-1940s Local 430 sent a survey to a “cross section” of 200 teachers to prove the existence of de facto segregation in order to influence the Board of Education’s hiring policy, which is exactly what their survey found. Though the Board of Education immediately rejected their findings, a teacher involved in AFT Local 430, referred to as “Margaret” by Verdries, recalled, “the next year, low and behold, there were the first few Negro teachers at White schools. It had an impact.”¹⁴⁵

The Los Angeles School Board’s banning of materials related to the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) from Los Angeles schools provides an important example of Local 430’s engagement with larger social issues. Information about UNESCO was a part of the curriculum in the Los Angeles public school system from 1946 to 1951. In September, 1950 the Board of Education adopted a teachers’ manual entitled “The ‘E’ in UNESCO,” “a sincere attempt to interpret through the ‘E’ (Education) all areas of UNESCO, to emphasize similarities rather than differences, to help people to improve human relations, and to help students understand and assume their responsibilities,” according to “Margaret.”¹⁴⁶ UNESCO was established in 1945 in the aftermath of World War II. Its constitution describes its purpose: “to contribute to peace and security by

¹⁴⁴ Frances Eisenberg, Interview in Verdries, “Teaching With the Enemy,” 182.

¹⁴⁵ “Margaret,” Interview in Ibid., 188.

¹⁴⁶ Ibid., 181–182.

promoting collaboration among the nations through education, science and culture.”

The purpose of UNESCO was, in part, to foster an understanding of the diversity and integrity of world cultures.¹⁴⁷ But in the midst of the Cold War, in the fall of 1951 rightwing organizations and other anti-communists protested the existence of the UNESCO program in Los Angeles schools, claiming the program was unpatriotic because it promoted a “one-world ideology” and it provided students with “daily doses of Communism, Socialism, New Dealism and other isms,” according to *The Los Angeles Teacher*.¹⁴⁸ As a result, on January 10, 1953 the Board of Education conceded to anti-communist demands and abolished the teaching of UNESCO. The Los Angeles Federation of Teachers (by now expelled from the AFT) repeatedly protested this ban of the UNESCO curriculum, linking the banning of UNESCO to the Red Scare and demanding a “revitalized” UNESCO program as late as 1956.¹⁴⁹

From its founding in 1935, AFT Local 430 advocated a vision of unionism that combined organizing in behalf of teachers on the job with a devotion to broader struggles for social justice. The membership of some of the key leaders of Local 430 in the Communist Party influenced the Local’s organizing against racism, particularly the union’s campaign promoting the incorporation of black history and intercultural education into the curriculum of public schools in Los Angeles.

¹⁴⁷ Educational Policies Commission of the National Education Association, “The United Nations, UNESCO, and American Schools” (Washington, DC: 1952).

¹⁴⁸ Verdries, “Teaching With the Enemy,” 82, 87.

¹⁴⁹ *The Los Angeles Teacher*, nos. 1, 3, September 1952; *The Los Angeles Teacher* XIII, no. 2, January 1953, L.A. Teachers Union Collection 46-51, folder 3, box 2; “The Federation’s Program for 1955-1956,” *The Los Angeles Teacher* XVIII, no. 1, October 1955, L.A. Teachers Union Collection 46-51, folder 3, box 2.

The Expulsion of Local 430 from the American Federation of Teachers

As we have seen, virulent anti-communism infected both the labor movement and education. Within the American Federation of Teachers, anti-communists had been attempting to purge the union of communists and other leftists since the 1930s, when leftists were able to gain some power within the union. After more conservative unionists successfully defeated communists and other leftists in the AFT elections for the presidency in 1939 and the AFT executive council in 1940, the opportunity finally arose for the anti-communist AFT leadership to expel left-led AFT locals. In 1941 the purges began with the revocation of Local 5's charter, the Teachers Union in New York City, and culminated with the expulsion of AFT Local 430, the left-led teachers' union in Los Angeles in 1948. The expulsion of Local 430 facilitated a political transformation of the union, both in Los Angeles and nationally, from a union especially engaged in anti-racist struggles to a relatively politically moderate union focused more on the bread and butter issues of teachers. The political infighting over communism within the AFT had the immediate impact of reducing the number of AFT members. It also diverted the union's energies away from growing its membership and unionization, perhaps resulting in the further postponement of the unionization of teachers.

The newly galvanized labor movement and the growth of the Communist Party during the Great Depression of the 1930s stimulated growth in membership in the AFT as well as its shift to the left politically. In 1934 there were 7,500 members

in the AFT, but more than 40,000 AFT members just six years later.¹⁵⁰ During the 1930s, moreover, the Communist Party and other leftists gained power within the AFT, as political conflict beset the union. By 1936, the CP and allies had gained ten of fifteen seats on the Executive Council as well as the presidency, when CP fellow traveler Jerome Davis was elected AFT president.¹⁵¹ According to Murphy, the CP at first viewed students as the primary target for organizing, but with a rapid influx of members into the CP, in conjunction with the rapid growth in AFT membership, the CP's orientation toward the AFT changed. By the mid-1930s the Communist Party "began to view the teachers' union as an important aspect of its program." The younger generation of radical activists that became active in the AFT in the 1930s, according to Murphy, were less concerned than older union leaders with teacher professionalism, instead focusing more on the availability of jobs and teacher salaries.¹⁵² The CP, moreover, was attracted to the AFT because of its reputation as a "gadfly" union as well as its history of paying some attention to social justice. When the CP and allies came to power within the AFT they would concentrate the union's energies even more on larger political issues as well as building alliances with community groups to promote social justice, particularly civil rights struggles.¹⁵³

The CP's Popular Front line in 1935 meant that the party became involved in less radical unions, like the AFL-affiliated American Federation of Teachers, while at

¹⁵⁰ Timothy Reese Cain, "Unionised Faculty and the Political Left: Communism and the American Federation of Teachers on the Eve of the Second World War," *History of Education* 41, no. 4 (June 2012): 520.

¹⁵¹ *Ibid.*, 525–526.

¹⁵² Murphy, *Blackboard Unions*, 155.

¹⁵³ *Ibid.*, 157.

the same time maintaining a strong presence in the Congress of Industrial Organizations (CIO). The CP's penchant for involvement in and support for the CIO meant that the CP influenced the AFT to actively support the CIO, a stance that was not popular with the leadership of the AFL or more moderate AFT unionists. The American Federation of Labor's leadership viewed the CP's involvement in the AFT with alarm, so much so that in 1936 the AFL investigated New York's Local 5 on charges of being communist-dominated and recommended that the AFT Executive Council take action against the union. Because the AFT was led by leftists at the time, and the left-led AFT Local 5 held considerable influence at the national level, the union refused to investigate Local 5. At the 1937 annual AFT convention, there was a contentious debate about whether or not the AFT should support or work alongside the CIO. The AFT convention voted to support the CIO and called on the AFL to do so as well.¹⁵⁴ The leftist leadership of the AFT, alongside the AFT's very public support for the CIO, would contribute to an increase in internal divisions in the union.

Internal divisions within the AFT ultimately resulted in a successful takeover of the leadership by conservatives, paving the way for the expulsion of left-led locals from the union. As John Lyons has shown in his examination of the AFT's history in Chicago, the opposition of the more professional and politically moderate Chicago Teachers Union, in particular, presented a strong challenge to the power of the left-led New York locals.¹⁵⁵ During the AFT's annual convention in Buffalo, New York in 1939, George Counts, with the support of more moderate AFT leaders and other

¹⁵⁴ Cain, "Unionised Faculty and the Political Left," 525; Murphy, *Blackboard Unions*, 162.

¹⁵⁵ Lyons, *Teachers and Reform*, 56.

liberals and leftists critical of the CP's politics, successfully challenged Jerome Davis for the presidency, beating Davis by 24 votes. Additionally, people who had previously sympathized and worked alongside the CP and their allies, including Davis, switched sides in the union as a result of the Soviet Union's signing of the Non-Aggression Pact with Nazi Germany in 1939.¹⁵⁶ Though Counts won the presidency, he and his allies were unable to take power on the Executive Council until the following year's convention when the domestic Red Scare and Stalin's assassination of Leon Trotsky in Mexico, according to Timothy Cain, "further coalesced the anti-Stalinist forces."¹⁵⁷ It was at the 1940 convention, moreover, that the American Federation of Teachers formally resolved to politically oppose communism and the Soviet Union.¹⁵⁸ William Green, the president of the American Federation of Labor, spoke at the AFL convention in 1940, declaring, "I urge you to put your house in order," and asserted that the AFL would not help the AFT by providing money for organizing drives "until you first make clear to the nation that you are an American institution."¹⁵⁹ The pressure of the AFL, which by the late 1930s viewed the AFT as communist-dominated, bolstered efforts to unseat CP members and allies from the Executive Council.

Once firmly in power in 1940, the more politically conservative leadership of the AFT went on the offensive against communism within the union. In 1941, the AFT investigated and revoked the charters of three left-led unions: the New York

¹⁵⁶ Murphy, *Blackboard Unions*, 166.

¹⁵⁷ Cain, "Unionised Faculty and the Political Left," 529.

¹⁵⁸ *Ibid.*, 532.

¹⁵⁹ Murphy, *Blackboard Unions*, 168.

City Teachers Union, Local 5; the Philadelphia teachers' union, Local 192; and the New York City College Local 537.¹⁶⁰ As a result, the union lost one-third of its total membership.¹⁶¹ Simultaneously, the AFT granted a charter to the Teachers Guild in New York, which had previously split from Local 5 when it was unable to gain power within the union—the Teachers Guild would evolve into the United Federation of Teachers in 1960, becoming the largest and most influential union local within the national AFT. Like the Los Angeles Federation of Teachers a few years later, the now expelled left-led New York Teachers Union would maintain its existence for a number of years, becoming Local 555 when it joined the United Public Workers of America, a CIO affiliate.¹⁶² Murphy explains that the two-day AFT hearing to determine the future of Local 5 “resembled a debate over the nature of teacher unionism. Issues ranged from the importance with industrial unions, not just AFL-affiliated unions, to the significance of working on community projects.”¹⁶³

After an interlude of a few years during World War II when the U.S. was allied with the Soviet Union, amidst the rapidly escalating Cold War in the late 1940s the AFT sought to finalize its project of expelling communists and other leftists from the union, this time by investigating left-led locals on the West Coast. The genesis of the national office's investigation into AFT Local 430 had to do with internal political schisms within the Los Angeles local.

¹⁶⁰ Taylor, *Reds at the Blackboard*, 73; Eaton, *The American Federation of Teachers*, 117-119.

¹⁶¹ Cain, “Unionised Faculty and the Political Left,” 534.

¹⁶² Taylor, *Reds at the Blackboard*, 73.

¹⁶³ Murphy, *Blackboard Unions*, 170.

Dissidents within AFT Local 430 formed a caucus, the Committee for a Democratic Union (CDU), to challenge the leftist leadership of Local 430 in the union's election in 1948. The Committee for a Democratic Union objected to the leadership's focus on broader political issues, accusing the leadership of being sympathetic to communism. Specifically, the committee wanted Local 430 to eschew a focus on broader social issues and instead focus almost exclusively on teachers' issues. In its "statement of beliefs," it stated,

We believe that the primary concern of the organization should be the professional problems of teachers, remuneration, working conditions, standards of admission to the profession, and all matters affecting the welfare of children, the schools and teachers. While we believe that teachers should take a leading part in political and social movements for the improvement of the community apart from the schools, we feel that such activities should be carried on primarily in organizations other than professional.¹⁶⁴

The CDU connected this desire to make the union more focused on the professional concerns of teachers to anti-communism. In February, 1948 Edith Cooke, member of the CDU and Corresponding Secretary for Local 430, wrote to Irvin Kuenzli, the Secretary-Treasurer of the AFT, "it is the persistent refusal of the controlling clique to permit the condemnation of any type of totalitarianism," and then referred to the fact that the "majority of the leadership" refused to re-print the anti-communist section of the AFT's constitution in Local 430's newsletter.¹⁶⁵ Hy Weintrab, a history teacher at Belmont High School, was quoted in the *Los Angeles*

¹⁶⁴ The Committee for a Democratic Union, "Statement of Beliefs," AFT Collection, series IV, AFT Defunct Locals, folder: Data re: Revocation of Local 430, box 10.

¹⁶⁵ Edith Cooke to Irvine R. Kuenzli, Secretary-Treasurer of the AFT, February 2, 1948, AFT Collection, series IV, AFT Defunct Locals, folder: Data Re: Revocation of Local 430, box 10.

Times in August, 1948 as saying that the leadership of Local 430 followed a “Communitic line.”¹⁶⁶ A CDU flyer, distributed in 1948, further stated that the group, presumably in contrast to the leadership of Local 430, stands in “opposition to totalitarianism, both Communist and fascist.”¹⁶⁷ As noted above, prior to members of the Communist Party and other leftists coming to power within the AFT in the 1930s, the AFT leadership emphasized the ideology of professionalism as a key characteristic of the AFT’s version of unionism. The Committee for a Democratic Union’s emphasis on professionalism, in conjunction with its clear anti-communism, reflects the potency of professionalism as an ideology shaping teacher unionism, this time molded by the Red Scare politics of the late 1940s.

The Committee for a Democratic Union, as its name suggests, also professed concerns about democratic practices within Local 430. Though the name of the group is perhaps connected to its denunciation of “totalitarianism” in favor of American democracy, the CDU criticized the leadership of Local 430 for violating democratic principles. Weintrab, the history teacher, accused Local 430’s leadership of voting “late in meetings after most of its members had left” and he charged that the local’s elections were not “always held in secrecy,” according to the *Los Angeles Times* in August, 1948.¹⁶⁸ CDU leader Walter Thomas said that it was difficult for the group to

¹⁶⁶ “Loyalty Issue Put to Teachers Local,” August 22, 1948, *Los Angeles Times*.

¹⁶⁷ The Committee for a Democratic Union Q&A Flyer, AFT Collection series IV, AFT Defunct Locals, folder: Data Re: Revocation of Local 430, box 10.

¹⁶⁸ “Loyalty Issue Put to Teachers Local,” August 22, 1948, *Los Angeles Times*.

be heard in meetings, claiming that president Harold Orr did not recognize CDU members who wanted to speak.¹⁶⁹ A CDU flyer further asserted,

It is customary for entrenched officers to ‘view with alarm’ people who challenge them. It is not customary to brand such aspirants for office as ‘spies, union-busters, liars, rumor-spreaders, reactionaries.’ A truly democratic spirit acknowledges the need for discussion, and that an honest difference of opinion may exist.¹⁷⁰

As further proof of undemocratic practices within Local 430, the CDU pointed to Harold Orr’s position as president of the local for nearly a decade.¹⁷¹ Edith Cooke also charged Orr with taking credit for the work of the local’s Committee for Democracy in Education, of which Cooke, Jane O’Bryan, Marguerite Cole, and Louise Whitehead were members. Cooke declared in a strongly worded letter in January, 1947 to Orr and other Local officers, “Mr. President, your bland claim of total credit for this Committee’s work, in which you showed little interest during progress, seems to be borrowing some polish for your slightly tarnished halo.”¹⁷²

These differences over the political orientation of Local 430, as well as concern over the lack of democratic practices within it, led the Committee for a Democratic Union to run an entire slate of candidates to unseat the local’s leadership in the January, 1948 union election. CDU member Theodore Whitehead ran against Harold Orr for president, asserting, in contrast to Orr, that he “advocates more than

¹⁶⁹ Kransdorf, *A Matter of Loyalty*, 35.

¹⁷⁰ Walter S. Thomas, President, and Edith M. Cook, Secretary, Committee for a Democratic Union, to Union Members, January 20, 1948, AFT Collection, series IV, AFT Defunct Locals, folder: Data Re: Revocation of Local 430, box 10.

¹⁷¹ Linnea Alexander, “Reply to a Letter from Mr. Orr’s Campaigners,” [n.d], AFT Collection, series IV, AFT Defunct Locals, folder: Data Re: Revocation of Local 430, box 10.

¹⁷² Edith Cooke to the Officers of Local 430, January 21, 1947, AFT Collection, series IV, AFT Defunct Locals, folder: Data Re: Revocation of Local 430, box 10.

lip service” to the “ideals of American democracy,” and pledging close cooperation with the American Federation of Labor at the local and state levels. Walter Thomas ran against incumbent Abraham Minkus for vice president, with one of his platform principles being that he would not “front for political extremists,” presumably something that Minkus and other union leaders had been doing. Edith Cooke, the only incumbent who was also a member of the CDU, ran again for Corresponding Secretary against Elsie Elieson, an AFT “contact member,” according to the union newsletter, at Virgil Junior High School. The CDU contested many other positions in the 1948 election as well.¹⁷³ The election results, reported to the national office of the AFT on February 2, 1948, show that the Committee for a Democratic Union lost the election, though not without a considerable fight. For instance, for the presidency, incumbent Orr received 334 votes while Whitehead obtained 157 votes. For the vice presidency, Minkus won with 310 votes, while Walter Thomas received 187 votes.¹⁷⁴ In other words, Whitehead received 32 percent of the votes in his bid for the presidency, while Thomas received 38 percent of the vote. Though the CDU lost, these election results perhaps point to the fact that there good amount of discontent with the current leadership. In an interview many years later with Clancy, Thomas claimed that voting irregularities may also have resulted in the CDU’s defeat.¹⁷⁵

¹⁷³ “Special Election Issue,” *The Los Angeles Teacher* VIII, no. 4, January 1948, AFT Collection, series IV, AFT Defunct Locals, folder: Data Re: Revocation of Local 430, box 10.

¹⁷⁴ Edith Cooke to Irvine R. Kuenzli, Secretary-Treasurer of the AFT, February 2, 1948, AFT Collection, series IV, AFT Defunct Locals, folder: Data Re: Revocation of Local 430, box 10.

¹⁷⁵ Clancy, Jr., “The History of the American Federation of Teachers in Los Angeles, 1919-1969,” 82–83.

When it lost the election, the Committee for a Democratic Union appealed to the national office of the AFT to investigate Local 430 on charges of communism, and grant the dissidents a new union charter. In a letter to the national office in February, 1948, Cooke said the CDU would not be able to fulfill an AFT requirement that the group get 30 percent of the membership to officially request an investigation because of the “present stranglehold of the group in office.” In the letter, Cook threatened that the people active in the CDU “could” allow their memberships in the union to lapse and “wait for a more auspicious time to work actively with the labor movement” should the AFT not agree to the committee’s requests.¹⁷⁶

The AFT Executive Council conceded to the appeal to investigate Local 430, ultimately deciding to revoke the local’s charter in the fall of 1948. An investigating committee consisting of three AFT Executive Council officers—Vice Presidents Selma Borchardt and Arthur Elder, and AFT President John Eklund—conducted an investigation in Los Angeles on September 1- 5, 1948. The investigating committee spent five days in Los Angeles talking to current and past officers of Local 430, as well as members of the community and AFL labor representatives at the local and state levels.¹⁷⁷ During the investigative hearings, according to Local 430’s newsletter, “member after member spoke in high praise of the democratic character of our union, the fine quality of the leadership and their devoted work in the interest of better education.” Approximately 85 members appeared on the first day, and about 75 the

¹⁷⁶ Edith Cooke to Irvine R. Kuenzli, Secretary-Treasurer of the AFT, February 2, 1948, AFT Collection, series IV, AFT Defunct Locals, folder: Data Re: Revocation of Local 430, box 10.

¹⁷⁷ Kransdorf, *A Matter of Loyalty*, 35; Clancy, Jr., “The History of the American Federation of Teachers in Los Angeles, 1919-1969,” 85.

following day. Despite this show of support, the Local 430 received a letter on September 20, 1948 from the Executive Council stating their decision to revoke Local 430's charter, subject to an appeal at the AFT's national convention in 1949.¹⁷⁸

The AFT Executive Council's rationale for purging Local 430 primarily cited political differences between the national office and Local 430. Despite claims by the Committee for a Democratic Union that some of Local 430's practices were undemocratic, the AFT did not cite this as part of its rationale in its summary of the AFT's decision to expel Local 430 issued in late 1948. Rather, the AFT charged that Local 430 "participated officially in affairs with groups and agencies whose activities were embarrassing to the labor movement and tend to alienate community support." The AFT called Local 430's appearances before the school board "undignified and discreditable," and further argued that Local 430 cooperated with the United Public Workers, a CIO affiliate, while at the same time the union "constantly and publicly flaunted its differences" with the AFL-affiliated central trades council." The Executive Council also referred to turnover in Local 430's membership and stressed that Local 430 "failed to take action in support of Section 9, Article 3 of the AFT Constitution when such action was proposed."¹⁷⁹ This last reference is to the section

¹⁷⁸ *The Los Angeles Teacher* IX, no. 1, September 1948, L.A. Teachers Union Collection 46-51, folder 3, box 2.

¹⁷⁹ "Summary of A.F. of T. Council Action in Connection with Revocation of Charter Local #430 Los Angeles," AFT Collection, series IV, AFT Defunct Locals, folder: Data Re: Revocation of Local 430, box 10.

of the AFT constitution that prohibits AFT member from also holding membership in “totalitarian” organizations, including the Communist Party.¹⁸⁰

AFT Local 430 unsuccessfully appealed the revocation of its charter at the AFT’s national convention in 1949. Local 430 wrote in the its newsletter in September, 1948 that the “revocation of the charter also indicates an obvious surrender on the part of the national officers to the atmosphere of hysteria and the attempted intimidation of the labor movement.” In its appeal letter to the AFT’s national office, reprinted in the union’s September, 1948 newsletter, Local 430 argued that the action taken was “arbitrary, capricious, and illegal” and that it had “no basis whatever in fact for the action taken.”¹⁸¹ AFT Local 430 brought its appeal before the AFT convention in 1949. Eklund, the AFT president, began by presenting the AFT leadership’s case against Local 430, stating mostly what had been stated in its report justifying the charter revocation. Eklund emphasized, without saying as much, links between Local 430 and various organizations, actions, and political positions associated with the Communist Party, including linking Local 430 with supporting American Youth for Democracy (which replaced the Young Communist League in 1944), the United Public Workers (which would shortly be expelled from the CIO on charges of communism), the People’s Educational Center, the State Legislative Conference, the Committee on Intellectual Freedom, and Local 430’s stated opposition to U.S. involvement in World War II until after June, 1941 (which

¹⁸⁰ AFT Convention Proceedings, 1949, AFT Collection, part II, series VIII folder 1, folder 14, box 24.

¹⁸¹ *The Los Angeles Teacher* IX, no. 1, September 1948, L.A. Teachers Union Collection 46-51, folder 3, box 2.

was when Nazi Germany invaded the Soviet Union, thereby nullifying the Stalin-Hitler Pact of 1939), among other things.¹⁸²

Local 430 President Harold Orr led the union's appeal at the convention in 1949, focusing on the lack of due process in the revocation of Local 430's charter rather than the political allegations. Orr dramatically declared, "even the worst criminal in the land is given formal charges with a chance to answer them, to see the evidence against him...Local 430 never had formal charges and therefore never had the opportunity to answer them." Orr further asserted that neither the investigating committee nor the Executive Council bothered to listen to the recorded testimony held at a Local 430 meeting on September 2, 1948. Orr noted that the officers of Local 430 were told by the AFT that the investigation would not be publicized, but an article appeared in the *Los Angeles Herald* on September 4, 1948 with a quote by President Eklund saying that they are investigating Local 430 because of charges that communists had gained power in the union. Orr also claimed that the investigating committee never made the evidence against Local 430 available for a reply before, just one week after the investigating committee left Los Angeles, the AFT informed the union that its charter had been revoked.¹⁸³ In the end, despite Orr's remonstrations, the AFT convention voted to uphold the charter revocation by a vote

¹⁸² AFT Convention Proceedings 1949, 117, AFT Collection, part II, series VIII, folder 14, box 24.

¹⁸³ *Ibid.*, 126-128.

of 792 to 108.¹⁸⁴ In response, Orr referred to the discussion that led to the vote as an “orgy of red-baiting,” and said that the Los Angeles Federation of Teachers would continue as an independent union “free from the thought-control domination of the leaders of the AFT.”¹⁸⁵

The newly chartered AFT Local 1021 in Los Angeles was slow to get off the ground and more politically moderate than its predecessor, Local 430. After Local 430’s charter revocation in September 1948, a year before Local 430’s appeal, the AFT granted a charter to the dissidents associated with the Committee for a Democratic Union, establishing AFT Local 1021. According to Clancy, the union “barely survived” under its first few presidents.¹⁸⁶ In fact, over the course of the 1950s AFT Local 1021 was quite weak. Though the Committee for a Democratic Union faulted Local 430 for not increasing its membership at a fast enough pace, Local 1021’s membership numbers were mostly stagnant in early to mid-1950s.¹⁸⁷ In 1949, AFT Local 1021 had 127 members, and a full six years later its membership had only increased to 250 members. By the late 1950s and through the 1960s, in part due to an infusion of financial resources into the union by the AFT at the state and national levels, Local 1021 began to increase in size and become much more active.¹⁸⁸ AFT

¹⁸⁴ Clancy, Jr., “The History of the American Federation of Teachers in Los Angeles, 1919-1969,” 86; Murray Illson, "Education in Review: Problems of Communism and Organization Dominate Meeting of Teachers' Federation," *New York Times*, August 28, 1949.

¹⁸⁵ Murray Illson, “AFL for School Aid Without Any Bias,” *New York Times*, August 24, 1949.

¹⁸⁶ Clancy, Jr., “The History of the American Federation of Teachers in Los Angeles, 1919-1969,” 102.

¹⁸⁷ *Ibid.*, 110.

¹⁸⁸ *Ibid.*, 180.

Local 1021, moreover, adopted the politics of its founders, eschewing the social unionism of Local 430 in favor of nearly exclusive focus on a more narrow set of bread and butter issues.

The revocation of Local 430's charter in 1948 was part of the AFT's efforts to root out left-led unions on the west coast. In 1948, the AFT also revoked the charter of the left-led University of Washington Teachers Union, Local 401, on charges of communism. The same year, the AFT's executive committee also investigated Local 61, the teachers' union for public school teachers in San Francisco, but rather than revoking Local 61's charter demanded that the union cooperate with the Central Labor Body, and "withdraw its affiliation with, and support of, the California Labor School," which was under investigation by the state on charges of subversion. The AFT found that Local 61 satisfactorily responded to its stipulations, and chose not to revoke the union's charter.¹⁸⁹

In short, in the late 1940s the American Federation of Teachers expelled two more left-led locals, this time on the West Coast, contributing to a culmination of its campaign to root out communists and other leftists. According to Fred Glass, as a result of the expulsion of Local 430, in the late 1940s the AFT in California decreased its membership by half, setting back the cause of teacher unionism in California.¹⁹⁰

The outcome of this renewed witch hunt was a political turning point for the American Federation of Teachers, as the union removed its leftist union locals

¹⁸⁹ "Report Re: Revocation of the Charters of Local 430, 401, and the Investigation of Local 61," AFT Collection, series IV, AFT Defunct Locals, folder: Data Re: Revocation of Charter of 430, box 10.

¹⁹⁰ Glass, *A History of the California Federation of Teachers, 1919-1989*, 18.

committed to broad social change. The new Los Angeles teachers' union, AFT Local 1021, in contrast to Local 430, made no mention in its literature of a desire to challenge racial inequality in the schools or in society more generally. This clearly struck a blow to the struggle against racism within teacher unionism in Los Angeles. Anti-communism within the AFT also decreased the level of democracy within the union. When the Committee for a Democratic Union lost its bid to unseat Local 430's leadership, it successfully appealed to the AFT to simply revoke Local 430's charter. The AFT's purging of left-led locals, moreover, displayed an unwillingness to allow affiliated locals to hold a politics in opposition to those of the national office, reflecting a major increase in intolerance for dissent within the union. The purging of left-led locals reflected a centralization of power within the American Federation of Teachers, decreasing bottom-up democracy. Though it is clear that the purging of Local 430 and other communist-led locals represented a weakening of democracy within the union, the concerns about democratic practices within Local 430 complicate this history. It is impossible, based on the available sources, to be certain about the veracity of the claims made by the Committee for a Democratic Union, but it is safe to assume that at least some of their concerns were valid, including their concern that Local 430's leadership was somewhat intolerant of the political opinions of more politically moderate union activists. Local 430 continued to exist as the independent Los Angeles Federation of Teachers, but not for very long. In the early to mid-1950s the leadership of the Los Angeles Federation of Teachers were subjected to a renewed anti-communist crusade against leftist teachers.

The Blacklisting of Teachers in Los Angeles in the 1950s

After the failed attempt in 1946 to blacklist Eisenberg and Bettington, high school teachers at Canoga Park High School, AFT Local 430 found its attentions divided by anti-communism yet again in 1948, this time to defend itself against charges by its own parent union, the American Federation of Teachers. Once Local 430's charter revocation was confirmed in 1949, the leftist leadership of the union reorganized themselves as the Los Angeles Federation of Teachers (LAFT), which attempted to maintain its existence as an independent left-led teacher union, an alternative to the newly-chartered and more politically conservative AFT Local 1021. However, the union's leadership once again found itself subject to the Red Scare. Throughout the 1950s, federal, state, and local investigation committees subjected LAFT leaders to interrogation about their political beliefs and associations. Unlike the Canoga Park High School case, however, this time anti-communists successfully fired leftist teachers. The LAFT did what it could to organize against this renewed blacklist, but the firing of the LAFT's leaders and the redirection of the union's energies toward defense of teachers against the blacklist ultimately resulted in the demise of this left-led teacher union in Los Angeles.

The first person to be targeted under the renewed 1950s anti-communist crusade against teachers, Harold Orr, was targeted specifically for his political activism as president of AFT Local 430 and its successor, the Los Angeles Federation

of Teachers.¹⁹¹ In 1948 Harold Orr, alongside Jung, affiliated with the United Public Workers of America, and Dr. Sanford Goldner, president of the American Jewish Labor Council, had brought charges against Nell Haas, an elementary school principal, before the Los Angeles School Board, claiming he was guilty of being anti-union, anti-Semitic, and for “showing contempt against professional Negro people.” A special hearing committee dismissed the latter two charges but found that the principal did show an unsympathetic attitude toward Local 430.¹⁹² That same year the school board sharply rebuked Orr and others who brought the complaint before the Board, accusing them of being “guilty of bad faith in giving wide-spread publicity to their violent and abusive charges” and ordered that they be censured. According to Verdries, J. Paul Elliott, president of the California School Trustees Association, connected the complaints to the Communist Party, asserting, “it has become obvious that whether these gentlemen are connected directly with the Communist Party line or not, their program of attack on the public schools in this community is in full accord with the Communist Party program.”¹⁹³

As a result of the Haas case, in October of 1950 the California Senate Investigating Committee on Education subpoenaed Orr to inquire into his political beliefs and associations. According to the LAFT newsletter, Orr “firmly resisted” any inquiry into his politics, and he declared, “as a loyal American with twenty-five years of teaching as my witness, I abhor the forces of bigotry and hysteria which set the

¹⁹¹ *The Los Angeles Teacher*, November-December 1950 XI, no. 3, L.A. Teachers Union Collection, 46-51, folder 3, box 2.

¹⁹² Verdries, “Teaching With the Enemy,” 68–69.

¹⁹³ *Ibid.*, 72.

mark of the leper on every kind of liberal.” Orr justified his refusal to answer a question about whether or not he was a member of the Communist Party by pronouncing, “I would not be a party to the violation of my rights under the Bill of Rights by allowing an inquisition into my private beliefs and associations.” In response, the Committee filed misdemeanor complaints against Orr and Dr. Linus Pauling, a California Technical Institute professor also under investigation, in an attempt to fire the two.¹⁹⁴

In order to facilitate the blacklisting of leftist teachers, on September 22, 1952 the Los Angeles Board of Education adopted Board Rule 1907. Board Rule 1907 mandated that any employee who was a member of the Communist Party presently or within a year of the adoption of the rule come forward within thirty days with a “verified statement” that she or he is no longer a member of the Communist Party. Failure to do so would result in dismissal on charges of insubordination. The rule also dictated that employees who refused to cooperate with legal investigations into subversion would be dismissed.¹⁹⁵ In response, the Los Angeles Federation of Teachers declared, “in time our schools would be staffed not by teachers, but by

¹⁹⁴ *The Los Angeles Teacher*, November-December 1950 XI, no. 3, L.A. Teachers Union Collection, 46-51, folder 3, box 2.

¹⁹⁵ Los Angeles City School Districts, Superintendent’s Bulletin no. 1, September 23, 1952, To: All Employees, From: Alexander J. Stoddard Superintendent, Subject: Rules and Orders of the Board of Education Relating to (a) membership in the CP and (b) the obligation to answer questions concerning duties and loyalty, Abraham Minkus Papers: Blacklisted Teachers in Los Angeles (hereafter Minkus Papers), 1945-1983, folder 2, box 1, Southern California Library.

vacuous guides to conformity, who evade controversial issues, associations, and ideas. Students would not learn to think, but to repeat.”¹⁹⁶

A short time later, in late 1952 the California state Committee on Un-American Activities, also known as the Burns Committee (the successor to the Tenney Committee), targeted two teacher union activists, explicitly linking them to the controversy over public housing in Los Angeles. Eisenberg, a high school teacher—by now, with twenty years of teaching experience—at Fairfax High School after being transferred from Canoga Park High School, found herself once again a target of investigation. Jean Wilkinson, a colleague of Eisenberg’s when they both taught at Canoga Park High School, with ten years of teaching experience, was also investigated. Both were active within AFT Local 430 and the Los Angeles Federation of Teachers. Eisenberg was the editor of the union’s newsletter as well as an Executive Board officer. When she was subpoenaed, Wilkinson was on pregnancy leave from teaching (she also contracted polio during her pregnancy), but had been a teacher for ten years, was a former officer of the union, and past chair of the union’s Committee on the Defense of the Schools.¹⁹⁷

The immediate trigger for the investigation of Wilkinson and Eisenberg was their support for interracial public housing in Los Angeles. During World War II the defense industry in Los Angeles greatly expanded, attracting many new people to the

¹⁹⁶ *The Los Angeles Teacher* XIII, no. 2, October 1952, L.A. Teachers Union Collection 46-51, folder 3, box 2.

¹⁹⁷ *The Los Angeles Teacher* XIII, no. 3, November 1952, L.A. Teachers Union Collection 46-51, folder 3, box 2; *The Los Angeles Teacher* XI, no. 10, June 1951, L.A. Teachers Union Collection 46-51, folder 3, box 2.

city, African Americans in particular, in search of work in the defense plants. New arrivals to Los Angeles found an acute housing shortage, in addition to an increase in racial segregation in the city after the influx of African American migrants. This housing shortage increased with the end of the war, as veterans returning home were looking for places to live. In response to the demands of civil rights organizers, in 1943 the Housing Authority of Los Angeles (HACLA) implemented completely integrated public housing. In the post-war years, according to Sides, public housing in Los Angeles was racially integrated, comfortable, and safe and often served as a way station on the way to private home ownership. While many white people utilized public housing in the immediate post-war years, by the late 1940s and early 1950s, as white families moved out, more poor black families moved in. There was also an increase in the proportion of Mexicans seeking public housing at the same time, though the proportion of African Americans living in public housing was much higher. By 1959, for example, 65 percent of public housing tenants in Los Angeles were black, while Mexicans comprised 19 percent of Los Angeles Housing Authority's tenants. In other words, writes Sides, in the late 1940s and early 1950s "public housing, both in reality and in public perception, was becoming synonymous with black housing."¹⁹⁸

In 1952, in the context of the Red Scare and the increasing association of public housing with African Americans, the real estate lobby of Los Angeles sought to undermine the housing authority's efforts to expand affordable housing in Los

¹⁹⁸ Sides, *L.A. City Limits*, 117-118.

Angeles on an explicitly integrated basis by accusing the housing authority of being dominated by communists. On August 29, 1952, the attack became personal when the white director of publicity for the housing authority, Frank Wilkinson, was testifying as an expert witness for the California Housing Authority at the Superior Court; he was asked about the political organizations he had been involved with. When Wilkinson refused to answer these questions, asserting that providing an answer might result in self-incrimination, the California Housing Authority immediately suspended him. The Los Angeles City Council then voted unanimously to have the Burns Committee investigate the Housing Authority on charges of subversion.¹⁹⁹

Though the anti-communist crusade against the Housing Authority of Los Angeles prompted the investigation into Eisenberg and Wilkinson, the two were ultimately fired because of their activism with the LAFT. The Burns Committee subpoenaed Eisenberg and Jean Wilkinson to testify about their political affiliations, and the two teachers refused, citing their constitutional rights. After Eisenberg wrote a letter of support for Frank Wilkinson, both she and Jean Wilkinson, who was married to Frank, were summoned before the Burns Committee.²⁰⁰ When asked about membership in the Communist Party, Eisenberg and Wilkinson refused to answer. As a result, in November of 1952, the Los Angeles Board of Education dismissed both teachers on charges of insubordination and unprofessional conduct. Eisenberg explained her refusal to answer the committee's questions: "As a teacher, and as a

¹⁹⁹ Parson, "Los Angeles' 'Headline-Happy Public Housing War,'" 260–261.

²⁰⁰ Verdries, "Teaching With the Enemy," 214; Kransdorf, "A Matter of Loyalty," 68; *The Los Angeles Teacher* XIII, no. 3, November 1952, L.A. Teachers Union Collection 46-51, folder 3, box 2.

mother of two sons who fought in World War II, one giving his life for this very Constitution and democratic way of life it establishes and guarantees, I shall continue to uphold and protect our precious freedom of thought.” Wilkinson similarly cited her rights under the Constitution to explain her refusal: “I am proud of my record as a teacher, and proud too of my citizenship in the community. I refuse to give up what I consider to be what I consider to be the most important of all American rights— freedom of belief and freedom to act on those beliefs.”²⁰¹ Tenure allowed Eisenberg and Wilkinson to appeal their firing through the courts; it was not until over a year later, in early 1954 that the firing of both teachers was upheld by the courts.²⁰² With this case, anti-communist efforts to fire leftist teachers were finally successful.

The firing of these two teachers catalyzed renewed efforts to blacklist teachers in Los Angeles, with members and leaders of the left-led Los Angeles Federation of Teachers targeted in particular. The House Un-American Activities Committee at the federal level—also known as the Velde Committee—subpoenaed prominent leaders of the Los Angeles Federation of Teachers when it came to Los Angeles in March, 1953. The Velde Committee’s arrival in Los Angeles was on the heels of an announcement by the Superintendent of Education that 45 teachers, according to the union, “would be interrogated on the basis of ambiguous and anonymous charges of disloyalty.”²⁰³

²⁰¹ *The Los Angeles Teacher*, November 1952 XIII, no. 3, L.A. Teachers Union Collection 46-51, folder 3, box 2.

²⁰² Fariello, *Red Scare*, 1995, 466.

²⁰³ Los Angeles Federation of Teachers, Press Release, October 27, 1952, Eisenberg Collection, folder 6: Teachers Fight Back, box 2.

The Velde committee subpoenaed Minkus, the vice president of the LAFT, for his activism in the CP and in the union, as well as his involvement in civil rights organizing. Minkus, a teacher of 19 years then at Reagan Avenue Elementary School, claimed his rights under the first and fifth amendments to the US constitution when he refused to answer questions about his politics. The Velde Committee asked him if he was at one point the section organizer for the Professional Section of the Los Angeles Communist Party, about his participation in the Citizens Committee for Better Education, which the Velde Committee claimed was a front group for the Communist Party, and asked questions, according to Kransdorf, about the CP's plot to take over the teachers' union.²⁰⁴ Minkus's FBI file indicates that he was at one point a member of the Communist Party, but in a file dated June 16, 1949 the FBI asserts that Minkus had become "inactive" in the CP and removed him from the FBI's "Key Figure List."²⁰⁵ Despite this, because of Minkus' refusal to answer questions, the Board of Education dismissed him on charges of "immoral conduct, unprofessional conduct, and evident unfitness for service." Minkus' dismissal on the "immoral conduct" charge was exceptional, as no other teachers faced a similar charge. Under the state's tenure law, a teacher dismissed on charges of "immoral conduct" could be dismissed immediately.²⁰⁶ Minkus later recalled that his prominent activism in the

²⁰⁴ Abraham Minkus vs. Los Angeles City Board of Education, 1953, and 1955, 1977, May 5, 1953, Minkus Papers, folder 2, box 2; Libbie and Abe Minkus, Interview with Greg Goldin, n.d., Goldin Collection, tape 2, box 2; Los Angeles Board of Education vs. Abraham Minkus, 1953-1954, Minkus Papers, folder 2, box 1; Kransdorf, *A Matter of Loyalty*, 77.

²⁰⁵ Abraham Minkus' FBI File, Minkus Papers, folder 6, box 1.

²⁰⁶ *The Los Angeles Teacher*, April 1953 XIII, no. 4, L.A. Teachers Union Collection 46-51, folder 3, box 2.

left-led teachers' union was one of the main reasons that he was targeted during the Red Scare. His wife, Libbie Minkus, who worked as a substitute high school teacher in the Los Angeles school system, stopped receiving calls to substitute teacher as a result of the hearing.²⁰⁷

In 1953, Harry Shepro and Serill Gerber, leaders in AFT Local 430, were blacklisted, further attesting to the fact that prominent activists with the left-led teacher union were specifically subject to the anti-communist crusade in education. In early April, 1953 the Velde Committee also called two other prominent teacher union activists to testify: Harry Shepro, the first president of AFT Local 430 in 1935 and a teacher of American history and government for over 30 years; and Serill Gerber, a sixth grade teacher and the Special Services Committee Chairman for the union. Like Minkus, both refused to answer the committee's questions and both were dismissed. But Shepro and Gerber were dismissed on charges of "unprofessional conduct, evident unfitness for service, and persistent violation of Board rules,"²⁰⁸ and not due to "immoral conduct," like Minkus, though all three teachers refused to answer questions, claiming their rights under the first and fifth amendments to the US Constitution. As a result, neither Shepro nor Gerber immediately ceased teaching—their final termination happened in early January, 1954.²⁰⁹ The case against the teachers was based, in part, on the testimony on cooperative witnesses. The Velde

²⁰⁷ Libbie and Abe Minkus, Interview with Greg, Goldin Collection, tape 2, box 2.

²⁰⁸ *The Los Angeles Teacher*, April 1953 XIII, no. 4, L.A. Teachers Union Collection 46-51, folder 3, box 2.

²⁰⁹ Minkus and Gerber vs. Los Angeles City Board of Education, 1951, 1977-1980, Minkus Papers, series 1, folder 3, box 2.

Committee interrogator, for instance, cited Louis Rosser's testimony claiming that Gerber was a one-time member of the Young Communist League as well as a member of the Communist Party.²¹⁰ The dismissal of the three teachers reveals the cooperative relationship between HUAC at the federal level and the Los Angeles Board of Education.

In 1953 and 1954, the Los Angeles School Board successfully sought the passage of a law in the state legislature that would make it possible to fire teachers on the spot for their refusal to testify about their political affiliations before investigating committees, making it easier to both weaken civil rights efforts in public schools and destroy the left-led teachers' union. The passage of such a law would avoid the delay caused by the tenure law in firing leftist teachers. According to Verdries, on January 8, 1953, Superintendent Stoddard presented a draft of a bill to the state legislature that would place the Los Angeles School Board's Rule 1907 in the state's Education Code.²¹¹ The Dilworth Act, named after its sponsor state Senator Nelson Dilworth, became law in 1953.²¹² Now, without any due process, any teacher or other school employee accused of subversion who refused to answer questions about whether or not they were affiliated with the Communist Party could be fired on the spot—this applied to anybody who claimed their rights under the first and fifth amendments to the US Constitution. At the same time, the Luckel Act was passed, mandating that all

²¹⁰ Bruce A. Findlay, Assistant Superintendent, Board of Education of the City of Los Angeles, to Mr. Serrill Leonard Gerber, April 10, 1953, Minkus Papers, series II: Other Los Angeles Teachers, folder 8, box 3.

²¹¹ Verdries, "Teaching With the Enemy," 101.

²¹² *Ibid.*, 107.

California state employees answer questions asked by government interrogators.²¹³

Martha Kransdorf argues that “school boards rushed to comply.” In the mid-1950s in Los Angeles, the entire list of 30,000 city workers was submitted for review.²¹⁴

In 1953 the Los Angeles School Board immediately took advantage of the Dilworth Act to subpoena and dismiss leftist teachers, including teachers involved in the Los Angeles Federation of Teachers. Dr. Alexander Stoddard, the Superintendent of Schools, named 171 school employees as “suspected left-wingers,” according to the *Los Angeles Times*. Of this 171, the school board subpoenaed eight teachers to testify before a special meeting on December 16, 1953. Seven of the eight teachers openly disobeyed, despite the Dilworth Act, while one teacher apparently cooperated with the interrogators.²¹⁵ The teachers called to testify before the Board of Education’s special meeting were David Arkin, Helen Hughes, Minna Omanoff Cooper, June Sirell, Leon Goldin, Claire Sokolow Kaye, Charles Sassoon and Anne R. Shugerman.²¹⁶ With the exception of Shugerman, who was a cooperative witness, all seven were dismissed for their refusal to answer the Board’s questions.²¹⁷ Cooperative witnesses linked this round of blacklisting to what one witness called the Communist Party’s attempt “to control the policies of the teachers’ union.”²¹⁸

²¹³ John W. Caughey, “Farewell to California’s ‘Loyalty’ Oath,” *Pacific Historical Review* 38, no. 2 (May 1969): 125.

²¹⁴ Kransdorf, *A Matter of Loyalty*, 33–34.

²¹⁵ “Seven L.A. Teachers Defy Board at Loyalty Hearing,” *Los Angeles Times*, December 17, 1953, Eisenberg Collection, folder 3, box 2.

²¹⁶ *Ibid.*

²¹⁷ Verdries, “Teaching With the Enemy,” 109.

²¹⁸ Clancy, Jr., “The History of the American Federation of Teachers in Los Angeles, 1919-1969,” 88.

The blacklist continued through the 1950s, though the frequency of teachers being subpoenaed was erratic. In 1955, “Margaret,” a union activist who participated in organizing to hire more black teachers, refused to testify when she was subpoenaed in the spring of 1955.²¹⁹ In 1956, Donald Weiss, a math and social studies teacher at Stevenson Junior High School since 1950, was called to testify before the Board of Education. He refused to answer the Board’s questions, citing his rights under the US Constitution.²²⁰ Eisenberg recalled in her interview that Weiss ultimately committed suicide due to the pressures.²²¹

The last and greatest gasp of the Red Scare in California’s educational system came in 1959 when the House Un-American Activities Committee issues subpoenas to 110 teachers, 40 of them in Northern California and 70 in southern California. HUAC was scheduled to hold its hearings in early June, but postponed the hearings twice, first for September and then for October, 1959, before finally cancelling the hearings altogether, claiming it would allow local school boards to interrogate the teachers instead.²²² This was the first time HUAC had cancelled scheduled hearings. The committee then turned over a list of 93 names of California teachers to local school boards, with the result that four teachers were fired and two resigned out of fear.²²³ Though HUAC did not return to Southern California, it did return to San

²¹⁹ “Margaret,” Interview in *Ibid.*, 218.

²²⁰ “Board Hears Pros and Cons on Dilworth Act,” *Los Angeles Times*, February 3, 1956.

²²¹ Frances Eisenberg, Interview with Greg Goldin Collection, tape 3, box 2.

²²² “California School Red Hearings Off,” *Los Angeles Times*, August 22, 1959.

²²³ Joshua Paddison, “Summers of Worry, Summers of Defiance: San Franciscans for Academic Freedom and Education and the Bay Area Opposition to HUAC, 1959-1960,” *California History* 78, no. 3 (Fall 1999): 195-196.

Francisco in May, 1960 to hold hearings for three days to investigate a “new batch of local ‘subversives,’” according to Joshua Paddison, most of whom were not teachers. In response to the hearing, anti-HUAC organizers staged mass protests. On the first day, 1,000 protesters gathered, and on the second day when protesters gathered again, the police turned high-powered fire hoses on the crowd, an incident that received wide publicity and proved to be a turning point in the Red Scare. The large protest against the hearings and the negative publicity caused by the police brutality helped to turn public opinion against the rabid anti-communism of the previous decade.²²⁴

The blacklisting of teachers in the 1950s did not happen without a fight by the teachers involved. Before the Los Angeles Federation of Teachers became much weaker in the mid- to late-1950s due to the blacklist, the union organized against the blacklist through its Academic Freedom Committee and then through the Teachers Defense Committee. From 1952 to 1954, both committees raised funds to help with the legal defense of the targeted teachers. The union also helped to organize an educational campaign, in addition to mass meetings and protests against the blacklisting. The Teachers Defense Committee, under the sponsorship of the Los Angeles Federation of Teachers, produced an animated cartoon in 1952 entitled, “The Man Who Hated Children,” about the blacklisting of teachers to increase public support for their campaign against the blacklist.²²⁵ By the time of the last round of

²²⁴ Ibid, 188, 196.

²²⁵ *The Los Angeles Teacher* XII, no. 10, August 1952; *The Los Angeles Teacher*, January 1953 XIII, no. 2; *The Los Angeles Teacher* XIII, no. 9, Jan 1954, L.A. Teachers Union Collection 46-51, folder 3, box 2; “Mass Protests Assail Teacher Loyalty Inquiry,” *Los Angeles Times*, December 15, 1953; “Joint Meeting of Representatives from the Los Angeles

subpoenas in southern California in 1959, the left-led teachers union no longer existed. Florence Sloat, one of the summoned teachers who had been active in the left-led New York teachers' union before arriving in Los Angeles, became the chair of the Teachers Defense Committee (TDC). The second version of the TDC was formed in 1959 specifically to organize in support of the 70 teachers in southern California subpoenaed by HUAC.²²⁶ Though AFT Local 1021 and the AFT-affiliated California Federation of Teachers opposed the blacklist, the AFT did not lead the organizing against the blacklist in 1959.²²⁷

The blacklisting of Florence Sloat in 1962 represented one of the final moments in the blacklisting of teachers in Los Angeles. One of the subpoenaed teachers in 1959, Sloat was one of the leaders of organizing efforts against the blacklist. Sloat made her name public in an ACLU lawsuit against releasing the names of the 70 teachers in Southern California. She did so, "because I have already been humiliated by this Committee, I want to spare other teachers and their families the same distress."²²⁸ Sloat referenced the fact that HUAC summoned her earlier in the year, in February, 1959, and then cancelled the proceedings. But the Los Angeles Board of Education, called her to testify under the Dilworth Act. She continued to

Federation of Teachers and the Teachers Defense Committee," January 16, 1954, Eisenberg Collection, folder 5, box 2.

²²⁶ Florence Muriel Sloat, Interview with Greg Goldin, n.d., Goldin Collection, tape 1, box 2.

²²⁷ "California School Red Hearings Off," *Los Angeles Times*, August 22, 1959. In this article, the president of the California State Federation of Teachers deplores the fact that HUAC intended to turn over names to the local school board.

²²⁸ American Civil Liberties Union Press Release, August 4, 1959, Florence Muriel Sloat Papers: Blacklisted Teachers in LA, 1959-1991 (hereafter Sloat Papers), Southern California Library.

teach, and was once again summoned, alongside the other 69 teachers, to appear before HUAC. Perhaps given Florence Sloat's public stance, as part of the ACLU lawsuit and then as chair of the Teachers Defense Committee, after nearly three years of teaching, on March 22, 1962 the Board of Education suspended Sloat under the Dilworth Act (which provided a statute of limitations of three years). After five and a half years of being blacklisted, with the help of the lawyers with the Teachers Defense Committee and the ACLU the Los Angeles Board of Education rescinded its policy implementing the Dilworth Act in 1968 and Sloat was able to return to teaching.²²⁹

Though AFT Local 430 was expelled from the AFT in 1948, it might have lived on as an independent union had the blacklisting of Los Angeles teachers not taken place. The leadership of the independent Los Angeles Federation of Teachers was targeted during the blacklist, and the energies of the union were diverted toward the defense of targeted teachers. Essentially, the blacklist finished what the expulsion of Local 430 had started—namely, the demise of left-led teacher unionism in Los Angeles.

Conclusion

Though the U.S. government's repression of radical dissent lived on, the period we now refer to as McCarthyism became progressively weaker over the course of the 1950s and early 1960s. The Dilworth Act, passed in 1953 in California, made it

²²⁹ Florence M. Sloat, Summary of Events Relating to Her Blacklisting, September, 1973, Sloat Papers.

mandatory for teachers to sign an oath declaring they were not members of the Communist Party; it also required teachers to answer questions about their present and past associations with the Communist Party. The teachers who, because of political principle, refused to cooperate with investigating committees were fired by their local school boards. The Dilworth Act faced a series of legal challenges throughout the 1950s and 1960s as teachers attempted to win their jobs back. Finally, the Los Angeles Board of Education formally stopped implementing the Dilworth Act in 1968.²³⁰ Though it is difficult to come up with a specific number, it is safe to say that approximately 200 teachers in the Los Angeles area alone were either fired or resigned out of fear during the Red Scare. The Democratic Party rose to power in the California in the mid-1950s, helping at least to weaken some of the more extreme tendencies of the Red Scare. Additionally, the rise of the New Left and the various social movements of the 1960s and 1970s helped to shift the country to the left politically. As a result, repression of leftist radicals became less mainstream and more covert. The FBI's Counter Intelligence Program, or COINTELPRO, throughout the 1960s placed various leftist people and groups under surveillance, and specifically aimed to discredit and disrupt political organizing the government deemed to be too "subversive."²³¹

²³⁰ Kransdorf, *A Matter of Loyalty*, 107.

²³¹ For more on COINTELPRO, see, for example, Ward Churchill, *Agents of Repression: The FBI's Secret Wars Against the Black Panther Party and the American Indian Movement*, Corrected ed (Boston, MA: South End Press, 1990); Kenneth O'Reilly, *Racial Matters: The FBI's Secret File on Black America, 1960-1972* (New York: Free Press, 1989).

The Red Scare's impact on teacher unionism in Los Angeles and nationally was far-reaching. The campaign to root out communists within the American Federation of Teachers began in 1941 and culminated with the expulsion of AFT Local 430, the left-led teachers' union in Los Angeles, in 1948. The purging of communists from the AFT was made easier by the prevalence of frenzied anti-communism in society in general, but the leadership of the AFT must also be held ultimately responsible for its very active complicity in the purges that took place during the 1940s. The inauguration of the anti-communist campaign within the AFT began quite early, several years before the start of the Cold War and the intensification of McCarthyism. AFT Vice President Arthur Elder, arguing in support of the revocation of Local 430's charter at the union's 1949 convention, plainly stated the objective of the expulsion:

We are here this afternoon deciding not only the future of the particular local in question...but I am sure I am still speaking for the [Executive] Council that...we are here this afternoon and this evening very largely shaping the future of our American Federation of Teachers. We are in a measure going to decide what kind of organization this American Federation of Teachers should be.²³²

The AFT's revocation of Local 430's charter and the subsequent blacklisting of union leaders and other leftist teachers facilitated both the demise of left-led teacher unionism in Los Angeles in the 1950s, as well as a rightward turn in the AFT nationally. Local 430 and its successor, the Los Angeles Federation of Teachers, promoted what scholars often refer to as social unionism, a combined focus on

²³² AFT Convention Proceedings 1949, AFT Collection, part II, series VIII, folder 14, box 24.

promoting bread and butter issues and organizing for social and economic justice in society more broadly. The union, in large part because of the influence of the Communist Party, prioritized anti-racism in its union work—this was also the case with the left-led teachers’ union in New York City, AFT Local 5, expelled from the AFT in 1941. Both unions demanded the hiring of more African American and other teachers of color. They also promoted the incorporation of intercultural education—African American history, in particular—into the school curriculum. The AFT’s expulsion of Local 430 therefore set the stage for the adoption of a version of unionism less committed to the struggle against racism, and certainly less committed to racial militancy. This political transition within the AFT made it possible for the Oceanhill-Brownsville conflict to take place in the fall of 1968, pitting advocates of community control of the public schools, a cause promoted by Black Power activists, against the white-led United Federation of Teachers, the New York City AFT affiliate.²³³

Activists within the AFT incorporated the idea of professionalism into their efforts to root out communists, giving the history of anti-communism within teachers’ unions a unique character. The anti-communists within Local 430 were proponents of what they deemed a more “professional” version of unionism, in contrast to the social unionism of the union’s leftist leadership. In their argument for a more limited version of unionism—business unionism—anti-communist Local 430 members described a focus on broad social issues as lacking in professionalism. Thus, they

²³³ For more on the Oceanhill-Brownsville conflict, see Podair, *The Strike That Changed New York Blacks, Whites, and the Ocean Hill-Brownsville Crisis*; Perlstein, *Justice, Justice*.

used the notion that teachers should act professionally to support business unionism within the AFT. The campaign to purge left-led locals resulted in the weakening of democracy within the AFT, as it facilitated the emergence of greater centralization within the union and a greater intolerance of political dissent. Due to the expulsion of some of the AFT's most active locals and the diversion of the union's attentions from expanding the unionization of teachers, anti-communism slowed the emergence of teacher unionism, and therefore public sector unionism more generally.

What happened to the teachers who were blacklisted? Some left teaching altogether, while others found ways to continue educating children. Abraham Minkus, the old Vice President of Local 430/LAFT who was a staunch advocate for intercultural education, became a salesman of washing machines under, a profession that he did not particularly relish. In an interview many years later, Minkus said of his blacklisting from teaching, "I felt that I was wasted, wasted. I think I had the ability to make a more significant contribution to American life than I see in helping maintain the laundry and dry cleaning industry." Both Minkus and June Sirell, another blacklisted teacher, lamented their reduced pensions.²³⁴ Blacklisted teacher and union activist Charles Sassoon continued his political work, facing the blacklist for a second time when he worked on ships and was active in the left-led Marine Cooks and Stewards Union.²³⁵ Jean Wilkinson, after her divorce from Frank Wilkinson, moved to Berkeley in 1965 and became a public school teacher there. She

²³⁴ Libbie and Abe Minkus, Interview with Greg Goldin, n.d., Goldin Collection, tape 2, box 2; June Sirell, Interview with Greg Goldin, n.d., Goldin Collection, box 2.

²³⁵ Greg Goldin, Term Paper, 15, Goldin Collection, folder 2, box 1.

helped to develop curricula on women's history for the public schools, co-editing several books on women's history.²³⁶ Frances Eisenberg made a good living as a tutor for many years, and continued to be politically active. Later in life, she was an organizer in behalf of senior citizens in West Hollywood, becoming involved in the West Hollywood Senior Advisory Council from its founding in 1987.²³⁷ After she was fired in 1962, Florence Sloat went back to school to get a Master's Degree in Fine Arts. She also continued to teach, first in a private school and then she was able to teach at a school outside of the city of Los Angeles for five years, before being reinstated in 1968.²³⁸

In 1981, several blacklisted teachers active in Local 430 and the Los Angeles Federation of Teachers received word that their lawsuit to have their teaching credentials reinstated had been successful. A Los Angeles Superior Court judge ruled that the blacklisted teachers should have been reinstated in 1968, when the School Board rescinded its policy of firing leftist teachers, and stipulated a collective settlement amount of \$200,000 for the back pay and damage caused to the blacklisted teachers.²³⁹ Only one teacher, June Sirell, was young enough to teach again, however, and only for a few years. Another blacklisted teacher, David Arkin, died eight months

²³⁶ Verdries, "Teaching With the Enemy," 264.

²³⁷ Fariello, *Red Scare*, 464; Myrna Oliver, "Frances Eisenberg; Teacher Challenged Firing," Obituary, *Los Angeles Times*, July 26, 1996.

²³⁸ Sloat, Interview with Greg Goldin, n.d., Goldin Collection, tape 1, box 2.

²³⁹ Legal Document, "This Agreement, for reference purposes only dated November 1, 1982, is entered into by and between The Los Angeles City Board of Education, a Municipal Corporation (hereinafter referred to as SCHOOL DISTRICT) and David Arkin, by Bea Arkin, surviving spouse and sole heir, Minna Cooper, Frances Eisenberg, Abraham Minkus, and June Sirell (Hereinafter collectively referred to as TEACHERS)," Minkus Papers, folder 7, box 2.

before the settlement.²⁴⁰ Though the other teachers—Abe Minkus, Minna Cooper, Seril Gerber, and Francis Eisenberg—did not return to teaching in the Los Angeles public schools, they were at least partially vindicated. Their willingness to file the lawsuit, moreover, is a demonstration of both their perseverance so many years after being blacklisted, and their continued willingness to combat injustice.

²⁴⁰ David Arkin was the father of the Hollywood actor and comedian Alan Arkin, who starred in many movies, including *The Russians are Coming*, a comedy about a small town in Maine that goes into a panic when a Soviet submarine crashes into the coast.

Chapter 2: “On Strike, Shut it Down!”: Faculty and the Black and Third World Student Strike at San Francisco State College, 1968-1969

“The newer movements for self-determination among students and Third World communities are a similar effort to destroy the trustees’ power and present us with the possibility of an alliance which could through struggle finally put control of education in the hands of those most concerned.”¹

- Bill Carpenter, AFT Local 1352 Member, 1970

Introduction

“The alarm rang at 6:30 a.m. In the past the ring meant that I must go to campus to teach my eight o’clock class. This time it meant going to campus to stop others from teaching their classes.”² The author of this quote, Rachel Kahn-Hut, was one among many faculty who went on strike in support of the Black Studies-Third World Student Strike at San Francisco State College from November of 1968 to March, 1969. Students of color at San Francisco State, with the support of their white student allies, struck beginning on November 6, 1968 to demand that the administration address racism at the college. The students demanded the immediate establishment of a Black Studies Department and a College of Ethnic Studies, to be run autonomously by students of color, faculty and people of color in the community. Students further demanded that the underrepresentation of people of color at San

¹ Bill Carpenter, “Report from AFT Convention,” AFT Local 1352 Newsletter, vol. III, no. 2, December 1, 1970, Tim Sampson Collection (hereafter Sampson Collection), folder 19, box 1, Labor Archives and Research Center (hereafter San Francisco Labor Archives), J. Paul Leonard Library, San Francisco State University, San Francisco, CA (hereafter Leonard Library).

² Rachel Kahn-Hut, “Going Radical,” in Arlene Kaplan Daniels and Rachel Kahn-Hut, eds., *Academics on the Line* (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 1970), 33.

San Francisco State be remedied by admitting more students of color and by hiring of more faculty of color. The strike, soon joined by faculty, would last until March, 1969, with many of the student demands met—it became the longest student strike in U.S. history until that moment in time. The student portion of the five-month strike, which successfully established the first College of Ethnic Studies in the country and was the longest student strike in U.S. history, is relatively well known.³ Less known is the support that faculty lent to the strike.

From the beginning of the student strike on November 6, 1968, a subset of leftist faculty organized themselves through a newly formed organization called the Ad Hoc Faculty Committee to walk out in sympathy with the student demands. The committee called on all faculty to strike starting on November 13, 1968, a week after the start of the student action. But it was not until January 6, 1969 that American Federation of Teachers Local 1352, the union representing faculty at San Francisco State, officially went on strike. The leftist faculty on campus helped to persuade the members of AFT Local 1352 to strike in sympathy with the student strikers.

In this chapter, I examine the central role that faculty played in the strike at San Francisco State during the 1968-1969 strike. The Ad Hoc Faculty Committee supported the student strike early on because the leftist faculty who constituted the group had a political vision that was aligned with the broader New Left. Leftist faculty sympathized politically with the burgeoning Black Power and Third World political movements within the U.S. and abroad; they believed that their union,

³ Daryl J. Maeda, *Chains of Babylon: The Rise of Asian America* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2009), 50.

AFT Local 1352, should not merely advocate on behalf of issues strictly related to faculty working conditions and compensation, but should take action in solidarity with the demands of the Black Students Union and the Third World Liberation Front at San Francisco State, even if that meant striking, an action that had the potential to result in great personal risk.

AFT Local 1352 was not prepared to declare a faculty strike at the start of the student strike, and thus only officially began its strike on January 6, 1969, the first day of school after the winter break. A variety of factors had to converge first before Local 1352 arrived at a place both politically and organizationally to pull off a strike of the faculty at San Francisco State. Prior to the strike, AFT Local 1352 consisted of a small but dedicated group of faculty unionists. Though those involved were quite politically progressive and the union did address broader political issues at times, the union's main organizing projects had to do with the faculty's working conditions, most prominently organizing to reduce the faculty's heavy teaching load.

Though individuals involved with AFT Local 1352 were supportive of the student movement during the two years leading up to the strike in 1968-1969, the union did not play a prominent nor very visible role in the movement. Rather, individual radical faculty, particularly a small number of faculty of color and a few radical white faculty members, participated in the student movement over the previous two years. The substantial nature of the student movement, especially in the spring of 1968 when thousands of students occupied the Administration building, and then the strike declared by students of color on November 6, 1968, helped to shift the

union's involvement in the movement at San Francisco State. The student movement's sweeping impact on the campus made faculty pay attention and become involved in larger numbers than they had been previously. Once the student strike began on November 6, 1968, AFT Local 1352 began to meet to make plans to support the students and join campus actions.

Three factors had to converge before AFT Local 1352 was prepared to begin its strike until January 6, 1969. First, faculty were incensed that the California State College Board of Trustees appointed S.I. Hayakawa, a conservative part-time faculty member from the English department, as Acting President of San Francisco State in November, 1969. The trustees' appointment was viewed as an imposition, bypassing normal selection procedures in which campus faculty participated. Thus, faculty considered Hayakawa's appointment as a direct attack on faculty governance. Hayakawa, moreover, as a very vocal opponent of the student strike, was sure to take a more hard line approach toward student activism than his more liberal predecessors. While radical faculty on campus supported the strike from the beginning, Hayakawa's appointment was an essential factor in swaying liberal and much less radical faculty members of AFT Local 1352 to vote to strike.

The second and related factor was the immense police brutality inflicted on the striking students. What became known as "Bloody Tuesday," in particular, had a galvanizing effect for the faculty. On that day, December 3, 1969, only one day after Hayakawa started his term as Acting President, police mercilessly attacked protesting students, injuring and arresting many. Faculty previously critical of either the student

demands or the student tactics witnessed this brutality with horror, convincing them that a strike by their union could help to reduce police brutality.

Lastly, once these two factors convinced a larger portion of the faculty to support the strike, thus resulting in the swelling of the membership of AFT Local 1352, the union sought strike sanction from the San Francisco Central Labor Council. The labor council included many unions who remained either disengaged or even critical of the social movements of the period, and thus would only be convinced to support AFT Local 1352's strike if the faculty strike was waged over "bread and butter" demands. AFT Local 1352 drafted a list of demands related to faculty working conditions and compensation in order to convince the labor council to sanction the union's strike. According to the council, moreover, the union had to demonstrate that it had attempted to negotiate with the administration before striking. During the winter school break from mid-December, 1968 to early January, 1969, AFT Local 1352 attempted to negotiate with the administration, but the trustees refused. Seeing this, in early January the labor council voted to sanction the union's strike at San Francisco State, and on January 6, 1969, the first day of school after the break, AFT Local 1352's strike began.

Members of AFT Local 1352 had different motivations for voting to support the student strike. The leadership of the strike and the militant minority of radical faculty at the college were most inclined to support the demands of the Black Students Union and the Third World Liberation Front, while another portion of the

largely white faculty required these other factors to converge before they could bring themselves to vote for the AFT Local 1352 strike.

This chapter also analyzes the relationship between the largely, though not exclusively, white male faculty members and the students of color leading the strike at San Francisco State College. While it is clear that the militant faculty at San Francisco State organized an array of liberal and politically moderate faculty to strike in support of the students, it was also unambiguously the case that even the leftist faculty took their lead from black students and other students of color who, over the previous two years, had built a vibrant movement to challenge institutional racism at San Francisco State. The Black Students Union, in particular, had been working tirelessly over the previous two years to establish a Black Studies Department and to admit more students of color to the college. Black and other students of color worked through the Tutorial Program to help underprivileged high school students with their studies so that they had a better chance to be admitted to college. And many students of color at San Francisco state designed Black and other Ethnic Studies courses that were taught through the Experimental College at San Francisco State during the two years leading up to the strike. Activist students of color, moreover, demanded that more students of color be admitted to San Francisco State College. Students saw the gross underrepresentation of students of color in the student body at the college and demanded that the college administration concede to admitting more students of color. These efforts, combined with the anti-war movement, largely led by Students

for a Democratic Society, laid the groundwork for the Black Studies-Third World Student strike at San Francisco State from November of 1968 through March of 1969.

I argue here that, by going on strike, AFT Local 1352 was promoting a new version of social unionism shaped by the racial and tactical militancy of the late 1960s. Not only was AFT Local 1352's strike the first faculty strike in the history of faculty unionism in California, and one of the first and longest strikes of faculty until that point in the nation, but it was unusual because faculty, taking their lead from students of color, went on strike to protest racism in higher education. Though AFT Local 1352 came up with a list of "bread and butter" demands, in large part to receive strike sanction from the labor council, the union's primary concern was about the students and their demands. AFT Local 1352, then, was rejecting a conservative approach to labor unionism, represented by many unions in the AFL-CIO at the time, which often limited unions to organizing around the working conditions and compensation of workers at a specific workplace or industry. AFT Local 1352 joined with the unions and rank-and-file activists of the 1960s and 1970s in seeking to link the labor movement with the social movements of the period.

Studying what unions did on the ground, in this case AFT Local 1352's support for the strike against racism at San Francisco State, and particularly the role that radicals and rank-and-file workers played in building that support, shows that segments of the labor movement were engaged with the social movements of the late 1960s and 1970s. Though many unions and union leaders were divorced from or even hostile toward the social movements of the 1960s and 1970s, As a number of scholars

have shown, there were also many efforts by rank-and-file workers and elected leaders to push the AFL-CIO to the left politically in the late 1960s and 1970s, to pry the labor federation away from its uncompromising support for the U.S. government's role in the Cold War.⁴ These efforts at reforming the AFL-CIO sought to harness the power of the labor movement to achieve greater social change, to help put an end to the U.S. government's war against Vietnam, and to help eradicate racism and other forms of discrimination in U.S. society.

While a number of studies have examined the student-led strike for Black and Ethnic Studies at San Francisco State, 1968-1969, very little has been written about

⁴ Frank Bardacke, *Trampling out the Vintage: Cesar Chavez and the Two Souls of the United Farm Workers* (London: Verso, 2011); Aaron Brenner, Robert Brenner, and Calvin Winslow, eds., *Rebel Rank and File: Labor Militancy and Revolt from Below in the Long 1970s* (London; New York: Verso, 2010); Jeffrey W. Coker, *Confronting American Labor: The New Left Dilemma* (Columbia: University of Missouri Press, 2002); Leon Fink and Brian Greenberg, *Upheaval in the Quiet Zone: A History of Hospital Workers' Union, Local 1199* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1989); Nancy Felice Gabin, *Feminism in the Labor Movement: Women and the United Auto Workers, 1935-1975* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1990); Matt García, *From the Jaws of Victory: The Triumph and Tragedy of Cesar Chavez and the Farm Worker Movement* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2012); Dan Georgakas and Marvin Surkin, *Detroit, I Do Mind Dying*, 2nd ed. (Cambridge: South End Press, 1998); Laurie Boush Green, *Battling the Plantation Mentality: Memphis and the Black Freedom Struggle* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2007); Michael K. Honey, *Going Down Jericho Road: The Memphis Strike, Martin Luther King's Last Campaign* (New York: W.W. Norton & Co., 2007); William P. Jones, *The March on Washington: Jobs, Freedom, and the Forgotten History of Civil Rights* (New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 2013); Peter B. Levy, *The New Left and Labor in the 1960s* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1994); Penny Lewis, *Hardhats, Hippies, and Hawks: The Vietnam Antiwar Movement as Myth and Memory* (Ithaca: ILR Press, 2013); David M. Lewis-Colman, *Race Against Liberalism: Black workers and the UAW in Detroit* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2008); Ruth Needleman, *Black Freedom Fighters in Steel: The Struggle for Democratic Unionism* (Ithaca: ILR Press, 2003); Heather Ann Thompson, *Whose Detroit?: Politics, Labor, and Race in a Modern American City* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2001); Zaragosa Vargas, *Labor Rights are Civil Rights: Mexican American Workers in Twentieth-Century America* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2005); Cynthia Ann Young, *Soul Power: Culture, Radicalism, and the Making of a U.S. Third World left* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2006).

the faculty's role in the student strike, and what has been written often portrays faculty involvement in the strike inaccurately.⁵ *A College in Crisis: A Report to the National Commission on the Causes and Prevention of Violence* was first published in 1969, the same year as the strike. Based on an impressive amount of research, including over 400 interviews and over 1,200 newspaper articles, this report nonetheless only very superficially mentions the faculty role in the strike.⁶ In fact, like much of the secondary literature on the strike, the report provides an inaccurate interpretation of the reasons for AFT Local 1352's strike. At one point, the authors of the report indicate, "some people, including some of the trustees" believe that the

⁵ William Barlow and Peter Shapiro, *An End to Silence: The San Francisco State College Student Movement in the '60s* (New York: Pegasus, 1971); Howard Saul Becker, ed., *Campus Power Struggle* (Chicago: Aldine Pub. Co, 1970); Martha Biondi, *The Black Revolution on Campus* (University of California Press, 2012); Kay Boyle, *The Long Walk at San Francisco State, and Other Essays* (New York: Grove Press, 1970); Kuregiy Hekymara, "The Third World Movement and its History in the San Francisco State College Strike of 1968-1969" (PhD diss., UC Berkeley, 1972); Arlene Kaplan Daniels and Rachel Kahn-Hut, eds., *Academics on the Line* (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 1970); Dikran Karagueuzian, *Blow It Up! The Black Student Revolt at San Francisco State College and the Emergence of Dr. Hayakawa* (Boston: Gambit, 1971); Leo Litwak and Herbert Wilner, *College Days in Earthquake Country: Ordeal at San Francisco State, A Personal Record* (New York: Random House, 1971); Daryl J. Maeda, *Chains of Babylon: The Rise of Asian America* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2009); James McEvoy and Abraham H. Miller, eds., *Black Power and Student Rebellion* (Belmont: Wadsworth Pub. Co, 1969); William H. Orrick, *College in Crisis: A Report to the National Commission on the Causes and Prevention of Violence* (Nashville: Aurora Publishers, 1970); Ibram H. Rogers, *The Black Campus Movement: Black Students and the Racial Reconstitution of Higher Education, 1965-1972* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2012); Fabio Rojas, *From Black Power to Black Studies: How a Radical Social Movement Became an Academic Discipline* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2007); Noliwe M. Rooks, *White Money/Black Power: The Surprising History of African American Studies and the Crisis of Race in Higher Education* (Boston: Beacon Press, 2006); Angela Rose Ryan, "Education for the People: The Third World Student Movement at San Francisco State College and City College of New York" (PhD diss., The Ohio State University, 2010); Karen Umemoto, "'On Strike!' San Francisco State College Strike, 1968-9: The Role of Asian American Students," *Amerasia Journal* 15, no. 1 (1989): 3-41.

⁶ Orrick, *College in Crisis*, ix.

faculty members struck for selfish reasons, and not primarily because they were in solidarity with the student demands to end racism in higher education. The authors then cite the San Francisco Central Labor Council's decision to provide strike sanction to the AFT strike, mentioning that the labor council's support was based on the list of demands the AFT drafted related to their own working conditions, not on the AFT's support for the student demands.⁷

The impression the reader is left with is that the AFT strike was narrowly based on the faculty's working conditions, and had little to do with the student strike. It is almost as if the AFT took advantage of the momentum caused by the student strike to strike for their own demands. However, my research shows the opposite. Though various factors had to converge prompting the union to strike, AFT Local 1352 was motivated to strike primarily in solidarity with the students. AFT Local 1352, and the Ad Hoc Faculty Committee before the union, struck to protest police brutality against students, to challenge the attack on campus and departmental autonomy by the trustees, and, importantly, because they supported the students' call for Black and Ethnic Studies.

Other books published within a few years after the strike discussed the faculty's role in the strike to varying extents. Dikran Karagueuzian's *Blow It Up! The Black Student Revolt at San Francisco State College and the Emergence of Dr. Hayakawa* (1971), for example, pays more attention to the faculty. However, it does not investigate the relationship between the Ad Hoc Committee and AFT Local 1352.

⁷ Ibid., 20.

It also leaves out an analysis of the AFT's demands as they related to the demands of the Black Student Union and the Third World Liberation Front.⁸ Both of these questions, in addition to an analysis of the overall influence of faculty support for the student strike, are central to this chapter.

William Barlow and Peter Shapiro's analysis, in *An End to Silence: The San Francisco State College Student Movement in the '60s* (1971), reflects tensions between the New Left and the labor movement in the late 1960s. Barlow and Shapiro were radical leftist participants in the student strike and contributors to the independent alternative student newspaper, *Open Process*. They drew on their own personal experiences as participants for the latter two-thirds of the book.⁹ The authors write of AFT Local 1352's strike: "it broadened the base of support for the student strike dramatically, at the same time placing upon it some crippling and ultimately fatal limitations." Barlow and Shapiro provide two underlying reasons for what they argue was the negative impact of AFT Local 1352's strike on the student strike. First, tactically, at the start of their strike on January 6, 1969 AFT Local 1352 constructed a picket line circling the perimeter of the campus, whereas prior to the start of the faculty strike students relied on rallies and what they called the 'tactic of the flea,' relatively small actions around campus meant to disrupt the normal functioning of the college while also building awareness about and support for the strike among other students and workers. According to Barlow and Shapiro, the picket line decreased the momentum of the strike and limited students' ability to utilize some of the successful

⁸ Karagueuzian, *Blow It Up!*.

⁹ Barlow and Shapiro, *An End to Silence*, vii.

tactics they had used previously. Second, Barlow and Shapiro critiqued the motivation of AFT Local 1352's strike on ideological grounds. They write about what they perceive to be the political differences between the AFT and the Third World

Liberation Front:

The AFT sought to share power with the Trustees [through negotiations]; the TWLF sought to seize power from the Trustees. The AFT took the calculated position that all of their demands were negotiable, hoping to expose the intransigence of the Trustees and maintain the blessings of the San Francisco labor hierarchy; the TWLF demands were non-negotiable, they would not compromise their needs any more than they would accommodate racism. Finally, the basic objective of the AFT demands was to achieve economic and professional equality for state college faculty.¹⁰

Barlow and Shapiro underscore some of the tactical and political differences between the students and faculty, arriving at a pessimistic view of the faculty's role in the strike. My research shows, on the contrary, that the AFT demands were largely window dressing for a strike called, first and foremost, in solidarity with the student demands. In other words, the AFT list of demands were drafted primarily to obtain strike sanction from the San Francisco Central Labor Council, which would only do so under the condition that the striking faculty drafted demands related to their own working conditions. Though the AFT members focused their energies on organizing picket lines circling the campus, the students were not bound to man the picket lines. On the contrary, the students were free, as they had been previously, to utilize whatever tactics they felt most effective. What helped to end the strike were not different tactics used by the AFT, nor was it the fact that the AFT engaged in

¹⁰ Ibid., 287-288.

negotiations with the College. Student activists also were also simultaneously engaged in negotiations, after all. Rather, a combination of factors were involved, nothing having to do with the AFT's participation in the strike: police violence; the intransigence of the conservative college administration; the mass arrest at a rally on January 23, 1969; the start of a new semester in mid-February which weakened the strike's momentum; and the mere fact that the strike, by March basically in month five, was running low on steam.

Other scholars, including Fabio Rojas, Noliwe M. Rooks, Martha Biondi, and Ibram Rogers have written about the strike at San Francisco State in broader analyses of the history of Black Studies and the Black Freedom Movement on college and university campuses. However, they overlook the role played by faculty and AFT Local 1352 entirely. Rojas' project in *From Black Power to Black Studies: How A Radical Social Movement Became an Academic Discipline* (2007) is to chart the evolution of Black Studies, from its social movement origins, to its institutionalization in the academic setting.¹¹ Rojas discusses the Third World student strike at San Francisco State not only for its "historical interest, but also as an instance of how a social movement creates institutional alternatives and interacts with a targeted organization's leadership."¹² In doing so, Rojas pays special attention to the responses of administrators to student protest, particularly the very different responses by two presidents, Robert Smith and his successor S.I. Hayakawa.

¹¹ Rojas, *From Black Power to Black Studies*, 4.

¹² *Ibid.*, 20.

In his analysis of the strike, Rojas does not consider the influence of faculty organizing or AFT Local 1352's strike on the success of the strike, and yet arrives at the conclusion that San Francisco State's President's S.I. Hayakawa was able to outmaneuver the striking students and "prevail in the conflict." The faculty's relationship with the administration and its role in advocating for or against Black and Ethnic Studies at San Francisco State College, though, were essential aspects of the struggle at San Francisco State. Moreover, iff Rojas's main project is to examine the ways in which social movements—in this case the student movement at San Francisco State—become institutionalized, the role of faculty, in addition to administrators, must be considered. Senate faculty—tenured and tenure-track faculty—hold some administrative authority at both the departmental and campus-wide levels and thus play a key role in the manner in which disciplines like Black Studies become institutionalized.

Noliwe M. Rooks, in *White Money, Black Power: The Surprising History of African American Studies and the Crisis of Race in Higher Education* (2006), also examines the institutionalization of Black Studies, but through the lens of the Ford Foundation's influence on the shape that Black Studies Departments took in the late 1960s and 1970s. She addresses the radical roots of the birth of Black Studies by examining the student actions at San Francisco State and Cornell University. Rooks discusses the strike at San Francisco State to draw a contrast between original demands for Black Studies rooted in black militancy and the politically moderating

effect of the Ford Foundation's role in institutionalizing Black Studies.¹³ Rooks's treatment of the strike does not mention either the role of faculty in general or the role of AFT Local 1352's strike in particular in the strike. A thread that runs through recent writings, in contrast to writing about the strike in its immediate aftermath, is that the significant faculty role in the strike gets ignored, downplayed, or minimized.

Martha Biondi's *The Black Revolution on Campus* (2012) is a comprehensive treatment of the black student movement in the late 1960s and early 1970s. Biondi argues, "the Black Student movement was part of the Black power movement, whose rhetoric, political analysis, and tactics broke from the civil rights movement."¹⁴ She contributes to the literature about the student protest movement in the 1960s, arguing that scholars have placed too much emphasis on the white anti-war student movement in their histories of the New Left, obscuring the significance of black student protest which, Biondi argues, actually "produced greater campus change."¹⁵ In her chapter on the San Francisco State strike, Biondi argues, "the aftermath was paradoxical: the tools to create a multiracial university were won, but in the short term a vision for a 'revolutionary' student-controlled Black studies movement was crushed."¹⁶

Despite an otherwise insightful analysis of the strike, however, Biondi's focus on the student-led portion of the strike, omits a serious consideration of the faculty's role in the strike. She writes that AFT Local 1352 struck "to protest the state of emergency, suspension of civil liberties, refusal of Reagan and the trustees to

¹³ Rooks, *White Money/Black Power*, 93.

¹⁴ Biondi, *The Black Revolution on Campus*, 4.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, 2.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, 44.

negotiate, mass arrests, and daily presence of several hundred police,” and “the teachers also struck for their own professional demands, including for the desire of a contract.”¹⁷ Biondi also mentions that white students and faculty struck in support of autonomy, particularly autonomy from the actions of the Board of Trustees and the unaccountable president of the college, S.I. Hayakawa.¹⁸ While all of this is accurate, Biondi leaves out the most important reason for the faculty strike; namely, the faculty were striking in solidarity with the students.

In this chapter, by shifting the focus to the faculty’s participation in the strike at San Francisco State, I show that AFT Local 1352’s involvement ultimately contributed to the length and the success of the strike. Additionally, an examination of the faculty’s role demonstrates that, in this instance, a labor union contributed to the racial and tactical militancy of the student-led strike. A full understanding of the racial politics and outcome of the strike necessitates a consideration of the faculty strike in solidarity with the student-of-color led strike.

In the previous chapter, I argue that the expulsion of communists and other leftists from the AFT narrowed the union’s political vision, most conspicuously with regard to the AFT’s racial politics. Anti-communists within the AFT nationally successfully purged left-led locals, beginning with AFT Local 5, the Teachers Union in New York, in 1941 and culminating in the expulsion of Local 430 in Los Angeles in 1948. As Clarence Taylor and Jonna Perrillo have argued in the case of the New York Local, I argue that the expulsion of the left-led AFT local in Los Angeles

¹⁷ Ibid., 92.

¹⁸ Ibid., 61.

resulted in a union less politically committed to the struggle for racial equality.¹⁹ In the previous chapter, I also showed how the AFT did not entirely abandon its commitment to racial equality, but rather moderated its approach and, in many ways, de-emphasized anti-racism as a component of its organizing. Essentially, the AFT adopted a new racial politics based in liberalism rather than radicalism. As a result, much of the AFT leadership at the national level distanced itself from or even actively opposed movements for racial equality when they adopted a more militant racial politics in the late 1960s and 1970s.

Much of the literature on the AFT and the racial politics of the late 1960s focus on the conflict at Ocean Hill-Brownsville, which reveals a confrontational relationship between the union and advocates of Black Power.²⁰ In the fall of 1968, under the leadership of Albert Shanker, the UFT went on strike three times—the third time for a month—to protest the transfer of 19 white teachers and school administrators out of the Ocean Hill-Brownsville School District by the locally elected school board. In doing so, the UFT essentially set itself against communities

¹⁹ Perrillo, *Uncivil Rights*; Taylor, *Reds at the Blackboard*.

²⁰ Maurice R. Berube and Marilyn Gittell, eds., *Confrontation at Ocean Hill-Brownsville: The New York School Strikes of 1968* (New York: Praeger, 1969); William Eaton, *The American Federation of Teachers, 1916-1961* (Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press, 1975); Kahlenberg, *Tough Liberal*; John F. Lyons, *Teachers and Reform: Chicago Public Education, 1929-1970* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2008); Marjorie Murphy, *Blackboard Unions: the AFT and the NEA, 1900-1980* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1992); Daniel H. Perlstein, *Justice, Justice: School Politics and the Eclipse of Liberalism* (New York: P. Lang, 2004); Jerald E. Podair, *The Strike that Changed New York Blacks, Whites, and the Ocean Hill-Brownsville Crisis* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2002); Philip Taft, *United They Teach: The Story of the United Federation of Teachers* (Los Angeles: Nash Publishing, 1974).

of color attempting to address the persistence of racial inequality in New York's public schools through community control.²¹

The UFT's opposition to the Ocean Hill-Brownsville school district reflects the limitations of the union's racial politics based in liberalism. Daniel Perlstein, in his study on the conflict, examines the political visions of the UFT and the black activists supportive of community control. Perlstein perceptively argues, "in its campaign against black activists, the teachers' union invoked the standard of race-blind equal treatment, which had been a hallmark of the African-American civil rights movement."²² In other words, the UFT leadership opposed discriminatory laws, which had to be struck down in order for children of color to become upwardly mobile based on merit. The UFT's racial politics ignored the persistence of structural racism once discriminatory laws were struck down, as seen in the racial inequality that permeated the New York public school system in the late 1960s. African American activists, other activists of color, and white allies had attempted to integrate New York's schools, ultimately without success, in part due to the refusal of many white liberals to support their efforts. White liberals refused to support sending white children to schools comprised mostly of students of color. At the same time, the UFT refused to supporting sending experienced teachers to schools in New York attended by students of color. As a result, segregation in New York's schools remained in tact, with conditions at schools attended by students of color lower in quality than majority-white schools. Frustrated with the lack of progress, activists turned toward

²¹ Perlstein, *Justice, Justice*, 5–6.

²² *Ibid.*, 2.

community control of the schools in the late 1960s, with the support of Black Power activists and other relatively more racially militant activists of color. Perlstein argues, “the UFT’s advocacy of race-blind policies placed the union in direct opposition to black activists challenging a school system in which formal neutrality abetted racial inequality.”²³

The conflict at Ocean Hill-Brownsville extended beyond the UFT, reflecting the racial politics of the AFT leadership nationally. David Selden, AFT President at the time and political ally of UFT President Albert Shanker, supported the UFT in the conflict, even arguing, as Jerald Podar points out in his study on the strike, that teaching children of color white, middle-class values will help them become upwardly mobile.²⁴ In her study of race and teacher unionism in New York, Jonna Perrillo highlights that the UFT, as the largest local within the AFT, held considerable sway in national politics, even “frequently” dictating national policies within the union.²⁵ Shanker’s influence with the union was even further amplified when, just a few years later, he replaced David Selden as president of the AFT in 1974.²⁶ Thus, the racial politics of the UFT leadership extended to the AFT leadership at the national level, underscoring why many historians have examined the Ocean Hill-Brownsville conflict as a significant element of the history of the AFT.

To fully understand the racial politics of the AFT in the late 1960s, however, it is important to recognize that many rank-and-file union members and elected

²³ Ibid., 15.

²⁴ Podair, *The Strike that Changed New York*, 173.

²⁵ Perrillo, *Uncivil Rights*, 6.

²⁶ Kahlenberg, *Tough Liberal*, 2007, 164.

leaders who did the difficult day-to-day work of keeping the union running tried to push the AFT's politics to the left on racial matters. For example, in his discussion of the conflict at Ocean Hill-Brownsville, Perlstein considers the efforts of Teachers for Community Control, a rank-and-file group who supported community control, in contrast to the UFT's position on the issue.²⁷ In his history of the Chicago Teachers Union, John Lyons highlights the organizing of black rank-and-file teachers in the 1960s, who, in 1963, formed the Concerned FTBs (Full-Time Basis Substitutes) to advocate for the rights of substitute teachers, 90% of whom were black at the time. Then in 1966, black teachers formed the Black Teachers Caucus, which was aligned with black nationalist politics, to challenge the Chicago Teachers Union leadership and confront racism in the Chicago Public Schools.²⁸

My discussion of AFT Local 1352's strike in 1968-1969, like the work of Lyons, Perlstein, and others, contributes to the literature on the history of the AFT emphasizing that the AFT's racial politics were not uniform in the 1960s. AFT Local 1352 departed from the moderate racial politics of the UFT and AFT leadership, allying with advocates of Black Power. AFT Local 1352's strike, moreover, goes beyond a discussion of the union's relationship with the Black Power movement. AFT Local 1352 engaged with the Third World Left in its strike, challenging racism in higher education affecting African Americans, Chicanos and Latinos, and Asian Americans. Consideration of the relationship between the Third World Left and the AFT is a topic yet to be explored. Moreover, with the exception of Cynthia Young's

²⁷ Perlstein, *Justice, Justice*, 48.

²⁸ Lyons, *Teachers and Reform*, 185.

examination of Local 1199, the Hospital Workers Union in New York, the literature on the labor movement and social movements of people of color in the 1960s and 1970s more generally has not considered the relationship between trade unions and the Third World Left.

San Francisco State College

Students and faculty of color were underrepresented at San Francisco State College in the late 1960s. Not only that, but there were few courses offered that students of color felt were relevant to or reflected their experiences with race and racism in a white-dominated society. The 1960s also witnessed the explosive growth of the Civil Rights Movement, in the South as well as the North, and the birth of the New Left. Students at San Francisco State, alongside some faculty, tired of being underrepresented and marginalized in campus life, organized to change the status quo. Students of color and some faculty did try to teach Black and Ethnic Studies courses at San Francisco State, but ultimately came to the conclusion that the college must establish Black and Ethnic Studies Department to seriously begin to address what students viewed as a racist curriculum.

San Francisco State College²⁹ (SFSC) was established in 1889 as a publicly-supported liberal arts college. It was earlier known as San Francisco State Teachers College, changing its name in 1935 to San Francisco State College.³⁰ At the time of

²⁹ San Francisco State College changed its name to San Francisco State University in 1974.

³⁰ “Statement by Acting President S.I. Hayakawa Before a Subcommittee of the House of Representatives Education Committee, Washington, DC,” February 3, 1969, “On the

the student strike in 1968-1969, San Francisco State, as it was known, was located in southwest San Francisco and occupied 94 acres, and had about 18,000 undergraduate and graduate students, and 664 faculty members. The average student age was 25.³¹ The college catered to largely working- and middle-class students, approximately 800 of whom lived on campus and the rest commuted to school.³² About 80 percent of San Francisco State's students worked to pay for school and came from poor, lower middle-class and working-class communities.³³ According to the California state constitution San Francisco State did not charge "tuition," but it did charge \$120 per year in "fees," and an additional \$720 per year for out-of-state students.³⁴

The underrepresentation of students and faculty of color at San Francisco State was one primary motivating factor for the strike. The majority of both the student body and the faculty were white in the 1960s. In fact, due in large part to the passage of the Master Plan for Higher Education of 1960,³⁵ the number of black students at San Francisco State had steadily declined, from an estimated 11% in 1960 to just 5.3% by the start of the strike in November, 1968, although 13% percent of

Record," *SFSC Pamphlet 68-4*, Peter Radcliff Collection, San Francisco Labor Archives, Leonard Library.

³¹ Orrick, *College in Crisis*, 7-8.

³² "Statement by Acting President S.I. Hayakawa Before a Subcommittee of the House of Representatives Education Committee, Washington, DC," February 3, 1969, "On the Record," *SFSC Pamphlet 68-4*, Radcliff Collection, folder 25, box 1.

³³ Rooks, *White Money/Black Power*, 36.

³⁴ Orrick, *College in Crisis*, 8. According to the Bureau of Labor Statistics inflation calculator, \$120 in 1969 dollars amounts to \$791.70 in 2012 dollars (see: http://www.bls.gov/data/inflation_calculator.htm)

³⁵ The Master Plan For Higher Education is also known as the Donahue Higher Education Act.

San Francisco's residents were African American in the late 1960s.³⁶ According to the 1970 census, students of color at San Francisco State were underrepresented compared to their numbers in the city of San Francisco. American Indians were 0.5% at San Francisco State, compared to 0.4% in San Francisco;³⁷ Filipinos were 0.9% at San Francisco State versus 3.5% in San Francisco; Mexican Americans were only 2.2% versus 9.7% in the city; Chinese and Japanese students comprised 7.6% of the student body compared to 9.8% in San Francisco; African Americans were 5.1% at San Francisco State compared to 13.4% in San Francisco; and white students made up 76.8% of the student body, versus 71.4% in San Francisco.³⁸ According to an article in the *Los Angeles Times*, moreover, in November of 1968, the month the strike started, 59% of the students attending San Francisco's public schools were nonwhite, while students of color at San Francisco State comprised only 16% of enrollment.³⁹ Nesbit Crutchfield, a student leader of the Black Students Union, commented, "San Francisco State wasn't diverse at all." He continued, "The vast majority of the students were white. Everything was a struggle." Biondi refers to colleges like San Francisco State as "historically white," a comment on the institutionalized racism extant at majority-white campuses.⁴⁰

³⁶ Jason Ferreira, "All Power to the People: A Comparative History of Third World Radicalism in San Francisco, 1968-1974," (PhD diss., UC Berkeley, 2003), 41.

³⁷ Native Americans appeared to be the one exception, though by a negligible margin.

³⁸ Angela Rose Ryan, "Education for the People: The Third World Student Movement at San Francisco State College and City College of New York" (PhD diss., The Ohio State University, 2010), 20. Ryan cites the 1970 census in her dissertation.

³⁹ Daryl E. Lembke, "S.F. State Crisis Takes on Look of Labor Row," *Los Angeles Times*, November 25, 1968.

⁴⁰ Biondi, *The Black Revolution on Campus*, 2.

The Master Plan for Higher Education, in fact, decreased the representation of students of color and poor and working-class students at California State Colleges. The Master Plan provided for virtually free education for residents of California. It also set up a three-tier system for students by ability for the institutions of public higher education—the community colleges, the State College system, and the University of California—in California. This system developed stricter admissions standards for the UCs, with 12.5% of high school students eligible for admission. The upper third of high school students in California were eligible for admission to the State Colleges, and anyone with a high school diploma, or who was at least age 18, was free to attend junior colleges.⁴¹ Prior to the passage of the Master Plan, between 50% and 70% of graduating high school students were eligible for admission to the state colleges, while the top 15% could potentially be admitted to the University of California.⁴² The new plan, as a result, channeled many poor students and students of color into the community college system, reducing their representation at the UC and the California State Colleges. Thus, the Master Plan for Higher Education helped to further race- and class-based stratification in public higher education in California, resulting in fewer students of color and working-class and poor students enrolled at colleges like San Francisco State.⁴³

The introduction of the SAT and the start of the Vietnam War further reduced the number of students of color at San Francisco State and other California State

⁴¹ Orrick, *College in Crisis*, 13.

⁴² Barlow and Shapiro, *An End to Silence*, 28–29.

⁴³ *Ibid.*, 185.

Colleges. The introduction of the SAT in the mid-1960s, according to Biondi, led to a “sharp drop in Black students at San Francisco State at precisely the moment when African American baby boomers and children of southern migrants were coming of age and possessed a strong desire for upward mobility and access to education.”⁴⁴ The year 1968, moreover, marked an escalation of the U.S. war against Vietnam. The military draft disproportionately siphoned young poor and working-class black people and other young people of color into the war effort, further reducing the proportion of students of color at colleges like San Francisco State, which served students from lower-income communities.⁴⁵

Comprehensive figures for the ethnic and racial breakdown of the faculty at San Francisco State during the strike are not available, but the available evidence suggests that the faculty was largely white, and certainly disproportionately male, compared to the student body. According to scholar Noliwe Rooks, the college employed just three faculty members and six administrators who were African American in the period leading up to the strike.⁴⁶ Margaret Leahy, a white student activist who participated in the strike as a member of Students for a Democratic Society, commented, “the faculty was almost entirely white.”⁴⁷ Reflecting on the racial composition of the faculty, Roger Alvarado, an activist in the Third World Liberation Front, and Nesbit Crutchfield of the Black Students Union, agreed that

⁴⁴ Biondi, *The Black Revolution on Campus*, 3.

⁴⁵ Rooks, *White Money/Black Power*, 36.

⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, 38.

⁴⁷ Margaret Leahy, Interview by Author, San Francisco, California, September 23, 2011 (hereafter Leahy Interview).

there were very few faculty of color, as did the faculty activists I interviewed. White philosophy professor and AFT Local 1352 leader, Peter Radcliff, recalled that the tenure-track faculty in his department were both exclusively male and white.⁴⁸ Eric Solomon, another white activist in AFT Local 1352 and professor in the English department, remembered the only diversity that existed in the English department was one part-time black faculty member who, when another black professor, a medievalist, was hired into the department, was let go.⁴⁹ Asian American professors at San Francisco State—who else would become involved in the strike—included Dora Tachibana in Biology and Jim Hirabayashi, a Professor of Anthropology who would later become dean of the College of Ethnic Studies.⁵⁰ The leadership of AFT Local 1352 was also, on the whole, white.⁵¹

A small number of faculty of color at San Francisco State stand out for their support of student movement in the two years leading up to the strike, as well as their support for the strike itself. Hari Dillon, an activist of Indian descent involved with both the Black Students Union and the Third World Liberation Front, remembered the important role that professors Nathan Hare and Juan Martinez played in the student movement prior to the strike as well as during the strike itself. Dillon

⁴⁸ Peter Radcliff, Interview by Author, San Francisco, California, October 7, 2011 (hereafter Radcliff Interview).

⁴⁹ Eric Solomon, Interview by Author, San Francisco, California, September 28, 2011 (hereafter Solomon Interview).

⁵⁰ Anatole Anton, Interview by Author, San Francisco, California, September 1, 2011 (hereafter Anton Interview); Jim Hirabayashi, Interview by Author, Mill Valley, California, June 9, 2011 (hereafter Hirabayashi Interview).

⁵¹ Radcliff Interview; Solomon Interview; Art Bierman, Interview by Author, October 14, 2011, San Francisco, California (hereafter Bierman Interview).

commented that both Hare and Martinez “were closely aligned” with activist students of color on campus and “were practically a part of our organizations, and were in our meetings and demonstrations and spoke on the speakers’ platform.”⁵²

Nathan Hare and Juan Martinez indeed stand out as two of the most active faculty of color politically affiliated with students of color at San Francisco State. Hare had previously been dismissed from his faculty position at Howard University for his active opposition, alongside student activists, to a visit by the head of the Selective Service System to campus in 1967.⁵³ In early 1968, the Black Students Union recruited Hare to head a Black Studies program at San Francisco State, and the administration, which, at least on paper, agreed to establish Black Studies at the college, hired Nathan Hare.⁵⁴ Once at San Francisco State, Hare became closely allied with the leadership of the Black Students Union. Juan Martinez was a Mexican-American professor in the History department who was regularly under fire by the administration and his conservative department chair, Ray Kelch, for his alliance with activist students of color at the college. Martinez left a tenure-track position at Arizona State University to join the History Department at San Francisco State in the fall of 1966 on a one-year contract, assured when he took the job at San Francisco State Martinez that his contract would be renewed. In fact, Martinez’s contract was not renewed during the year before the strike; students then charged the History

⁵² Hari Dillon, Interview by Author, Berkeley, California, October 13, 2012 (hereafter Dillon Interview).

⁵³ Biondi, *The Black Revolution on Campus*, 35.

⁵⁴ Ibram Rogers, “Remembering the Black Campus Movement: An Oral History Interview with James P. Garrett,” *Journal of Pan African Studies* 2, no. 10 (June 2009): 38.

Department with racism and made his retention a central demand of the massive student occupation of the Administration Building in May of 1968.⁵⁵

Additionally, Professor Robert Chrisman, hired in 1968 to teach both in Black Studies and the English department, was one of the handful of black faculty members at the college. Unlike Hare and Martinez, Chrisman not only participated in the student and AFT strike, but became somewhat active in the leadership of AFT Local 1352 for a short period of time, becoming a Vice President of AFT Local 1352 after the end of the strike. He would later go on to found the influential journal *The Black Scholar* with Nathan Hare.⁵⁶

Only a handful of faculty of color and radical white faculty actively participated in the student demonstrations in the two years leading up to the strike of 1968-1969. First, faculty of color, most prominently Nathan Hare and Juan Martinez, shared similar experiences of discrimination in a society governed by white supremacy. They also understood what it meant to be in the minority at San Francisco State. The small number of radical white faculty that stand out for their support of the student movement include Anatole Anton, a young professor of Philosophy; William Stanton, a professor of Economics; and John Gerassi, a professor of International Relations.⁵⁷

⁵⁵ Ryan, "Education for the People," 51.

⁵⁶ Robert Chrisman, Interview by Author, San Francisco, California, December 6, 2012 (hereafter Chrisman Interview).

⁵⁷ Leahy Interview; Chrisman Interview; Anton Interview; William Stanton, Interview by Author, Mountain View, California, October 18, 2011 (hereafter Stanton Interview).

The radical white faculty tended to be more engaged in social movements of the 1960s than the broader white faculty, and shared a critique with activist faculty of color and many student activists that U.S. society was fundamentally oppressive and exploitative. The broader faculty, on the other hand, whatever their individual class backgrounds, were in many ways quite comfortable, both in their racial and gender privilege as largely white and male, but also their relatively advantageous class status, firmly situated in the middle-class of the U.S. class structure. Only with the student strike in the fall of 1968 would faculty organize collectively to support the student movement, first as the Ad Hoc Committee and then as AFT Local 1352.⁵⁸

The demand for Black and Ethnic Studies and open admissions derived from this lack of diversity among both the students and the faculty, but also, importantly, stemmed from the college's woefully inadequate offering of courses relating the issues relevant to communities of color. In the two years leading up to the strike, only a handful of courses on Black and Ethnic Studies were taught through traditional academic departments, such as Sonia Sanchez's class on Black Literature in the English Department. Sanchez commented that, "at that time it was a revolutionary idea to insert into the English Department the study of African-American literature."⁵⁹

Some of the only Black and other Ethnic Studies courses offered the two years prior to the strike were student-run courses at San Francisco State's Experimental College. White student activist Jim Nixon, who would later serve as student government president from the fall of 1967 to the spring of 1969, was one of the main

⁵⁸ Anton Interview; Radcliff Interview.

⁵⁹ Biondi, *The Black Revolution on Campus*, 47.

founders of the Experimental College. The Experimental College was founded in 1965 in order to provide an alternative to the traditional course offerings at San Francisco State. Students designed and taught courses on a range of topics, ranging from “Zen Basketball”⁶⁰ to more political classes like a seminar offered on “Guerrilla Warfare,” which “became the subject of a minor controversy in the Bay Area.”⁶¹

Perhaps most important for my analysis here, the Experimental College served as a testing ground for the Black Studies program at San Francisco State, with student leaders in the Black Students Union teaching courses that helped to raise political awareness about the value and need for course offerings relevant to black and other students of color. Aubrey LaBrie, a Black Students Union member, taught the first Black Studies course on Black Nationalism in the Experimental College in the spring of 1966.⁶² Marianna Waddy, a leader in the Black Student Union, helped to lead the way by organizing a Black Arts and Culture series in the fall of 1966, with over 200 students taking classes on “Black Psychology,” “The Miseducation of the Negro,” “Black Writers from Rebellion to Revolution,” “The History and Social Significance of Black Power,” and other classes.⁶³ The following academic year, 1967-1968—the year before the strike—eleven Black Studies courses were offered through the Experimental College. Black Students Union activist Ramona Tascoe considered the Experimental College invaluable. She declared in an interview with Martha Biondi that the Experimental College “was something I had never been exposed to. It was

⁶⁰ Ryan, "Education for the People," 23.

⁶¹ Ryan, "Education for the People," 23; Karagueuzian, *Blow It Up!*, 55.

⁶² Biondi, *The Black Revolution on Campus*, 47.

⁶³ Barlow and Shapiro, *An End to Silence*, 89.

like a dream come true.”⁶⁴ Undoubtedly the Black Studies offerings in the Experimental College served to legitimate Black Studies as an academic discipline in the eyes of undergraduates, as well as raise the profile of the Black Students Union. The work of the BSU through the Experimental College was part of a broader effort over the two years leading up to the student strike in November of 1968 to establish Black Studies at San Francisco State.

The pivotal role that members of the Black Students Union played in designing and teaching courses in Black Studies underscores the fact that activist students of color, particularly BSU members, led the movement to establish Black and Ethnic Studies at San Francisco State. Though faculty were trained and experienced teachers, it was students who pushed the faculty to support Black and Ethnic Studies through their leadership in the Experimental College and the student movement.

Though limited, some Black Studies courses were offered through traditional academic departments at San Francisco State. Many of these courses, however, were also taught by student activists, with the sponsorship of politically sympathetic faculty. For example, in the spring of 1967 Jimmy Garrett, one of the leaders of the Black Students Union in the years prior to the strike, taught both an undergraduate and graduate-level course in the School of Humanities.⁶⁵ Some faculty members faced retribution by conservative department chairs and administrators for agreeing to

⁶⁴ Biondi, *The Black Revolution on Campus*, 47.

⁶⁵ Rogers, “Remembering the Black Campus Movement: An Oral History Interview with James P. Garrett,” 36.

sponsor Black Studies courses. Dick Fitzgerald, a professor of History, was fired the year before the strike by the conservative History department chair, Ray Kelch, very possibly for agreeing to sponsor a Black Studies course.⁶⁶

In short, frustrated at the underrepresentation of students of color at the college administration and the lack of courses relevant to the lives of students of color from 1966-1968, students concluded that the college must do more to address racism at the college. It was not enough for students of color to teach Black and Ethnic Studies courses through the Experimental College, or to try to get departments to sponsor these courses. So students, with some faculty support, demanded that the college do more, to admit more students of color, to hire more faculty of color, and to establish autonomous Black and Ethnic Studies departments at the college. Only then would some of the problems experienced by students and faculty of color begin to be rectified.

The Birth of AFT Local 1352 at San Francisco State College

By the time the student and faculty strike started on November 6, 1968, AFT Local 1352 had only been in existence for a few years. The local was founded in 1960 by Arthur K. Bierman (hereafter referred to as “Art” Bierman), a professor of Philosophy, and Herb Williams, a professor in the Anthropology department.⁶⁷

⁶⁶ Questions sent by author to Dick Fitzgerald, 2011. Fitzgerald returned the answers by email. After being fired from San Francisco State College, Fitzgerald went on to earn his PhD from UC Riverside in 1969 and taught at Laney College in Oakland from 1969 to 1981.

⁶⁷Barlow and Shapiro, *An End to Silence*, 281; Karagueuzian, *Blow It Up!*, 129. There is conflicting evidence about the year of AFT Local 1352’s founding. In contrast to the above

Bierman remembered the formative moment when he and Williams decided to form the local: “My salary wasn’t very big and I needed money, so I painted. I was painting the inside of a house and earning money, and Herb Williams came over and stopped by and said, ‘What we ought to do is start a union.’” The two then drew up a list of 45 faculty members, according to Bierman, then grabbed a sandwich and went to Bierman’s home and starting making calls, and soon enough the union had its first forty members.⁶⁸ Bierman says they decided to affiliate with the American Federation of Teachers in part because they “the AFT left a lot of latitude.” “And one of my original aims,” Bierman recalled, “was that it (the union) should be pretty democratic...I didn’t think that a person should serve more than a year as president.”⁶⁹ AFT Local 1352 would represent librarians, full-time faculty, and part-time faculty.⁷⁰

Bierman played a particularly important and ongoing role in the local for many years, serving in various positions. Bierman recalled that he helped to organize six other locals in the state.⁷¹ Bierman was born in Madison, Nebraska in his grandmother’s home in 1923, and grew up on a farm. He received his B.A. in Philosophy in 1947 from the University of Michigan, then went on to receive his

citations, Paddison claims union was started in 1963, while Bierman remembers that the union was founded in 1961.

⁶⁸ Arthur K. Bierman, Interview by Peter Carroll, Audio Recording, 1992, San Francisco Labor Archives, Leonard Library, 60.

⁶⁹ Bierman, Interview by Peter Carroll, 65.

⁷⁰ Radcliff Interview; Peter Radcliff and Sue Banford to Faculty, December 5, 1968, Radcliff Collection, folder 28, box 1.

⁷¹ Bierman, Interview by Peter Carroll, 48.

Masters' Degree at the same university before transferring to UC Berkeley, where he received his Ph.D. a few years later.⁷² Paddison writes that Bierman's politics were

shaped equally by, on one hand, his Depression-era admiration for Roosevelt's social welfare programs and, on the other, the rural values of autonomy, individualism, and libertarianism. An ardent progressive, environmentalist, and socialist, he nonetheless rejected the conformity required by the Communist Party, U.S.A.⁷³

He had also been involved in the Socialist Party, but by the time he started teaching at San Francisco State in the fall of 1952 he no longer was.⁷⁴ Bierman remembers that upon arrival at San Francisco State the college was "small, very vibrant, a wonderful campus." He would soon help to institute the Philosophy Department as well.⁷⁵

Bierman and other San Francisco State faculty established AFT Local 1352 in part to protect faculty in the context of anti-communism of the late 1950s and early 1960s. Peter Radcliff, a professor of Philosophy who became quite active in the union upon his arrival at San Francisco State in 1963, recalled that Bierman and Williams formed the local "to offer protection to faculty and in protest to the activities of the House Un-American Activities Committee (HUAC) on the national and the state level."⁷⁶ Prior to helping to found AFT Local 1352, Bierman helped to form San Franciscans for Academic Freedom and Education (SAFE) in June of 1959 in opposition to subpoenas issued by HUAC to forty public elementary and high school teachers in California on June 6, 1959. Bierman described this organizing as a

⁷² Ibid., 1–14.

⁷³ Paddison, "Summers of Worry, Summers of Defiance: San Franciscans for Academic Freedom and Education and the Bay Area Opposition to HUAC, 1959-1960," 192.

⁷⁴ Bierman, Interview by Peter Carroll, 26, 35.

⁷⁵ Ibid., 26–27.

⁷⁶ Radcliff Interview.

“prelude to the organization of the union.”⁷⁷ SAFE’s aim, according to Joshua Paddison, was centered around building opposition to the HUAC hearings in an effort to get them cancelled. The hearings were ultimately cancelled due to SAFE’s coalition work with student groups and community organizations.

This victory was short-lived, and HUAC returned to San Francisco May 12-14, 1960 for hearings meant to investigate a “new batch of local ‘subversives,’” most of whom were not teachers.⁷⁸ SAFE and other groups, particularly student groups from San Francisco State and UC Berkeley, intensified their organizing in opposition to the HUAC hearings scheduled for May, culminating in one of the most famous and influential protests against HUAC during the period.⁷⁹ On the first day of the hearings, May 12, 1960, students from UC Berkeley and San Francisco State organized a protest in Union Square attended by more than 1,000 people. The next day’s protest, which came to be known as “Black Friday,” ended in mayhem after the police turned water hoses on protesting students, in addition to clubbing protesters with their batons. These protests would make national headlines and, according to Paddison and other scholars of McCarthyism, “prove to be a turning point in the history of HUAC,” ultimately facilitating the committee’s demise and moderating the intensity of domestic anti-communism in the United States.⁸⁰

⁷⁷ Bierman, Interview by Peter Carroll, 53.

⁷⁸ Paddison, “Summers of Worry, Summers of Defiance,” 188.

⁷⁹ Ibid., 188–189.

⁸⁰ Ibid., 197-199. Also see, among other scholars of McCarthyism, Blauner, *Resisting McCarthyism*; Cauter, *The Great Fear*; Fariello, *Red Scare*, 1995; Heale, *American Anticommunism*; Schrecker, *Many Are the Crimes*.

Bierman and Williams' roles in founding SAFE in 1959 are important for understanding the founding of AFT Local 1352 at San Francisco State the following year. First, on a very practical level, organizing against HUAC helped to politicize and mobilize liberal and other faculty at San Francisco State College concerned with HUAC's attack on civil liberties. Many of the people involved in this organizing would become some of the first union members at San Francisco State and continue their activism through the union. SAFE included several other San Francisco State faculty members, including Mark Linenthal, Patrick Strauss, Leonard Wolf, Don Gibbons, and Don Garrity.⁸¹ Additionally, Art Bierman joined with 165 other faculty San Francisco State faculty members who condemned the hearings in a full-page advertisement in the San Francisco State student newspaper. There were a number of socially conscious, relatively young faculty members hired at San Francisco State in the early 1950s involved in liberal causes, including the protests against HUAC.⁸²

Second, SAFE's politics correlate with AFT Local 1352's politics at its founding. Both Herb Williams and Art Bierman, in fact, helped to found both organizations. SAFE's politics were relatively centrist; the group was principally concerned with freedom of speech, due process, civil rights, and fiscal responsibility. SAFE's "Statement of Our Position," moreover, had a "touch of anticommunism," according to Paddison, implying perhaps that HUAC, as the national committee investigating subversion, was imposing itself on California, and California could in

⁸¹ Ibid., 192.

⁸² Ibid., 196-197.

fact take care of its own Communists.⁸³ Unlike more radical groups, SAFE did not defend people's rights to specifically be active in the Communist Party or hold radical politics, instead preferring to focus on HUAC's chilling effect on civil liberties.

AFT Local 1352 was founded by Williams and Bierman in part to protect faculty against HUAC, indicating that from its inception the union would be engaged in broader social issues and not simply be confined to organizing around economic issues. Peter Radcliff recalled that the union "carried signs for non-bread-and-butter issues," including one picket in the mid-1960s of "about fifteen or twenty" faculty in front of the administration building on campus in protest against release class rankings to the military. Radcliff said that if the union "released class rankings, we were participating in the drafting mechanism of the United States and the furnishing of soldiers to fight in the Vietnam War."⁸⁴ Bierman noted regarding the union's political orientation, "there was always a question of whether we should be taking so many political positions or only stick to faculty issues. Because it would alienate some people from joining us. But practically everybody, I think, was for political positions."⁸⁵ Finally, it should be highlighted that AFT Local 1352 was born out of opposition to fervent anti-communism only twelve years after the Los Angeles-based AFT Local was expelled by the International due to charges of subversion.

At the time of AFT Local 1352's founding, faculty at colleges and universities in California did not have the legal right to unionize. The union's engagement with

⁸³ Ibid., 193.

⁸⁴ Peter Radcliff, Interview by Harvey Schwartz, Audio Recording, 2000, San Francisco Labor Archives, Leonard Library, 21.

⁸⁵ Bierman, Interview by Peter Carroll, 82–83.

non-bread-and-butter issues stemmed not only from the nature of the local's founding in the aftermath of the HUAC protests, but also because the union was essentially founded as an activist group of liberal and other like-minded faculty on campus. Though AFT Local 1352 activists sought union recognition and a collective bargaining agreement as their ultimate goals, it would not be until the 1982 that faculty would be able to formally establish the union at San Francisco State and other California State Colleges. Only with the passage of the Higher Education Employer-Employee Relations Act (HEERA) in 1978 did workers at the California State College system and the University of California gain the legal right to organize and be represented for collective bargaining purposes. Previously, under the George Brown Act of 1961 workers at California State Colleges and the UC had limited rights to "meet and confer."⁸⁶ According to Carol Vendrillo, the Brown Act "provided for representation of employees on a 'members-only' basis, by requiring the public employer to 'meet and confer with representatives of employee organizations upon request.'⁸⁷ This meant that while the college administration could not refuse to meet with AFT Local 1352 and other employee organizations, it had no obligation to actually negotiate or come to an agreement with them. Power rested in administrative hands.

⁸⁶ Radcliff, Interview by Harvey Schwartz, 29.

⁸⁷ Carol A. Vendrillo, Chapter 6: "Collective Bargaining in California's Public Sector," in Joyce M Najita and James L Stern, eds., *Collective Bargaining in the Public Sector: The Experience of Eight States* (Armonk, N.Y.: M.E. Sharpe, 2001), 140. The Rodda Act, passed a few years earlier in 1975, provided workers in the public schools and community colleges with the right to union representation and collective bargaining.

AFT Local 1352 tended to attract liberal and leftist faculty as union members. Additionally, liberal union activists such as Bierman and Williams founded AFT Local 1352 to take up broader political issues, as well as attempt to advocate on behalf of faculty in the absence of a collective bargaining agreement. Had the union been the exclusive representative of the entire faculty at San Francisco State for bargaining purposes, it would have attracted a broader swath of the faculty, including more politically moderate and conservative faculty. Because the union was a democratic organization, these relatively more conservative union members might have influenced the union to be more politically moderate. Thus, the politics of the founders of the AFT Local 1352, combined with the lack of a labor law in California permitting unionization among college and university faculty, served to push the union to the left politically.

The lack of formal union recognition for faculty at San Francisco State by the time of the strike in 1968-1969 was not unusual nationally. Though faculty at the U.S. Merchant Marine Academy in New York unionized in 1966, the unionization of faculty at the City University of New York in late 1969 brought national attention to faculty unionism, marking “the effective beginning of the movement,” according to Joseph Garbarino. During the 1970s, the rate of unionization for public universities was much higher than for private universities: by 1979, 29 percent of public institutions while just 12 percent of private four-year institutions were organized.⁸⁸

⁸⁸ Joseph Garbarino, “Faculty Unionism: The First Ten Years,” *Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science* 448 (March 1980): 75.

In the years leading up to the strike in 1968-1969, despite the lack of legal recognition, AFT Local 1352 organized to improve the faculty's working conditions. In 1967 the union joined with Association of California State College Professors (ACSCP) to put pressure on the administration to reduce the workload of the faculty, from four classes taught per term to three courses.⁸⁹ According to Radcliff, the faculty's workload at the State Colleges was higher than at comparable institutions.⁹⁰ In the spring of 1968, AFT Local 1352 and ACSCP organized to persuade faculty members to sign a pledge card which stated that they were willing to take direct action by refusing to teach more than 9 units (three courses) starting in the spring of 1969 if the administration did not act first on the issue. Radcliff, following the local's practice of rotating the presidency, was president of AFT Local 1352 the year of the workload campaign.⁹¹ Bierman asserted in a speech in January, 1969 that at San Francisco State 66% of the faculty signed the pledge the during the spring of 1968.⁹² In December, 1968, in their newsletter, the ACSCP highlighted some of the progress made on their "9 unit load" campaign, making it clear that much was left to be done. Advancements included the fact that the Trustees of the State College System authorized college presidents to make some adjustments to teaching load. Also, the Financial and Educational Policy Committees of the trustees allocated some

⁸⁹ Barlow and Shapiro, *An End to Silence*, 284-285.

⁹⁰ Radcliff Interview.

⁹¹ Ibid.

⁹² Speech Delivered by Art Bierman, January 22, 1969, Radcliff Collection, folder 5, box 2. The speech was likely delivered before AFT 1021, the Los Angeles local, as Bierman was trying to garner support for AFT Local 1352's strike.

additional money to adjust teaching loads, though not nearly enough to adjust all faculty teaching loads.⁹³

By the fall of 1968, the term after the workload pledge drive, the strike started by students on November 6, 1968 would redirect the union's activism from focusing heavily on the issue of teaching load to organizing in solidarity with the students and their demands against racism in higher education.

The Student Movement

The roots of both the student and faculty strikes lie in the student activism of the previous two years. The social movements of the late 1960s, particularly the movement against the Vietnam War, activism by Third World leftists, and Black Power, were vibrant at San Francisco State. The student movement against the Vietnam War involved both white students and students of color; Students for a Democratic Society made opposition to the war central to its organizing. The Black Students Union took demanded the admittance of more students of color to the college. And BSU leader Jimmy Garrett submitted a formal proposal to establish a Black Studies program in March of 1967. Activist students of color formed the Third

⁹³ Ross Y. Koen, "9-unit campaign bears early fruit," *The Voice*, December, 1968, Radcliff Collection, folder 28, box 1. More specifically, Koen writes that the Trustees' Finance and Educational Policy Committee approved a request for \$1,799,700 to be used for teaching loads, which would, if approved by the legislature, create 210 additional instructor positions, reducing the teaching load for about 8 percent of the stage college system's faculty. The committees also approved an additional \$3,119,480 to be used to reduce teaching load of faculty teaching graduate courses, which would finance a reduced teaching load for about 14% of the faculty. Also, the Coordinating Council for Higher Education recommended that the legislature appropriate \$5,000,000 in the 1969-1970 budget "for research related assistance and activities" which could be used to reduce teaching loads.

World Liberation Front in the spring of 1968 as an umbrella group for organizations of students of color on campus. Student activism during the 1967-1968 school year began with came to be known as “the Gater Incident” on November 6, 1967 and culminated in the occupation of the Administration Building in May of 1968. Student activist Hari Dillon later described the atmosphere in the two years leading up to the student strike: “San Francisco State was like a cauldron of intellectual and political ferment.”⁹⁴ These political struggles, according to Dillon, “laid the basis for the politicization of that campus to the point where you could actually launch—including the white students, led by students of color, but including the white students—to the point where you could actually have a strike that lasted for five months and involved, at the height, almost the entire campus.”⁹⁵ While individual faculty participated in the student movement prior to the strike, the AFT Local 1352, as a union, was not very active.⁹⁶ The involvement of AFT Local 1352 mainly consisted of aiding faculty facing disciplinary charges because of their involvement in student-organized demonstrations.⁹⁷

The student movement at San Francisco State in the late 1960s existed in a national and international context of political upheaval. Black Nationalist and Third World politics heavily influenced student activists at the college. They sought intellectual and political guidance from the ideas of local activists Bobby Seale and Huey Newton of the Black Panther Party, as well as from Stokely Carmichael, leader

⁹⁴ Dillon Interview.

⁹⁵ Ibid.

⁹⁶ Leahy Interview.

⁹⁷ Radcliff, Interview by Harvey Schwartz, 35.

of the Student Non-Violent Coordinating Committee credited with popularizing the “Black Power” slogan in 1966 during the James Meredith “March Against Fear” from Memphis, Tennessee to Jackson, Mississippi. Students of color at San Francisco State were also inspired by the anti-colonial struggles of the Third World, and read literature by revolutionaries like Che Guevara, Franz Fanon, Mao Tse-Tung, and Amilcar Cabral.⁹⁸ For activists of color at San Francisco State, the political ferment of domestic and global revolutionary and radical movements combined with student activists’ own experiences with racism growing up to facilitate their embrace of Black Nationalism and Third World politics. Hari Dillon, an activist with the BSU and the Third World Liberation Front, remembers, “it was this visceral experience with racism in our youth that led us to embrace Black and Third World nationalism in our twenties. Black and Third World nationalism was our salvation from the ideological and psychological bondage of racism.”⁹⁹

The struggle for open admissions and Black and Ethnic Studies at San Francisco State was, as Biondi lays out, part of a larger movement in the U.S. that brought the Black Freedom Movement to colleges and universities across the country. Starting with the famous lunch counter sit-ins organized by black students in Greensboro, North Carolina and the formation of the Student Non-Violent Coordinating Committee in 1960, black student activism would explode in the late 1960s as activists protested on nearly 200 college campuses in 1968 and 1969 alone.

⁹⁸ Ryan, "Education for the People," 7.

⁹⁹ Hari Dillon, “We Did Not Struggle In Vain,” Speech at the 20th Anniversary of the Third World Student Strike" (unpublished, 1988), in author's possession.

Though the San Francisco State strike is often credited with establishing the first Black Studies Department in the nation in 1969, a Black Studies Department was established at Lake Merritt College in 1968, thanks to the efforts of Black Panther Party leaders Bobby Seale and Huey Newton in the mid-1960s.¹⁰⁰ Biondi traces this campus-based movement of the late 1960s, arguing that, first and foremost, black students were demanding “a role in the definition and production of scholarly knowledge.” They were “turning the slogan ‘black power’ into a grassroots social movements.”¹⁰¹

Students at San Francisco State were also actively involved in the movement against the U.S. war in Vietnam. This anti-war activism politicized and mobilized the student body at the college, helping to set the stage for the student strike in 1968-1969. Formed in September of 1966, the largely white Students for a Democratic Society at San Francisco State made organizing against the Vietnam War central to its activism. Most prominently, SDS focused its energies at San Francisco State and other college campus on inhibiting recruitment by Dow Chemical, the company principally responsible for manufacturing Napalm, as well as attempting to prevent recruitment by the Armed Forces.¹⁰²

In October of 1967, anti-war activists from San Francisco State participated in “Stop the Draft Week,” a national mobilization during which thousands of young people refused the military draft. In the Bay Area, activists organized major

¹⁰⁰ Biondi, *The Black Revolution on Campus*, 41.

¹⁰¹ *Ibid.*, 2.

¹⁰² Barlow and Shapiro, *An End to Silence*, 28, 96.

demonstrations during Stop the Draft Week at both the San Francisco Federal Building and the Oakland Induction Center. San Francisco State SDS activist Bruce Hartford recalled that UC Berkeley student activists were “sort of taking the lead” in the coalition that organized the action at the Oakland Induction Center, but that San Francisco State activists were the “number two force” in the group.¹⁰³ The action in Oakland, originally intended to be non-violent, ended with clashes between Oakland police and protesters. Among those arrested during a peaceful civil disobedience action at the Oakland Induction Center were the singer Joan Baez, the beat poet Lawrence Ferlinghetti, and author and San Francisco State professor Kay Boyle.¹⁰⁴ Boyle was one of the handful of radical white faculty at San Francisco State involved in activism prior to the faculty strike in solidarity with the student strike in 1968-1969. During the student strike of 1968-1969 SDS would help to mobilize white students to support the student of color-led strike.

In addition to the anti-war activism led by SDS, the student activists in the Black Students Union played a prominent role in the student movement at San Francisco state. The BSU was a leading force among activist students of color at the college; it was the organization on campus that catalyzed the movement to establish open admissions, as well as the initial efforts to establish a Black Studies program on campus. The BSU’s activism would inspire other students of color and lead to the demand in 1968 to establish a College of Third World Studies. The Negro Students Association, originally formed in 1963 at San Francisco State, formally became the

¹⁰³ Ibid.

¹⁰⁴ Ryan, "Education for the People," 33; Barlow and Shapiro, *An End to Silence*, 109.

Black Students Union in 1966, thanks in large part to the efforts of black student activists like Jimmy Garrett, Jerry Varnado, Marianna Waddy,¹⁰⁵ Jo Ann Mitchell, and Benny Stewart, all of whom, except for Garrett who left the college in the spring of 1968, played a prominent role in the student strike of 1968-1969.

James Garrett, known as Jimmy Garrett, played a particularly prominent role helping to transform the Negro Students Association into the Black Students Union. By the time Garrett arrived at San Francisco State, he had been involved the black freedom movement for six years, since the age of fourteen. He was involved in the southern Civil Rights Movement in the early to mid-1960s, including the Congress of Racial Equality and the Student Non-Violent Coordinating Committee. He participated in the Freedom Rides to the South in 1961, joined SNCC's staff, and remained active in the South until he was severely beaten outside of Jackson, Mississippi during his activism in 1965. Continuing to work with SNCC, Garrett moved to Los Angeles where SNCC was involved with the United Civil Rights Coalition.¹⁰⁶ He had also been involved in the youth wing of the Communist Party.¹⁰⁷ Garrett, though still young, brought a good deal of experience and a militant politics to his activism at San Francisco State, helping to influence the course of the BSU's political activism.

Upon his arrival at San Francisco State, Garrett pushed for the transformation of the Negro Students Association into the Black Students Union in 1966. This new

¹⁰⁵ Waddy since has become known as Maryum Al-Wadi. She was the first president of the BSU after the Negro Students Association changed its name to the BSU (Barlow and Shapiro, *An End to Silence*, 87).

¹⁰⁶ Rogers, "Remembering the Black Campus Movement: An Oral History Interview with James P. Garrett," 32-34.

¹⁰⁷ *Ibid.*, 33.

name signified an evolution of the organization's politics, as the students involved came to identify with Black Power and Third World radicalism. The BSU's statement of purpose released in 1966 read, in part: "The Black Students Union recognizes the struggles for freedom of nonwhite peoples around the world as a positive part of our educational processes." The statement continued, "We...seek simply to function as human beings, to control our own destinies. Initially, following the myth of the American Dream, we worked too hard to attend predominantly white colleges, but we have learned through direct analysis that it is impossible for black people to function as human beings in a racist society in which black is synonymous with enemy."¹⁰⁸ Garrett remarked in an interview published in 2009 that BSU members chose to call the group a union instead of an association because, "the connection we thought of was the union movement. That is not simply an alliance or an association, but a union. It is a coming together of a broad base of people."¹⁰⁹ This explicit connection made to the union movement perhaps foreshadowed the BSU's strategic decision to seek solidarity from AFT Local 1352, the faculty union, during the student strike of 1968-69. Though Garrett left San Francisco State before the student strike began, he helped to lay the groundwork for the strike by pushing for the radicalization of the black student organization on campus. Furthermore, during the spring semester of

¹⁰⁸ Orrick, *College in Crisis*, 115.

¹⁰⁹ Rogers, "Remembering the Black Campus Movement: An Oral History Interview with James P. Garrett," 33.

1967, Garrett was responsible for submitting the first conceptual proposal for a Black Studies program to the faculty at San Francisco State.¹¹⁰

The BSU had been organizing for nearly two years prior to the strike to establish a Black Studies Department and to admit more black students to the college. Despite promises in 1967 and 1968, the trustees of the State College system refused to formally establish a Black Studies Department. As noted, in the fall of 1966, members of the Black Students Union taught black studies classes through the Experimental College, and by the spring of 1967 the BSU began to demand the establishment of a Black Studies Program at San Francisco State.¹¹¹ Jimmy Garrett helped develop “A Proposal to Initiate an Institute of Black Studies at San Francisco State” and officially presented it to the Instructional Policy Committee of the faculty’s Academic Senate by March 1, 1967.¹¹² This proposal had two primary objectives: establish a Black Studies curriculum by the fall of 1967, and increase admissions of students of color. Though the Instructional Policy Committee of the Academic Senate voted in 1967 to establish a Black Studies program as soon as possible, the Council of Academic Deans, a body created to counteract the power of the Academic Senate, refused to commit to establishing the program in 1967.¹¹³

During the 1967-1968 academic year, black students then attempted, in part successfully, to work in a piecemeal fashion by trying to convince various departments on campus to sponsor Black Studies courses. This was less than ideal, of

¹¹⁰ Ibid., 31.

¹¹¹ Barlow and Shapiro, *An End to Silence*, 90.

¹¹² Ibid., 15.

¹¹³ Ibid., 127-128.

course, especially since black students wanted the power to determine which classes would be taught and who would teach them. Even then, several departments, including the History Department, were unsympathetic and refused to approve Black Studies courses.¹¹⁴

When Dr. Nathan Hare was hired to chair and help form a Black Studies program at San Francisco State in January of 1968, nearly a year prior to the strike, he proposed giving the program departmental status and as much autonomy from the administration as possible. Hare put forward his proposal one year after Jimmy Garrett first offered his own proposal for a Black Studies program. Hare's "Conceptual Proposal for Black Studies" "stressed the goal of serving the educational needs of the Black community as a whole," according to Biondi. "A commitment to advancing the interests of all Black people, not just students, was a core animating principle of the Black student-Black Studies movements."¹¹⁵ Hare's proposal asserted that Black Studies "not only reflects their cries (black students)—echoed by others across the country—for a relevant education; it also represents the greatest and last hope for rectifying an old wrong and halting the decay now gnawing away at American society."¹¹⁶ An important element of Hare's proposal, moreover, reflects the political project inherent in the fight for Black Studies. The proposal called for

¹¹⁴ Barlow and Shapiro, *An End to Silence*, 131; Anton Interview.

¹¹⁵ Biondi, *The Black Revolution on Campus*, 48-49.

¹¹⁶ Barlow and Shapiro, *An End to Silence*, 134.

students taking Black Studies courses to be involved in the community: “field work must be an important part of the program’s curriculum.”¹¹⁷

One incident in early November of 1967 would strongly influence the student movement for the remainder of the academic year. The Black Students Union charged the college’s student newspaper, *The Gater*, with racism. Not only had the paper singled out the BSU for criticism by claiming that the group’s leaders Garrett and Mariana Waddy were pocketing student government money, but it also mocked black consciousness by, for instance, referring to boxer Muhammed Ali by his birth name, Cassius Clay, which he had stopped using as a critique of naming practices under slavery. On November 6, 1967, about a dozen members of the Black Students Union entered the offices of *The Gater* in a confrontation that soon turned into fisticuffs. Photos published the next day by the paper showed several members of the BSU engaged in a fight with white students affiliated with the newspaper, including the editor. As a result the administration suspended several members of the BSU, but did not suspend any of the white students involved in the incident.¹¹⁸ One of the people suspended was George Mason Murray, BSU leader and Minister of Education in the Black Panther Party. As a graduate student in the English department, Murray taught classes, and one of his students was Danny Glover, currently a famous actor, but then a college freshman involved in the BSU.¹¹⁹ The administration’s repeated targeting of Murray for his politics would be a persistent bone of contention between the BSU, the

¹¹⁷ Ibid.,138.

¹¹⁸ Ferreira, “All Power to the People,” 91–92.

¹¹⁹ Biondi, *The Black Revolution on Campus*, 45.

faculty (including AFT Local 1352) and the college administration through the strike the following year.

To the BSU and other student activists, the suspension of black students for what came to be dubbed “the Gater Incident” underscored that the college administration was, in a racist fashion, singling out black activists for discipline. This point soon became even clearer when, on November 24, 1967, *Open Process*, the counter-cultural student newspaper on campus, published an erotic poem by Jefferson Poland, “whimsically dedicated to the head of the Physical Education Department,” as well as a photo of a reclining nude man. After conservative students mailed copies of the paper to politicians and the California State College Trustees, the administration suspended Poland, as well as the white editor of the paper, Blair Partridge. *Open Process* was also briefly suspended.¹²⁰ After the ACLU intervened and students organized themselves into the Movement Against Political Suspensions (MAPS) in late 1967, the administration rescinded the suspensions of the two white students associated with *Open Process* on December 1, 1967, while the suspension of the black students for their involvement in the Gater Incident remained in tact.¹²¹

In response to what they viewed as a double standard, student activists escalated the student movement on campus in late 1967 and early 1968. They organized a large demonstration on December 6, 1967, which resulted in the occupation of the Administration Building on the same day. The students demanded that the suspensions of the BSU activists involved in the Gater Incident be lifted.

¹²⁰ Barlow and Shapiro, *An End to Silence*, 116; Orrick, *College in Crisis*, 27.

¹²¹ Ferreira, “All Power to the People,” 93.

They also demanded that students be allowed to control student publications, including *The Daily Gater*, *Open Process*, and a paper called *The Phoenix*. The students further demanded that the administration put an end to its political harassment of student activists.¹²² As demonstrators gathered at the locked Administration Building, a student found an open window and proceeded to climb through it to open up the building for the rest of the protesters. John Gerassi, one of the few radical white faculty members engaged with the student movement at the time, decided to follow the student in through the window. As he entered the window, due to the resistance of a campus security guard, the glass of the window was broken. At that moment, halfway into the building, Gerassi was photographed; the photo appeared in newspapers all over the country.¹²³ Gerassi was fired for his participation in the building occupation, and despite the fact that AFT Local 1352 grieved his firing, Gerassi's dismissal remained in place and thus he would not be present the following year during the strike.¹²⁴

The occupation and the firing of Gerassi were significant for two reasons. First, the occupation of the administration building represented the increased militancy of the student movement, as well as the fact that students of color and white student activists were working in coalition with each other around common political projects, further helping to set the stage for the student strike the next year. Second, Gerassi's participation points illustrates that individual white radical faculty were

¹²² Ryan, "Education for the People," 37.

¹²³ Barlow and Shapiro, *An End to Silence*, 119.

¹²⁴ Radcliff Interview.

engaged with the student movement, at great risk to their academic careers, while AFT Local 1352's involvement appeared limited to carrying the grievances of radical faculty targeted by the administration for their participation in protests. The fact that AFT Local 1352 defended radical faculty, however, indicates that the union was willing to risk losing support from more conservative union members opposed to the radicalism of the student movement on campus. Radcliff, for example, recalled that some more conservative and moderate faculty members were unhappy when the union defended Gerassi against his firing.¹²⁵

In addition to student involvement in the Black Students Union, students of color at San Francisco State were active in a number of different organizations, which came together to form the Third World Liberation Front (TWLF) in the spring of 1968. These groups included the Philippine-American College Endeavor (PACE), the Asian American Political Alliance (APAA), the Intercollegiate Chinese for Social Action (ICSA), the Mexican American Student Confederation (MASC), and the Latin American Student Organization (LASO).¹²⁶ According to Jason Ferreira, the Third World Liberation Front formed in part to demand “educational self-determination” and that “the university produce knowledge that reflected the realities of working-class communities of color and simultaneously contribute to the transformation of difficult economic, political, and social realities.”¹²⁷ Juan Martinez, professor in the History department, played a significant role in encouraging students to found the

¹²⁵ Ibid.

¹²⁶ Ferreira, “All Power to the People”, 78, 87.

¹²⁷ Ibid., 27.

TWLF. He also helped to arouse student interest in forming two important organizations on campus, the Philippine-American College Endeavor (PACE) and El Renacimiento, later to be renamed the Mexican American Student Confederation (MASC).¹²⁸ Martinez was the faculty adviser for MASC.¹²⁹ The TWLF consisted of six organizations, listed above, and two representatives from each group made up a central committee tasked with developing policies for the organization.¹³⁰

Like the largely white Students for a Democratic Society, students of color were active in the movement against the Vietnam War. Students of color called attention not only to the liberation struggle of the Vietnamese people against U.S. imperialism, but also relating the Vietnamese struggle to their own efforts for self-determination within a racially stratified U.S. society.¹³¹ Students of color were especially involved in the Tutorial Program and the Community Involvement Program in the two years leading up to the strike.¹³² The Third World Liberation Front had three important political objectives: the admittance of more students of color through the special admissions program; the establishment of a Third World College, including the hiring of faculty of color to staff it; and, lastly, during the 1967-1968 school year the rehiring of two faculty members in History, Juan Martinez

¹²⁸ Barlow and Shapiro, *An End to Silence*, 156–157.

¹²⁹ Karen Umamoto, “‘On Strike!’ San Francisco State College Strike, 1968-9: The Role of Asian American Students,” *Amerasia Journal* 15, no. 1 (1989): 20; Barlow and Shapiro, *An End to Silence*, 156-157.

¹³⁰ Orrick, *College in Crisis*, 206.

¹³¹ Ferreira, “All Power to the People,” 85.

¹³² *Ibid.*, 59- 63.

and Richard Fitzgerald, both of whom were let go that year for their political involvement on campus.¹³³

The situation in the History Department during the 1967-1968 academic year provides a telling example of the problems faced when an impasse was reached about teaching an African and Black History course. There were three leftist faculty members in the department who were active in the movement prior the strike: Dick Fitzgerald, Juan Martinez, and Lucille Birnbaum. They had to contend with a conservative political atmosphere in the department. The chair, Ray Kelch, was unsympathetic to the student movement and leftist faculty. Anatole Anton, professor of Philosophy—later fired for his participation in the strike—remembered a history professor named Mejia, who he said was from Spain and was “genuinely a fascist” and a supporter of Franco, the dictator of Spain.¹³⁴ What was necessary for a course to be established by students was the sponsorship of a single professor. Dick Fitzgerald, who had just finished graduate school and was in his first year teaching at San Francisco State in 1967-1968, agreed to sponsor a Black Studies course. In response, the Kelch informed Fitzgerald that he would not be re-hired for the following year, and thus was not present during the strike of 1968-1969.¹³⁵ Similarly, Martinez, one of the few faculty members of color at San Francisco State, was not rehired by the

¹³³ Barlow and Shapiro, *An End to Silence*, 159; Ferreira, "All Power to the People," 96.

¹³⁴ Anton Interview.

¹³⁵ Barlow and Shapiro, *An End to Silence*, 131. Barlow and Shapiro say this: Once Kelch, the chair, learned of Dick Fitzgerald's charity in agreeing to sponsor the course, he called Fitzgerald into his office and accused him of “stabbing the department in the back.” However, in a note to me Fitzgerald said the reason for him not being rehired is “unclear,” and that there was some criticism of Ray Kelch because Kelch was gay, but closeted (Fitzgerald mailed answers to me in response to interview questions that I emailed to him).

History Department for the 1968-1969 academic year. Kelch had assigned Martinez undergraduate U.S. history survey courses, though Martinez arrived at San Francisco State under the impression that he would be teaching Mexican American history courses. This, combined with Martinez's activism on campus, especially his close alliance with activists of color on campus and because of his role in organizing Mission High School students to fill out applications and demand admittance to San Francisco State, led the History Department to not renew Martinez' teaching contract.¹³⁶ In an interview with the *Berkeley Barb*, Martinez stated, "I believe I am not being retained essentially because I criticized the administration and [History and Social Science] departments for failing to provide for the wants and needs of minority students."¹³⁷

Student activists, including activists in the Black Students Union and the Third World Liberation Front, were particularly active before the strike around the issue of special admissions, later to become known as the Equal Opportunity Program (EOP). In the mid to late-1960s, San Francisco State had a very modest affirmative action program in which admission standards were waved for 2% of incoming students. However, in the 1960s the administration consistently failed to fill all of the potential enrollment slots that made up the 2 percent over the course. One of the BSU's primary organizing projects during the 1967-1968 academic year was to expand the number of students of color admitted to San Francisco State. After Martin Luther King, Jr. was assassinated in April, 1968, the trustees of the California State

¹³⁶ Ryan, "Education for the People," 51; Barlow and Shapiro, *An End to Silence*, 165.

¹³⁷ Ferreira, "All Power to the People," 97.

College System increased this quota from 2 to 4 percent as a way to increase the enrollment of students of color.¹³⁸ At San Francisco State, vacancies were created for 427 students of color.

This demand to increase minority enrollment by filling all of the unused special admit slots would become one of the demands of a large student-led sit-in in May of 1968 when student activists occupied the Administration Building yet again. This occupation was one of the largest demonstrations during the 1967-1968 academic year, as well as the last large action that tested the power of the student movement prior to the student strike that began on November 6, 1968. The occupation was, moreover, the first big action organized by the Third World Liberation Front, which organized alongside white students in Students for a Democratic Society. The coalition that came together to organize the occupation would come together once again in November, 1968 to organize the student strike. The students occupying the Administration Building had three primary demands: 1) rehire Juan Martinez; 2) admit 400 students of color under the special admissions program; and 3) cancel the college's contract with the Air Force Reserve Officers' Training Corps (AFROTC), though the faculty had voted to retain AFROTC on campus.¹³⁹ The students also demanded the hiring of nine additional Third World faculty positions to support the infusion of more undergraduates of color to the

¹³⁸ Biondi, *The Black Revolution on Campus*, 51–52.

¹³⁹ Ryan, "Education for the People," 52–53; Orrick, *College In Crisis*, 34; Karagueuzian, *Blow it Up!*, 54.

college.¹⁴⁰ At 10 p.m. on May 21, 1968, the first day of the building occupation, President Summerskill called the San Francisco Police Department's Tactical Squad to retake the building. Twenty-seven students remained in the building to submit to arrest. The occupation would have ended there had the police attacked the assembled students outside the building. In the process, the police beat up Terrance Hallinan, an attorney for the Associated Student government, splitting his head open. Seeing this, students reacted by throwing random objects at the police. The police reacted violently, sending eleven protestors to the hospital with wounds. The following day, Wednesday, May 22, 1968, over 400 students re-occupied the Administration Building to protest the police violence.¹⁴¹

The building occupation was partially successful. On Thursday, May 23, President Summerskill conceded to two out of three of the student demands, agreeing to rehire Juan Martinez for the following year and to admit more students of color, as well as allocating more teaching positions to account for the new students. Though Summerskill did not agree to cancel AFROTC, the students voted to accept the settlement.¹⁴² Summerskill did agree to call a referendum of the entire college community on the question of whether or not to retain AFROTC, however. Initially elated about this victory, students would soon be disappointed. An Educational Opportunities bill providing funding for special admits passed the California legislature, but governor Ronald Reagan, due to his opposition to affirmative action,

¹⁴⁰ Ferreira, "All Power to the People," 99.

¹⁴¹ Ryan, "Education for the People," 53; Ferreira, "All Power to the People," 99-101.

¹⁴² Umemoto, "'On Strike!'" San Francisco State College Strike, 1968-9: The Role of Asian American Students," 23.

in 1968 slashed \$250,000 from the EOP budget via line-item veto. As a result, the funding for special admissions at San Francisco State was cut, preventing the college administration from following through on their concession to the students.¹⁴³

A faculty vote at an Academic Senate meeting on May 23, 1968, during the student occupation revealed a politically divided faculty. While the occupation was taking place, the Academic Senate convened to discuss whether or not to remove AFROTC from the campus. The Senate did not take up the other student demands. Conservative faculty prevailed, convincing a majority of the faculty to vote in favor of continuing the AFROTC contract by a vote of 282 to 251. Some liberal faculty members who voted to retain AFROTC did so because they were upset at the tactics used by the students.¹⁴⁴ The faculty vote did play a role in president Summerskill's refusal to end the AFROTC contract, even though he acceded to the other student demands. The split vote of the faculty on AFROTC, furthermore, is relevant for the faculty support of the student strike the next year for a couple of reasons. First, it is important that as many as 251 faculty, presumably many liberal faculty members and radicals alike, voted to end the AFROTC contract. It indicates that the anti-war movement, which by 1968 witnessed an upsurge nationally, did impact the largely white faculty's willingness to take a political stand on an issue pushed by the student movement at San Francisco State, even if by way of a relatively passive vote at an Academic Senate meeting. However, it is also noteworthy that the vote failed to end the AFROTC contract, highlighting that the faculty as a whole were much more

¹⁴³ Orrick, *College in Crisis*, 34.

¹⁴⁴ Ferreira, "All Power to the People," 100.

inclined to be either moderate or conservative politically and to favor more cautious tactics.

George Murray, a graduate student previously suspended for his role in the Gater Incident in November of 1967, was suspended a second time for his radical politics, this time on the order of the trustees of the California State College system. At their meeting on September 26, 1968, the trustees, angered at political statements Murray made over the summer, formally requested that president Robert Smith transfer Murray to non-teaching duties. Murray had given speech at a conference in Cuba in August, 1968 in which he declared, “Every time a Vietnamese guerilla knocks out a U.S. soldier that means one less aggressor against those who fight for freedom in the U.S.”¹⁴⁵ The media publicized the fact that the Minister of Education for the Black Panther Party, George Murray, was slated to teaching undergraduate students in the English Department at San Francisco State. The *San Francisco Examiner* even ran a headline declaring, “SFS Puts Admirer of Mao on Teaching Staff.”¹⁴⁶ Smith refused to suspend Murray, citing due process requirements, and on October 31, Chancellor Dumke simply *ordered* Smith to suspend Murray. In the meantime, George Murray was undeterred by the trustees’ threats and continued to say what he pleased, including at a rally outside of a trustees’ meeting in October when he said that “political power comes from the barrel of a gun.”¹⁴⁷ At the rally Murray also proclaimed, “we are slaves and the only way to become free is to kill the

¹⁴⁵ Ibid., 112; Barlow and Shapiro, *An End to Silence*, 207; Orrick, *A College in Crisis*, 37.

¹⁴⁶ Biondi, *The Black Revolution on Campus*, 55; Barlow and Shapiro, *An End to Silence*, 208.

¹⁴⁷ Orrick, *College in Crisis*, 13.

slavemasters,” and what the country needed was an “old-fashioned black-brown-red-yellow-poor white revolution.”¹⁴⁸ President Smith caved to pressure and issued the suspension on November 1, 1968.¹⁴⁹

The administration’s action further antagonized leftist and other faculty, who viewed the firing of Murray as an attack on faculty governance. Faculty decision-making within the department was tossed aside by the chancellor and the trustees, and now President Robert Smith. In a statement released on November 5, 1968, AFT Local 1352 President Gary Hawkins opposed the high-handed manner in which the trustees imposed their will on the campus in the firing of Murray. Hawkins asserted that an Murray was suspended “without due process. The instructor did not have an opportunity to defend himself, and the instructor’s department, the legitimate vehicle...did not act on the matter.”¹⁵⁰ AFT Local 1352 and faculty in general would become particularly incensed at incidents like this, in which the college’s administration bypassed faculty decision-making in order to impose its will in the college.

The student movement in the two years prior to the beginning of the student strike on November 6, 1968, then, helped to make the strike possible. A series of escalating actions, culminating in the occupation of the administration building in the spring of 1968, brought students of color and white students together as they demanded an end to institutional racism at San Francisco State as well as an end to

¹⁴⁸ Ibid., 39.

¹⁴⁹ Orrick, *College in Crisis*, 41.

¹⁵⁰ Statement by Gary J. Hawkins, President, AFT Local 1352, November 5, 1968, Radcliff Collection, folder 25, box 1.

the college's complicity in the U.S. war in Vietnam. The actions of these years highlight that black and other students of color had been pushing the administration to establish Black and Third World Studies, to admit more students of color, and to hire more faculty of color prior to declaring a strike. Faculty involvement in the student movement was primarily confined to a handful of radical white faculty and faculty of color. However, it also became clear that a greater portion of the faculty started to pay attention to the movement, as seen most prominently in AFT Local 1352's condemnation of the firing of George Murray, a graduate student instructor and advocate of Third World leftist politics.

The Student Strike

In the fall of 1968 students were becoming increasingly frustrated by the slow pace of change at San Francisco State. The college administration had agreed during the 1967-1968 school year that a Black Studies program should be established at the college, but kept postponing implementation. During the spring of 1968, for example, the proposal for Black Studies was passed back and forth between the Instructional Policies Committee of the Academic Senate, where the black students had support, and the Council of Academic Deans, which was "more recalcitrant, requesting a number of discussions with the BSU before the implementation of the program could be considered," according to Angela Rose Ryan.¹⁵¹ By the fall of 1968, the Black

¹⁵¹ Ryan, "Education for the People," 56. Barlow and Shapiro, *An End to Silence*, 127. In March, 1967, the Instructional Policy Committee voted to support the establishment of Black Studies.

Studies program still only had 1.5 positions: Nathan Hare as the Chair and one part-time staff person. On the eve of the student strike, Hare was quoted in the student newspaper as saying, “we’re only a paper department.”¹⁵² President Smith, moreover, refused to move Black Studies courses taught in other departments to a new Black Studies Department and “bristled at the idea” of an autonomous Black Studies Department.¹⁵³ Roger Alvarado, a student activist with the Third World Liberation Front, recalled that the strike was a necessity because “Black Studies wasn’t going anywhere but the Experimental College.” And Nesbit Crutchfield, leader of the Black Students Union, argued “we had done everything in our power to try to move this issue without the strike.”¹⁵⁴ Robert Chrisman, black faculty member at the college, asserted, “the BSU strike did not occur in a vacuum on November 6. It emerged as a final act, from a familiar pattern of urgent black demand and token white response.”¹⁵⁵

Clear that the administration at San Francisco State was not prepared to concede to the their demands, students of color prepared to strike. On October 28, 1968, the Black Students Union held a rally and announced a student strike for Wednesday, November 6, the anniversary of the Gater Incident the previous year.¹⁵⁶

¹⁵² Ryan, "Education for the People," 76.

¹⁵³ Biondi, *The Black Revolution on Campus*, 154.

¹⁵⁴ Nesbit Crutchfield, Interview by Author, Berkeley, California, October 21, 2012 (hereafter Crutchfield Interview).

¹⁵⁵ Robert Chrisman, “Observations on Race and Class at San Francisco State,” in Abraham Miller and James Mcevoy, eds., *Black Power and Student Rebellion* (Belmont, California: Wadsworth Publishing Company, 1969), 224.

¹⁵⁶ Orrick, *College in Crisis*, 43. It was also the day after the national election that brought Richard Nixon to the presidency.

The Third World Liberation Front then called a meeting for November 5, 1968 in the Main Auditorium of the Creative Arts Building. In attendance were over 700 students of color, as was Stokely Carmichael, leader of the Student Non-Violent Coordinating Committee and Black Power advocate. Carmichael advised the students to prepare for a prolonged struggle, and that victory might not come quickly.¹⁵⁷ Inspired by revolutionaries in Vietnam, after Carmichael spoke, BSU leader Benny Stewart outlined the “war of the flea” as a potential strategy to be used during the strike, which he described this way:

Taking over buildings, holding it for two or three days, and then the thing is dead....We think we have developed a technique to deal with this for a prolonged struggle. We call it the war of the flea....What does a flea do? He bites, sucks blood from the dog, the dog bites. What happens when there are enough fleas on a dog? What will he do? He moves. He moves away....We are the majority and the pigs cannot be everywhere....You must begin to wear them down....We should fight the racist administration on our grounds from now on, where we can win.¹⁵⁸

The students at the meeting laid out plans for a student strike to start the next day, November 6, 1968. On the eve of the strike, the Black Students Union issued ten demands and the Third World Liberation Front added five additional demands.¹⁵⁹

Broadly speaking, students of color called a strike at San Francisco State to confront racial inequality in higher education. At the center of the students’ demands was the establishment of a Black Studies Department and College of Ethnic Studies,

¹⁵⁷ “Summer of the Longest American Student Strike,” *Gater*, February 18, 1969, San Francisco State College Strike Collection (hereafter the Strike Collection), Leonard Library.

¹⁵⁸ Ryan, “Education for the People,” 79.

¹⁵⁹ Ferreira, “All Power to the People,” 120; Barlow and Shapiro, *An End to Silence*, 218; Umemoto, “On Strike!” San Francisco State Strike, 1968-9: The Role of Asian American Students,” 29.

both of which were to be autonomously run. Students of color wanted courses that reflected their lived realities. They sought courses that incorporated people of color into the study of literature and history, and courses that acknowledged that racial inequality permeated US society and that people of color had a long history of resistance. Students of color who joined the strike wanted departmental autonomy because they insisted that faculty, students, and communities of color could best determine the direction of the Black and Ethnic Studies departments, free from the dictates of the largely white administration of the college. They also demanded the allocation of 20 faculty positions to Black Studies and 50 to the College of Ethnic Studies, and that the college admit more students of color. Finally, the BSU called for the rehiring of George Murray and that Nathan Hare receive a full professorship as Chair of the Black Studies Department.¹⁶⁰ During their internal discussions leading up to the strike about how best to support the strike, Students for a Democratic Society

¹⁶⁰ Rojas, *From Black Power to Black Studies*, 69-70. The BSU's full list of ten demands: 1) that all Black Studies courses be taught through a newly-established Black Studies Department; 2) that Nathan Hare receive a full professorship as Chair of the Department; 3) that the new department be autonomous; 4) that all unused Special Admissions slots for black students be filled in the Spring of 1969; 5) "that all black students who wish to, be admitted in fall 1969"; 6) that 20 full-time faculty positions be allocated to Black Studies; 7) that a black person replace Dr. Helen Bedesem as the Financial Aid Officer and that "Third World people have the power to determine how it will be administered"; 8) no disciplinary action be taken against strikers; 9) that the Trustees not be allowed to dissolve Black Studies; and 10) that that George Murray retain his teaching position on campus for the 1968-1969 academic year. Third World Liberation Front additional five demands: 1) that a School of Ethnic Studies be established; 2) that 50 faculty positions be allocated to the School of Ethnic Studies, including the 20 for the Black Studies Department; 3) and that San Francisco State admit all students of color who apply in the Spring and 4) Fall of 1969; and 5) they also demanded that, "George Murray, and any other faculty person chosen by non-white people as their teacher, be retained in their position."

debated whether or not to include an anti-war demand, ultimately deciding against it.¹⁶¹

During the first week of the strike, which started on November 6, students successfully shut down most of the campus. On the first day of the strike, they established picket lines in front of academic buildings and passed out flyers discouraging students from attending classes. At noon, a rally was held. Meanwhile, in a coordinated fashion, contingents of activists in the Black Students Union and the Third World Liberation Front left a meeting held earlier in the day and entered classes across campuses, sometimes in a disruptive manner, and announced the student body was on strike to end racism and demanded the dismissal of the class. In “war of the flea” fashion, some fires were set in trash cans and toilets were stopped up. The tactics of the members of TWLF and SDS produced results, as the campus was thrown into chaos.¹⁶² The president of the college, Robert Smith, announced the closure of the campus that first day in response to these tactics.¹⁶³ By the end of the first week of the strike, activists decided to modify their tactics to be less disruptive—but still effective—in order to avoid alienating potential supporters. Instead of disrupting classes, groups of students formed “educational teams” and they would ask to enter classrooms to teach students about the issues underlying the strike. Picketing

¹⁶¹ Roger Alvarado, Interview by Author, Oakland, California, May 15, 2012 (hereafter Alvarado Interview); Hartford Interview.

¹⁶² Barlow and Shapiro, *An End to Silence*, 223-224; Ryan, “Education for the People,” 79; Dillon Interview; Orrick, *College in Crisis*, 137; Biondi, *The Black Revolution on Campus*, 57-58; Rojas, *From Black Power to Black Studies*, 73; Rooks, *White Money/Black Power*, 51.

¹⁶³ Chrisman, “Observations on Race and Class at San Francisco State,” 225.

and constant rallies continued.¹⁶⁴ Their tactics were quite effective. Attendance was down fifty percent at the end of the week.¹⁶⁵

Faculty and the Student Strike

The BSU and the TWLF led the strike and faculty soon followed. BSU leader and graduate student Nesbit Crutchfield emphasized in an interview years later that the BSU strategically sought to expand support for the strike by first solidifying the support of as many black students as possible, before building support among Third World and then white student activists. Finally, the BSU and TWLF actively sought the support of faculty. Crutchfield recalled that to successfully pressure the administration to concede to their demands, “you had to have some white folks saying that was legitimate, because just people of color saying [they were] legitimate, there was so much racism that that wasn’t going to float.”¹⁶⁶

Though AFT Local 1352 supported the student strike, the union was not prepared to declare a strike right away. A variety of factors had to converge first before the union arrived at a place both politically and organizationally to pull off a strike of the faculty at San Francisco State. Though the AFT did not immediately declare a strike, it did officially express support for the student strike, though this support was not unqualified. At a meeting on November 4, two days before the start

¹⁶⁴ Barlow, *An End to Silence*, 226; Leahy Interview; Dillon Interview; Hartford Interview.

¹⁶⁵ Ferreira, “All Power to the People,” 124.

¹⁶⁶ Crutchfield Interview.

of the student strike, the Executive Council of Local 1352 passed a resolution that read:

Recognizing the validity of many grievances of the Black Student Union, and recognizing the extreme violation of all due process and right governance of an academic community, as indicated by Chancellor Dumke's dictatorial action with regard to George Murray, we support the strike presently called for, we urge individual union members to act in support of the proposed strike, and we call for the resignation of Chancellor Dumke, who has proven himself no longer a reputable member of the academic community.

Gary Hawkins, the president of local during the 1968-1969 academic year, put out a statement on November 5 to the union membership qualifying the statement. Hawkins emphasized that "the emphasis of the resolution" was the suspension of George Murray by the Chancellor of the State College System, Dumke, without *due process*. He also indicated that the union's Executive Council had discussed the language of the resolution at some length, and very clearly were not expressing support for the BSU demands in "their entirety," nor were they expressing "support for any of the demands specifically."¹⁶⁷

It is clear, then, that the AFT leadership as a whole, while sympathetic to the students, was not in full political support of the student demands. Part of the reason the AFT was unprepared to take strike action immediately was because there was some difference of opinion about whether or not the issues at hand were necessarily traditional union issues. For instance, Radcliff related that AFT Local 1352 President Gary Hawkins was not convinced that the union should take action over what he

¹⁶⁷ Statement by Gary J. Hawkins, President of AFT Local 1352, November 5, 1968, Radcliff Collection, folder 25, box 1.

perceived as student issues—in other words, issues not directly related to the compensation, benefits, and working conditions of the faculty.¹⁶⁸ AFT Local 1352 had a policy of rotating the union presidency among its most active leaders once a year; Hawkins became the union president for the 1968-1969 school year. As president, his opinion mattered, but did not necessarily tell the whole picture about the union membership's views about the strike. AFT Local 1352 had, after all, taken positions on bigger political issues unrelated to faculty working conditions previously. What Hawkins's initial thoughts about AFT Local 1352's involvement in the strike reveal is that the union would need to undergo an internal process to determine, firstly, if it was in sufficient political agreement with student demands, and, secondly, if the union was willing to call a faculty strike over non-bread and butter issues.

Though AFT Local 1352 was hesitant to immediately declare a strike in solidarity with the students, several radical faculty involved in the Ad Hoc Committee were prepared to strike a week after the start of the student strike. Many of the leaders in the union, including Gary Hawkins, Peter Radcliff, Eric Solomon and Art Bierman, one of the original founders of AFT Local 1352, were involved in a group called the Ad Hoc Faculty Committee.¹⁶⁹ The group publicly urged faculty to strike with the students starting on Wednesday, November 13, just seven days after the start of the student strike.¹⁷⁰ On November 13, about 65 leftist faculty members joined the

¹⁶⁸ Radcliff Interview.

¹⁶⁹ Bierman was away in Florida for much of the beginning of the strike.

¹⁷⁰ Barlow and Shapiro, *An End to Silence*, 226.

student strikers.¹⁷¹ English Professor Eric Solomon, like Radcliff, was also a past-president of local 1352. William Stanton, a 45-year old professor of Economics at San Francisco State, past faculty member at San Jose State, and ex-member of the California State Assembly, was perhaps one of the most important leaders of the Ad Hoc Committee.¹⁷² Stanton had previously been fired from his faculty position at San Jose State for his civil rights activism—he was trying to get students admitted to San Jose State who had been expelled from Alabama State University for their participation in sit-ins.¹⁷³ Anatole Anton, a 28-year old faculty member in the Philosophy department who was active in Students for a Democratic Society, was also involved in the Ad Hoc Faculty Committee.

The administration's disregard for faculty governance in the firing of George Murray was central to the Ad Hoc Committee's support for the strike. Stanton called a meeting, upon the "unanimous invitation of the Economics Department," according to Stanton, to specifically discuss the Chancellor's abandonment of due process in the suspension of George Murray. At the meeting, the group issued an ultimatum of sorts to the Chancellor and the trustees: "if the Chancellor does not rescind his order to suspend Murray by Tuesday [November 12] at 5 P.M., the Ad Hoc Committee plans to strike Wednesday morning. During the strike we plan to meet our classes off campus." Their statement declared, "the time to resist is now."¹⁷⁴ On November 8,

¹⁷¹ Ferreira, "All Power to the People," 125; Orrick, *College in Crisis*, 48.

¹⁷² Radcliff, Interview by Harvey Schwartz, 50–51; Anton Interview.

¹⁷³ Anton Interview; Radcliff, Interview by Harvey Schwartz, 50–51.

¹⁷⁴ "A Statement by the Ad Hoc Committee: The Chancellor's Recent Violation of Academic Due Process," Radcliff Collection, folder 25, box 1.

1968 the Ad Hoc Committee issued a statement addressed to the faculty at large, urging them to join the strike. Among the 35 signers of the statement were leaders and activists with AFT Local 1352, including Hawkins, Radcliff, Herbert Williams (co-founder of AFT Local 1352), Eric Solomon, and others.¹⁷⁵

Though this early statement from the Ad Hoc Faculty Committee discusses the issue of due process as their main reason for striking, the group issued a flyer on November 21, which clearly expressed solidarity with the student demands. Two of the reasons they urged faculty to support the demands were because, first, “Among the ten BSU demands and the five TWLF demands there is a preponderance of demands which can be justified and supported by everyone,” and, second, “full support of the strike means that people at this college have taken a giant step to destroy the racism which made the strike necessary.”¹⁷⁶ Bill Stanton explained why faculty should support the strike: “The Trustees must act to restore Murray, guarantee adequate funds for Black Studies and the Third World people, and make a clear declaration that the faculty will be free to run this college.”¹⁷⁷ Clearly the Ad Hoc Committee, a group led by leftist faculty on campus, which overlapped with some of the leadership of AFT Local 1352, urged the faculty to support the student-led strike because it supported the demands of the BSU and the TWLF. However, the Ad Hoc Committee emphasized the attack on faculty autonomy in the George Murray Case,

¹⁷⁵ Statement by the Ad Hoc Faculty Committee, November 8, 1968, Radcliff Collection, folder 30, box 1.

¹⁷⁶ Flyer, “Support the Strike!”, Radcliff Collection, folder 29, box 1.

¹⁷⁷ Rojas, *From Black Power to Black Studies*, 75.

perhaps also in part because they knew that violations of faculty governance would distress a broader segment of the faculty, prompting greater support for the strike.

Student activists in the BSU and TWLF recognized the important role that the Ad Hoc Committee played in building faculty support for the strike. BSU activist Nesbit Crutchfield recalled, “there were progressive forces within the AFT that were *far* ahead of the main body of the AFT, and we embraced them, we met with them, we strategized with them.” “And this Ad Hoc Committee,” he continued, “we looked at them as being a real feather in our cap.”¹⁷⁸ Hari Dillon of the BSU and TWLF asserted that the relationship between the faculty and activist students was informal but “very strong.” There were no formal structures that the students and faculty set up to meet with each other on a regular basis, but individual students established political relationships with activist faculty: Roger Alvarado, for example, was close to Fred Thalheimer, a professor of Sociology; John Levin, SDS and Progressive Labor Party activist, was close with Eric Solomon, and so forth.¹⁷⁹

In the first few weeks of the strike, though a minority of faculty supported the strike, the majority of faculty, including many liberal faculty, did not join the strike. According to Sociology professor Arlene Kaplan Daniels, “the majority did not participate. They either offered sympathy—while continuing to hold classes—or ignored the strike entirely. I fell into the medium-liberal category, which has been since castigated as wishy-washy.” Once Kaplan Daniels realized that “the strike was not just an educational experience for young radicals. It was a serious protest over

¹⁷⁸ Crutchfield Interview.

¹⁷⁹ Dillon Interview.

long-standing grievances,” she transitioned from offering only mild, or “wishy washy” support, to striking alongside students and other faculty.¹⁸⁰

On Wednesday, November 13, the first day of the strike called by the Ad Hoc Committee, the police moved against protesting students in a major confrontation that would prove to be a turning point in the student strike. On that day, the faculty picketed in front of the college before heading to the Main Auditorium to join a meeting of the Academic Senate. While the faculty were meeting, the San Francisco Police Department’s Tactical Squad broke up a BSU press conference in progress, and swung wildly at protesting students, badly clubbing BSU leader Nesbit Crutchfield in the process.¹⁸¹ Crutchfield recalled the moment when the police came after him:

I didn’t realize that my name was also on the police list for arrest, because I’d been organizing a lot, marching a lot...and so when I took this large contingent of people with me, the police came and attacked me. I mean, literally attacked me with these long samurai swords.

A cop, he continued, “started hitting me and I had to defend myself. Of course they beat me to the ground, and I was accused of assault with a deadly weapon—my head!” He was arrested that day, the beginning of a series of arrests during the strike that would ultimately result in him spending nearly two years in jail and prison for his leadership in the strike.¹⁸²

¹⁸⁰ Arlene Kaplan Daniels, “From Lecture Hall to Picket Line,” in Kaplan Daniels and Kahn-Hut, eds. (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 1970), 43.

¹⁸¹ Rojas, *From Black Power to Black Studies*, 67; Orrick, *College in Crisis*, 48; Crutchfield Interview.

¹⁸² Crutchfield Interview.

During the mayhem, faculty attempted to intervene to stop the police violence against the student protesters. The number of protesters swelled dramatically as the cops were brutalizing people. The Ad Hoc Committee, hearing the commotion, rushed out of the Academic Senate meeting and created a human barrier between the police and the students.¹⁸³ Black Students Union leader Terry Collins remembered being moved when faculty put their bodies between the police and the students, saying, “I started crying. I said, ‘Man, this is way out.’”¹⁸⁴ Third World Liberation Front leader Roger Alvarado recalled, “That was going to be a major confrontation which was really averted” due to the action taken by the faculty.¹⁸⁵ Crutchfield referred to the faculty action as “courageous” “because they didn’t have to do what they did. Not behind these crazy black kids.”¹⁸⁶ According to Radcliff, some faculty members even started to jokingly refer themselves as the “Fac Squad” as they went up against the “Tac Squad.”¹⁸⁷ In general, police violence was quite awful and though students bore the brunt of police violence, faculty were also attacked by the police. Anatole Anton remembered, “Faculty got pretty badly beaten up, some of them.

¹⁸³ Alvarado Interview; Stanton Interview; Radcliff, Interview by Harvey Schwartz, 49; Ryan, "Education for the People", 88; Orrick, *College in Crisis*, 50.

¹⁸⁴ Ryan, "Education for the People", 88.

¹⁸⁵ Alvarado Interview.

¹⁸⁶ Crutchfield Interview.

¹⁸⁷ Radcliff, Interview by Harvey Schwartz, 49. SDS activist Bruce Hartford was less sanguine about the faculty intervention, recalling that the student protesters outnumbered the police and that some student activists thought the faculty action was protecting the police from the students! (Hartford Interview).

There's a guy in the English Department, I can't remember his name, but I'll never forget this image of blood coming down his face."¹⁸⁸

Conservative political forces within the state arrayed against the strikers, including then-governor Ronald Reagan. When San Francisco State President Smith closed campus on November 13 in response to the police violence and generalized chaos, Reagan went so far as to say, "if it's necessary we'll call out the National Guard, and if that's not sufficient, call in the federal troops."¹⁸⁹ In a letter to George Johns, Secretary Treasurer of the San Francisco Labor Council, San Francisco Mayor Alioto, a moderate Democrat, wrote, "the city is spending thousands of dollars daily to supply police necessary to maintain order on campus, and it will continue to do so as long as the circumstances require."¹⁹⁰

The Appointment of S.I. Hayakawa as Acting President

In an attempt to crush the strike, the trustees appointed the conservative S.I. Hayakawa as Acting President of San Francisco State on November 26, 1968, same day that the previous president of San Francisco State, Robert Smith resigned. A liberal, Smith was unable to deal with competing pressures—on one side, the very conservative trustees, and on the other, radical students demanding he shut down campus and concede to their demands. Within a few hours of Smith's resignation, the trustees, without even so much as consulting the Faculty Selection Committee,

¹⁸⁸ Anton Interview.

¹⁸⁹ Ferreira, "All Power to the People," 127.

¹⁹⁰ San Francisco Mayor Alioto to George Johns, Secretary-Treasurer of the San Francisco Central Labor Council, December 10, 1968, Radcliff Collection, folder 26, box 1.

appointed S.I. Hayakawa as Acting President of San Francisco State. He was the third college president in just six months.¹⁹¹ Hayakawa taught part-time in the English Department from when he arrived at San Francisco State until the time of his appointment as Acting President in 1968.¹⁹² Prior to his appointment, according to Daryl Maeda, Hayakawa had “never served on important university committees or held an administrative post.”¹⁹³

Politically, Hayakawa was to the right of much of the faculty at San Francisco State, and had been a vocal opponent of student protesters and advocated a hard line approach toward the strike. He was also infamous for making controversial and somewhat absurd statements publicly. For example, Hayakawa criticized the faculty when he said, “the universities and the colleges should be centers for the dissemination of the values of our culture, and the passing on of those values. But dammit, with enough half-assed Platons in our university departments, they are trying to make them centers of sedition and destruction.”¹⁹⁴ Despite the intensity of his opposition to the Black Students Union, Hayakawa, according to Maeda, “professed to understand the black perspective because he had personal friendships with African Americans and was intimately familiar with their culture. As evidence he pointed to his tenure as a *Chicago Defender* columnist and his expertise on jazz and art.”¹⁹⁵

Hayakawa, moreover, maintained that racism could be reduced to irrational thinking

¹⁹¹ Orrick, *College in Crisis*, 23. Summerskill and Smith were the two previous presidents.

¹⁹² Maeda, *Chains of Babylon*, 42.

¹⁹³ Ibid., 58.

¹⁹⁴ Orrick, *College in Crisis*, 63.

¹⁹⁵ Maeda, *Chains of Babylon*, 56.

by white people, that “once attention was directed to their fallacious patterns of thought, whites would logically and inevitably begin to eradicate racism.”¹⁹⁶

The appointment of Hayakawa was the last straw for many faculty. Arlene Kaplan Daniels, a faculty striker in the department of Sociology, remembered, “to the faculty, the selection of Hayakawa was a clear sign that the trustees meant to run our college without campus consent.”¹⁹⁷ This, alongside the suspension of George Murray despite the wishes of the faculty in the English department, was a clear indication that any pretense of faculty governance was thrown out of the window, and now the faculty at San Francisco State were being treated by their boss like any waged worker under capitalism. There was no question for many faculty that the union was the answer.¹⁹⁸

On his first day in office, December 2, Hayakawa, demonstrated that he would take a hard line approach toward the strikers in what became known as the “Sound Truck Incident.” Angered by the presence of a sound truck the protesters were using, Hayakawa, wearing a red, blue, green, and yellow tam o’ shanter, jumped onto the sound truck in order to pull out the wires. Upset at this aggressive move, students gathered around and shouted and cursed at Hayakawa. One of the protesters was professor and poet Kay Boyle, who shouted, “Hayakawa-Eichman, Hayakawa-Eichman, Quisling Quisling!” In response, Hayakawa pointed at Boyle and yelled,

¹⁹⁶ Ibid., 46.

¹⁹⁷ Kaplan Daniels, “From the Lecture Hall to Picket Line,” 46.

¹⁹⁸ Radcliff Interview; Solomon Interview; Bierman Interview; Stanton Interview; Anton Interview.

“you’re fired, Kay Boyle!”, though he would later deny it.¹⁹⁹ He claimed that he had called Boyle a “fool.”²⁰⁰ According to Radcliff, the union brought unprofessional conduct charges against Hayakawa for this incident.²⁰¹ The college president did not have the authority to simply fire a tenured faculty member on the spot. The fact that Hayakawa, perhaps in a heightened emotional state, yelled at Boyle that she was fired, was symbolic of the disrespect many faculty experienced at the time.

The conservative Hayakawa, with the blessing of the trustees, took a more hard line approach to crushing the strike than the liberal Smith ever could have. At a press conference on November 30, Hayakawa declared a “state of emergency” on campus, prohibited picketing, sound amplification, rallies, or any form of protest activity. Faculty who did not teach classes, Hayakawa declared, would be immediately suspended and tried by a committee headed by a member of the conservative group, the Faculty Renaissance, a group Hayakawa had helped to create in 1966 or 1967.²⁰² Hayakawa declared, the strike was “largely unnecessary—almost comically inappropriate—America is not a racist society in principle and only partially a racist society in fact.”²⁰³

Police attacks on students increased in frequency and intensity under Hayakawa’s watch, culminating on December 3 in what became to be known as

¹⁹⁹ Daryl E. Lembke and John Dreyfuss, “S.F. State Opens, Disorders Erupt: Five Suspended,” *Los Angeles Times*, December 3, 1968.

²⁰⁰ Barlow and Shapiro, *An End To Silence*, 258.

²⁰¹ Radcliff, Interview by Harvey Schwartz, 74.

²⁰² Ferreira, “All Power to the People,” 136.

²⁰³ Barlow and Shapiro, *An End to Silence*, 256.

“Bloody Tuesday,” one of the bloodiest days of police violence during the strike.²⁰⁴ On that day, the day after Hayakawa took office, students engaged in pitched battles with the police, as the Tactical Squad and the California Highway Patrol chased students all over campus and mercilessly beat them. By the end of the day, there were 41 arrests and many injured students.²⁰⁵ Hari Dillon described the day as an effort by the administration and the police “as an all out effort to crush the strike.”²⁰⁶ Hayakawa described the events of December 3: “this has been the most exciting day of my life, since my tenth birthday, when I rode on a roller coaster for the first time!”²⁰⁷ Clearly, Hayakawa was a polarizing figure on campus, though to Governor Ronald Reagan, he was the right choice as president of the college. Reagan said, “he’s our man; he’s doing a good job.”²⁰⁸

Police violence was so extensive that over the course of November and December, 1968, previously undecided students and faculty shifted to supporting the strike. Many students were genuinely afraid that somebody would be killed.²⁰⁹ Police violence during the fall semester of 1968 helped to radicalize and mobilize a larger percentage of the student body in support of the strike, as was often the case when the

²⁰⁴ Orrick, *College in Crisis*, 65; Dillon Interview; Barlow and Shapiro, *An End to Silence*, 265; Ferreira, “All Power to the People,” 139–140; “Summary of the Longest American Student Strike,” *Gater*, February 18, 1969, Strike Collection.

²⁰⁵ “Summary of the Longest American Student Strike,” *Gater*, February 18, 69, Strike Collection.

²⁰⁶ Dillon Interview.

²⁰⁷ Barlow and Shapiro, *An End to Silence*, 264.

²⁰⁸ Karagueuzian, *Blow It Up!*, 27.

²⁰⁹ Zelzer Interview; Radcliff, Interview by Harvey Schwartz, 49; Dillon Interview.

police used excessive violence to crush student protests in the 1960s.²¹⁰ Excessive police violence and the now open complicity of the college administration influenced many moderate faculty to believe that the campus must be shut down until order could be restored. Fifty-one faculty members in the English Department signed a “Statement of Conscience,” that was circulated to departments across campus and released on December 2. In it the faculty wrote: “Fifty-one members of the English Department believed that armed police on our campus during the present unresolved crisis endangers the lives of our students.” The statement continued, “we urge the immediate creation and funding of a Department of Black Studies and a School of Ethnic Studies.”²¹¹

In late November and early December, members of AFT Local 1352 came to believe that an official strike by faculty would help to decrease police violence. Radcliff recalled that there was a “standard arrangement in San Francisco that police don’t club legitimate AFT/CIO sanctioned picket lines.”²¹² Liberal and leftist faculty, in addition to some more politically moderate faculty, thought that an official AFT Local 1352 strike, with traditional picket lines, would help to reduce police violence against students. The hostile response of the administration, moreover, made some faculty more seriously consider the student demands, and ultimately helped to drum up support for an official AFT Local 1352 strike, as faculty concluded that the people

²¹⁰ Biondi, *The Black Revolution on Campus*, 62.

²¹¹ “Statement of Consciences by 51 members of the English Department,” Chair of Humanities, James R. Wilson, to Department Chairmen, December 2, 1968, Radcliff Collection, folder 25, box 1.

²¹² Radcliff, Interview by Harvey Schwartz, 42.

in power should not be trusted, whether they were the College President or baton-wielding members of the police force. This excessive police violence and the imposition of Hayakawa as president at San Francisco State helped to push the AFT Local 1352 membership over the edge, as they began to prepare to officially strike.²¹³

AFT Local 1352 Strike

Over the course of November and into December, 1968, the various factors prompting AFT Local 1352's strike had converged. The trustees' appointment of Hayakawa as president of San Francisco State angered a broader swath of faculty. Not only had the faculty been completely bypassed in the selection process, but the trustees chose a conservative and controversial member of the faculty to become president, a man who, in the eyes of many faculty, was sure to exacerbate rather than resolve conflicts on campus. Police violence against students intensified, culminating in "Bloody Tuesday" on December 3. The subversion of faculty governance and police violence were the triggers that led to AFT Local 1352's strike, but over the course of November and early December an increasingly larger proportion of the faculty supported the student demands. Ultimately, when AFT Local 1352 went on strike, it did so to support the struggle against racism on campus.

Outraged at the attacks on Bloody Tuesday, AFT Local 1352 called an emergency meeting for the next evening, on December 3, at which union members

²¹³ Radcliff Interview; Bierman Interview.

voted to support a strike.²¹⁴ The meeting, held at the Methodist Church at the intersection of 19th Avenue and Holloway Street—the main entrance to campus and major center of much of the strike activity—was to be a significant turning point for AFT Local 1352’s role in the strike.²¹⁵ At that meeting, AFT Local 1352 members resolved to strike if any member of the faculty was suspended without due process. In a vote of 80 to 22, union members passed a second resolution to request strike sanction from the San Francisco Labor Council.²¹⁶ Another resolution empowered the Executive Committee of the Local to set a strike deadline. The vote in favor of seeking strike sanction indicates that AFT Local 1352 members were prepared to officially go on strike a full month before their strike began on January 6, 1969. Sociology Professor Arlene Kaplan Daniels recalled, “by this time, moderate, wishy-washy liberals like me were in agreement with the old-time radicals. A strike began to seem the only tactic available to us.”²¹⁷

The demands of students of color were central to the AFT’s participation in the strike. According to the newspaper of the College Council of the AFT in California the intent of the second resolution regarding setting a strike deadline was

to get negotiations started immediately on the most important causes of campus arrest: the feeling of minority students that their needs are not being served by San Francisco State [and] faculty

²¹⁴ Ferreira, “All Power to the People,” 140-141; Radcliff, Interview by Harvey Schwartz, 55; Bierman, Interview by Peter Carroll, 95-6; “Why We Seek Strike Sanction,” Draft, December 4, 1968, Radcliff Collection, folder 25, box 1.

²¹⁵ “Meeting Notice—San Francisco State College Federation of Teachers (AFT Local 1352), Radcliff Collection, folder 29, box 1.

²¹⁶ Bierman, Interview by Peter Carroll, 95–96.

²¹⁷ Kaplan Daniels, “From the Lecture Hall to the Picket Line,” 49.

resentment of the attempt by the trustees and politicians to usurp powers traditionally exercised by the faculty.²¹⁸

What this statement makes clear is that leadership of AFT Local 1352 came around to an understanding that the union, in its official capacity, had an important role to play in supporting the student demands.

The decision to seek strike sanction was not without controversy among the union membership. Of the AFT members who voted, 22 opposed seeking strike sanction. Eric Solomon, who at this point was a rank-and-file member though he had been president of the union in the past, recalls that some faculty voted against strike sanction was because “this was not the AFT they had belonged to and joined, that that was to do with salaries and subsequently everybody who voted against it, I think, quit.” The version of unionism promoted by the members who voted to strike, then, had the potential to alienate faculty who believed that unions should confine their activism to promoting the economic and professional interests of the faculty. However, as Solomon and others pointed out, there was a large and immediate infusion of new members into the AFT Local 1352 as a result of the support the union lent to the strike, even if some union members left the union.²¹⁹

Another point of controversy during the AFT meeting on December 3 was over the definition of what it meant to be on strike. Solomon recalled that Bierman and Hawkins made a presentation and “were waffling on the issue of what it meant to go

²¹⁸ “San Francisco State AFT Takes a Stand,” *The Union Gazette*, College Council of the AFT, December 4, 1968, Radcliff Collection, folder 27, box 1.

²¹⁹ Eric Solomon, Interview by Peter Carroll, Audio Recording, 1992, San Francisco Labor Archives and Research Center, J. Paul Leonard Library, 40–41.

on strike,” saying that it might be acceptable to teach classes off campus. Solomon maintained that BSU leaders present at the meeting were “quite appalled” at the idea that faculty would continue to teach classes off campus. Solomon made an impassioned speech in favor of refusing to work at all during the strike: “I said, Look, either you strike or you don’t strike. And if you strike, I never heard of a striker ever getting paid.”²²⁰ Years later, Solomon recalled that moment with pride; he said the union members at the meeting sided with Solomon, as well as his political allies Fred Thalheimer and Hank McGucken who made same argument, and decided that striking meant not teaching classes at all.²²¹ This debate reflects the existence of different political tendencies within the union.

The debate also shows the fact that the issues could be democratically debated among the membership before arriving at a decision, rather than the decision being handled by a small group of elected leaders on the union’s executive board. The debate also highlights the leading role that the militant minority of union members played in pushing the union to the left.

AFT Local 1352 was prepared to strike in early December, 1968, but the need to attain strike sanction by the San Francisco Central Labor Council postponed and shaped the character of the strike. In order to get strike sanction, in early December the Executive Committee of the San Francisco Central Labor Council determined that AFT Local 1352 needed to go through a process of negotiations with the college administration to attempt to arrive at a settlement before striking. The Labor Council

²²⁰ Solomon, Interview by Peter Carroll, 56.

²²¹ Ibid., 43.

also made clear, “under our laws, rules, and procedures we stand limited to consideration of involved teachers’ problems and the resolvment [sic] of such,” further indicating that the problems of students are not in this area.²²²

Though the catalyst for AFT Local 1352’s strike were the demands of the BSU and the TWLF, it became clear that the local would need to come up with a list of its own “bread and butter” demands in order to convince the Labor Council to provide strike sanction. This would be somewhat controversial among some students and faculty who only wanted to concentrate on the student demands, and feared that coming up with a list of faculty demands unrelated to the student demands might distract from the demands of the students for self-determination and to end racism at San Francisco State. Arlene Kaplan Daniels and Rachel Kahn-Hut understood the desire to seek strike sanction, but also commented in *Academics on the Line*, an anthology published by striking faculty in 1970, that, “dependence on labor movement ties made us unable to focus publicly on our most crucial reasons for striking.”²²³

Despite these drawbacks, there were clearly benefits to getting strike sanction from the labor council. First, requesting strike sanction was a standard practice in the labor movement. Not requesting it might have alienated the local from the Bay Area labor movement, and also might have been frowned upon about the local’s parent union, the American Federation of Teachers. Perhaps more importantly, strike

²²² “Why We Seek Strike Sanction,” Draft, December 4, 1968, Radcliff Collection, folder 25, box 1.

²²³ Kahn-Hut and Kaplan Daniels, *Academics on the Line*, 9.

sanction meant that unionized workers would not cross the faculty's picket line to do things like construct buildings, make deliveries, and so forth. It also brought labor support directly to the picket line from various unions in the community, especially AFT Local 61, the union that represented public school teachers in San Francisco; the ILWU, which represented longshoremen; the Painters Union, AFSCME; the Social Workers Union, Local 535; and the Teamsters, Local 9.²²⁴ Lastly, according to Radcliff, attaining strike sanction would reduce police violence on the picket lines: "because this is a union town," he maintained, "the police aren't going to club sanctioned pickets."²²⁵

To satisfy the San Francisco Labor Council, AFT Local 1352 came up with a list of demands relating to the faculty's working conditions and compensation, including issues the union had been organizing around for some time. The demands included a grievance procedure related to faculty affairs, smaller class loads, amnesty for all faculty and students who participated in the strike, the prevention of layoffs of faculty during the Spring Semester of 1969, and, importantly, settlement of the Third World Student Strike.²²⁶

When questioned, many faculty said they believed this list of demands was merely window dressing on a union strike that was, at its core, against racism. Rachel Kahn-Hut and Arlene Kaplan Daniels commented about this predicament: "In effect,

²²⁴ Radcliff Interview; Ferreira, "All Power to the People," 148-9.

²²⁵ Radcliff Interview.

²²⁶ Bill Barlow, "Know Your Allies! A Critical History of the AFT," [n.d.], *Open Process*, Radcliff Collection, folder 25, box 11; AFT Local 1352 Press Release, December 13, 1968, folder 3, box 2, Radcliff Collection.

then, we were caught between the campus and statewide administration, which granted us no voice but recognized the issue of the battle, and the unions, which provided us with political leverage with which to join the battle but would not recognize the issue.” A pamphlet distributed in early January and drafted by AFT Local 1352 explaining the reasons behind the union’s strike put the demands of the student strikers at the very top. It read, “the AFT demands that ‘BSU and TWLF grievances be resolved on and implemented.’” Additionally, AFT Local 1352 published an article in the school newspaper, *The Daily Gater*, in which the authors addressed the student demands first. The article read, “teachers owe their students the obligation to insist on good schools for their education.” It continued, “minority students are among those to whom we owe an obligation: to enroll more of them and to provide them with a relevant curriculum.”²²⁷ The AFT Local 1352 issued a press release explaining why faculty decided to strike, which included a demand that the “trustees provide enough money to staff any Black Studies or Ethnic Studies programs that may be established.”²²⁸

That said, some of the leaders of the local, including long-time leaders Bierman and Radcliff, having fought around these issues for years and having made little headway, did take the faculty demands seriously and were hoping to win something on both their demands and the student demands. In the article referenced above in the student newspaper, AFT Local 1352 also emphasized that faculty at San

²²⁷ Kahn-Hut and Kaplan Daniels, *Academics on the Line*, 9; “AFT Explains Reasons Behind Current Strike,” *The Gater*, January 16, 1969, Strike Collection.

²²⁸ Press Release Gary J. Hawkins, AFT Local 1352 President, December 13, 1968, Radcliff Collection, folder 10, box 2.

Francisco State were overworked and underpaid, arguing that the teaching load is “50 percent higher than at comparable colleges,” and that “salaries lag 30-40 percent behind those of other colleges and universities.”²²⁹

AFT Local 1352 embarked on negotiations with the college administration in early December, 1968. The local set its strike deadline for December 16, providing just under two weeks for negotiations. But when Hayakawa unexpectedly closed the campus for winter break a week early beginning on December 13, talks with the administration, through the mediation of the labor council, continued through the holidays. AFT Local 1352 set a new strike deadline of January 6, the first day of classes after the extended winter break.²³⁰ But faculty at the state colleges did not have the legal right to collective bargaining, and the trustees had no legal obligation to negotiate. Though the trustees agreed to send representatives to meet with the union, they were not politically inclined towards negotiating.²³¹ Negotiations during December, 1968, and the first week of January, 1969 ultimately resulted in no progress, as each meeting between the union and the representatives of the trustees produced no agreements. AFT Local 1352 issued negotiating bulletins to its membership indicating as much. For instance, one bulletin issued on December 29, 1968 declared, “it is the unanimous conclusion of the Negotiating Committee that, as

²²⁹ Bierman Interview; Radcliff Interview; “AFT Explains Reasons Behind Current Strike,” *The Gater*, January 16, 1969, Strike Collection.

²³⁰ AFT Local 1352 Press Release, December 23, 1968, Radcliff Collection, folder 29, box 1.

²³¹ “State College Trustees Agree to Meet Union,” *Los Angeles Times*, December 17, 1968.

of Saturday, December 28, there have been no meaningful negotiations.”²³² As late as January 3, 1969, right before the start of the faculty strike, Mansel Keene, the representative of the trustees, said, “We are not willing to negotiate anything...I’m not even free to recommend.”²³³

Negotiations having produced nothing, AFT Local 1352 called a membership meeting for January 5, 1969 to decide whether or not to strike. Because of the importance of the meeting, the union invited non-union faculty members to attend and observe.²³⁴ During the meeting, AFT Local 1352 negotiators reported to those assembled that “no progress had been made toward the solution of any of the most pressing problems on campus.”²³⁵ By this point, the membership of the AFT had more than doubled, from less than 200 members to about 400 members. At the meeting, the membership overwhelmingly voted to begin their strike the next morning, on Monday, January 6, but before doing so they added three new members to the local’s negotiating committee: Eric Solomon, Hank McGucken, and Fred Thailhimer.²³⁶ The membership voted to add them because of the three men’s dedication to the student demands. When questioned, for instance, about if the strike was to “save the

²³² AFT Local 1352 Negotiating Bulletin #2, December 29, 1968, Radcliff Collection, folder 28, box 1.

²³³ Barlow and Shapiro, *An End to Silence*, 277; AFT Local 1352 President Gary Hawkins to Faculty, January 3, 1969, Radcliff Collection, folder 6, box 2.

²³⁴ Gary Hawkins to Faculty at San Francisco State, January 3, 1969, Radcliff Collection, folder 6, box 1.

²³⁵ Kaplan Daniels, “From the Lecture Hall to Picket Line,” in Kaplan Daniels Kaplan Daniels and Kahn-Hut, *Academics on the Line*, 51.

²³⁶ Solomon Interview.

students,” Solomon replied that it was.²³⁷ Negotiations having failed, the San Francisco Labor Council voted to provide strike sanction to AFT Local 1352.²³⁸

Having made its decision, AFT Local 1352 set out to organize the various elements necessary to carry out a successful strike. January 6, 1969, the first day of instruction after the winter break, faculty set up picket lines starting at 7:30 am and going until 7:30 pm, with each faculty member taking five-hour picket shifts.²³⁹ Striking faculty set up a picket line around the perimeter of the campus, and picketing faculty encouraged their colleagues to not cross the picket lines. Sociology Professor Arlene Kaplan Daniels remembers yelling at faculty who crossed the line: “consider what you are doing! The unexamined life is not worth living! Do you think Henry David Thoreau would approve your actions?”²⁴⁰ The *Los Angeles Times* reported that picketing faculty “challenged arriving students with cries of “Scabs,” “Don’t cross the line,” and “Racist,” and that strikers carried signs demanding “Amnesty and Due Process,” “Strike, Fight Racism,” and “Don’t Cross the Line.”²⁴¹ Two hundred to 400 faculty joined the strike, between a quarter to a third of the entire faculty.²⁴² A disproportionate number of the faculty came from the Humanities and Social Sciences, with less participation from Physical Education, Business, and the hard

²³⁷ Solomon, Interview by Peter Carroll, 41.

²³⁸ Orrick, *College in Crisis*, 69.

²³⁹ Kaplan Daniels, "From Lecture Hall to Picket Line," in Kaplan Daniels Kaplan Daniels and Kahn-Hut, *Academics on the Line*, 51.

²⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, 53.

²⁴¹ Daryl E. Lembke and John Dreyfuss, “S.F. State Reopens; Teachers’ Strike Gets Union Sanction,” *Los Angeles Times*, January 7, 1969.

²⁴² “S.F. State Acts to Dock Striking Teachers,” *Los Angeles Times*, January 29, 1969; “Court Orders Teachers to End Their Walkout,” *Los Angeles Times*, February 5, 1969; Chrisman Interview; Solomon Interview; Radcliff Interview.

sciences.²⁴³ AFT Local 1352 laid out a strike plan, with picket captains and picket schedules covering various entrances to the campus. The union also set up a strike headquarters. Anita Silvers, a faculty supporter unable to walk the picket lines due to a disability, helped to staff the strike headquarters. Silvers helped out with answering the phones, doing mailings, fundraising, and organizing a speakers program, according to Radcliff.²⁴⁴

A bone of contention among the striking faculty arose over the question of teaching classes off campus during the strike. Some of the more moderate AFT leaders, including most prominently Art Bierman, maintained that the union granted striking faculty the permission to teach off campus, arguing that faculty should be allowed to teach off campus because it would keep faculty “out longer” and prevent faculty from being fired.²⁴⁵ By contrast, Eric Solomon, who was aligned with the more leftist members of the union, strongly opposed faculty teaching off campus, arguing that a proper strike means not working, period. Solomon recalled that Donald Garrity, a provost and vice president of academic affairs, sent a payroll list to Solomon during the third week of the AFT strike. The payroll list indicated, according to Solomon, “that there were actually about 100 people who were just faking it of those 300. In other words, they came to meetings, they walked the picket lines, but in the afternoons they taught their classes, usually off campus.”²⁴⁶

²⁴³ Stanton Interview.

²⁴⁴ Radcliff, Interview by Harvey Schwartz, 61-62.

²⁴⁵ Bierman, Interview by Peter Carroll, 116-117.

²⁴⁶ Solomon Interview.

There were, of course, many conservative and politically moderate faculty who refused to support either the student strike or AFT Local 1352's strike, once declared. For example, the American Association of University Professors (AAUP) chapter at San Francisco State went on record in opposition to the strike in early January. Later, in a 1971 assessment of the strike in the *AAUP Bulletin*, John H. Bunzel, Chair of the Political Science Department at San Francisco State during the strike, condemned the AFT strike, declaring, "the AFT leaders did not see or seemingly care that such tactics could do serious damage to the academic community." Bunzel further argued that the AFT allied itself with "mindless, irresponsible, and even criminal elements on campus," further implying that student and faculty complaints about racism on campus were false in his reference to "alleged" racism. Bunzel denounced the AFT strike for supporting the BSU and TWLF demands, going so far as to argue that some faculty went on strike as "a revolt against the tediousness of day-to-day existence, an antidote to being bored."²⁴⁷ The Faculty Renaissance, a conservative faculty group at San Francisco State, also opposed the strike. In a Statement of Policy, Program, and Aims issued in October, 1968, the Faculty Renaissance defended the college's record: "We are proud of the help the College has given to minority-group students, the children of the foreign-born, and the children of the underprivileged who have found opportunities within our halls." Nine faculty members from a cross section of departments, including

²⁴⁷ John Bunzel, "The Faculty Strike at San Francisco State College," *AAUP Bulletin* 57, no. 3 (September 1971): 342, 346.

Hayakawa, signed the statement.²⁴⁸ Conservative opposition to both the student and faculty strike clearly stems, in part, from a denial of racism at San Francisco State.

There were other politically moderate members of the faculty at San Francisco State who, while they did not support the student and faculty strike, also were critical of the college administration. On January 7, 1969, the day after the start of AFT Local 1352's strike, several faculty members sent a letter to the State College Trustees, Governor Ronald Reagan, and San Francisco Mayor Joseph Alioto, in which they emphasized, "we do not wholly support the students' strike or the teachers' strike but neither can we live with the dictatorial rigidity by which Dr. Hayakawa is attempting to keep the campus open. Specifically, we protest his ban on off-campus teaching." Seven faculty members signed onto the letter, attempting to stake out a middle ground between the conservative faculty and the faculty on strike.²⁴⁹

Ultimately, however, despite the presence of some faculty opposition to the strike, AFT Local 1352's strike did help to strengthen the student strike. The AFT Local 1352 strike helped to infuse energy and numbers into what had largely been a student strike, as well as garner the strike more media attention—all of which helped to put more pressure on the college administration to concede to the student

²⁴⁸ Faculty Renaissance, San Francisco State College, "Statement of Policy, Program, and Aims," October 1968, Radcliff Collection, folder 29, box 1; "Union Says Firing of S.F. State Teachers Would Widen Strike," *Los Angeles Times*, January 13, 1969.

²⁴⁹ Jordan Churchill, Professor of Philosophy; Don Franklin, Assistant Professor of Music; David Marvin, Professor of International Relations; Henry Onderdonk, Associate Professor of Music; Alexander Post, Associate Professor of Music; Jerrold Werthimer, Associate Professor of Journalism; Urban Whitaker, Coordinator of Year-Round Education to Trustees, Reagan, Citizens Committee of Concern, Mayor Alioto, "Others Who Are Concerned," January 7, 1969, Radcliff Collection, folder 6, box 6.

demands.²⁵⁰ AFT Local 1352's effect on the strike can be seen in the number of strikers present on the picket lines on January 6. Two thousand faculty, other school employees, and community members walked the picket line at 19th Avenue and Holloway Street, one of the main entrances to campus.²⁵¹ Additionally, the campus newspaper reported that as of January 13, according to "an extensive report by the Associate Dean of Students' office," attendance at classes had fallen to approximately 21 percent.²⁵² Members of the Black Students Union and the Third World Liberation Front recalled that the AFT strike strengthened their strike; BSU leader Nesbit Crutchfield remarked, "Here are these white folks, these white professors with letters behind their names, going out on strike, legitimizing the closing down of the school. And that gave it incredible legitimacy in areas that it would have been recognized if they hadn't gone out."²⁵³ Similarly, TWLF leader Hari Dillon commented about AFT Local 1352's involvement in the strike, "I think that it was a *huge* qualitative boost when the Ad Hoc group was able to get the whole AFT, and the AFT able to get the labor council to sanction and go on strike. I mean, it added enormous strength to the strike."²⁵⁴

Striking faculty further demonstrated their commitment to the strike by defying a court order that stipulated that AFT Local 1352's strike was illegal. On Wednesday, January 8, Superior Judge Edward O'Day issued a temporary restraining

²⁵⁰ Lembke and Dreyfuss, "S.F. State Reopens; Teachers' Strike Gets Union Sanction," *Los Angeles Times*, January 7, 1969.

²⁵¹ Orrick, *College in Crisis*, 69.

²⁵² "Attendance Plummet Lower," *Daily Gater*, January 13, 1969, Strike Collection.

²⁵³ Crutchfield Interview.

²⁵⁴ Dillon Interview.

order against the faculty strike. That same day representatives of the San Francisco Attorney General's office served copies of the restraining order on thirty AFT members on the picket line, taking pictures of each faculty striker in the process. At a union membership meeting the next day, Thursday, January 9, called to discuss the court order, 205 union members attended and unanimously voted to continue the strike despite the restraining order. After the meeting, the faculty marched four abreast to campus to continue picketing while singing "solidarity forever, for the union makes us strong!" According to a *Los Angeles Times* article, 300 striking students greeted the marching faculty with "wild cheering and stepped up chants of 'on strike, shut it down.'" Hawkins explained the union's defiance of the court order: "We feel it is everyone's right to withdraw his labor and peacefully picket."²⁵⁵

The AFT California State College Council and the California Federation of Teachers spoke out in support of AFT Local 1352's strike. John Sperling, the president of the College Council, the system-wide coordinating body for AFT locals at the California State College campuses, told the press on January 12, 1969 that a strike would be called across the State College System within 48 hours of the firing or arrest of striking faculty members at San Francisco State. According to an article in the *Los Angeles Times* on January 13, 1969, Sperling claimed, "a combined strike of AFT members at all school levels would put 12,000 teachers out of their classrooms." Sperling added, "I imagine that would put a serious crimp in the educational system." Similarly, in the same *Los Angeles Times* article Raoul Teilhet, the president of the

²⁵⁵ Daryl E. Lembke and John Dreyfuss, "Striking Teachers Ignore Picketing Ban at S.F. State," *Los Angeles Times*, January 19, 1969.

California Federation of Teachers, declared, “I will call on our members for a one-day walkout in support of the college council.” At this stage, the support of the College Council and the CFT was largely rhetorical and financial. Nonetheless, a strike threat on the part of thousands of educators at public schools and colleges across California undoubtedly put considerable pressure on the college administration at San Francisco State, making the trustees and Hayakawa think twice before simply firing striking faculty at the college en masse.²⁵⁶

AFT Locals at other campuses within the California State College System demonstrated solidarity with AFT Local 1352, with only partial success. On December 21, 1968, a report from the AFT’s California State College Council indicated that several State College AFT locals were seeking strike sanction from their local labor councils in the event they decided to strike in solidarity with AFT Local 1352. Locals at San Jose, Hayward, Sacramento, Chico, Pomona, Humboldt, and Sonoma State Colleges, according to the report, had sent a request or were in the process of sending a request for strike sanction to their local labor councils, on the basis that the college administration at San Francisco State refused to negotiate with AFT Local 1352. The report reveals that, for the most part, the AFT locals did not have the capacity to successfully organize sympathy strikes. Some of the AFT locals, moreover, were less militant than AFT Local 1352 and voted not to seek strike sanction. For instance, at a meeting of the College Council on December 21, it was revealed that at a meeting held by the AFT local at San Diego State in December “an

²⁵⁶ “Union Says Firing of S.F. State Teachers Would Widen Strike,” *Los Angeles Times*, January 13, 1969.

attempt to pass a strike resolution similar to those passed at San Francisco and San Jose failed by three votes. The San Diego climate is less militant than elsewhere with fewer local grievances to capitalize on.” Similarly, regarding the situation of the AFT local at Los Angeles, the same report read, “faculty desire to keep student and faculty grievances separate.” And at San Fernando Valley State College, after the AFT local voted in favor of seeking strike sanction in early December, 1968, “a conservative reaction set in,” and at the following meeting conservative faculty members successfully nullified the previous vote. The nullification vote at San Fernando Valley State College came on the heels of militant student actions on the part of the Black Students Union in November at that college, which many faculty members opposed.²⁵⁷

Though several AFT locals at State College campuses sought strike sanction, AFT Local 1362 at San Jose State was ultimately the only one to actually go on strike. The faculty strike at San Jose State, which began on January 8, 1969, was called in sympathy with the faculty and student strike at San Francisco but was also over faculty and student demands at San Jose State. At the time of the strike, about 300 of the college’s 1,200 faculty were members of AFT 1362.²⁵⁸ AFT 1362’s demands called for “resolution of minority students’ grievances and implementation of programs,” “open admissions for the spring 1969 for minority students desiring admission to San Jose State,” as well as demands specific to faculty needs: for

²⁵⁷ California State College Council, AFT, Meeting Minutes, December 21, 1968, Radcliff Collection, folder 27, box 1; Barlow and Shapiro, *An End to Silence: The San Francisco State College Student Movement in the '60s*, 294.

²⁵⁸ “Teachers at San Jose State Picket,” *Los Angeles Times*, January 10, 1969.

example, a salary increase, faculty status for librarians, and a “professional sick leave policy.” The union also demanded that the hiring of Black, Mexican-American and other minority faculty be given priority by the administration.²⁵⁹

AFT 1362’s strike at San Jose State was largely unsuccessful. According to the *Los Angeles Times*, on Friday, January 10, about 90 faculty joined the picket lines, while the college administration counted 63 “verified, unexcused absences” by faculty.²⁶⁰ Additionally, the college administration fired 28 faculty for participating in the strike, including the president of the AFT local, Eldred E. Rutherford.²⁶¹ Radcliff, AFT Local 1352 leader at San Francisco State, remembered that the strike at San Jose State was “more of a problem, than a help.”²⁶² Bierman had similar feelings about the situation at San Jose State: “we weren’t particularly anxious for them to do it either because they weren’t as well organized as we were, and they would be just another problem for us.”²⁶³ The AFT College Council sponsored a small one-day walkout on January 22, 1969 to protest the firing of faculty at San Jose State. The fired faculty at San Jose State would be rehired in the spring of 1969, but, overall, the small turnout combined with the firings of striking faculty at San Jose State reflected the largely unsuccessful nature of the San Jose State AFT strike.²⁶⁴

²⁵⁹ Union Demands, AFT Local 1362, Radcliff Collection, folder 6, box 2.

²⁶⁰ “90 Teachers Picket at San Jose State,” *Los Angeles Times*, January 11, 1969.

²⁶¹ Noel Greenwood, “Grievance Panel Reverses Dumke in Firing Case,” *Los Angeles Times*, August 11, 1970.

²⁶² Radcliff, Interview by Harvey Schwartz, 60.

²⁶³ Bierman, Interview by Peter Carroll, 95.

²⁶⁴ Barlow and Shapiro, *An End to Silence: The San Francisco State College Student Movement in the '60s*, 298; Harry Bernstein, “Agreement Ends San Jose State Strike,” *Los Angeles Times*, February 14, 1969.

Because AFT Local 1352 at San Francisco State had received strike sanction, unions in the Bay Area refused to cross the picket line to conduct work on campus, and workers represented by other unions joined the picket line in solidarity with AFT Local 1352. AFT's strike caused immediate closure of the campus cafeteria, for example, as cafeteria workers refused to cross the picket line. A group calling itself the Clerical Workers Organizing Committee called on clerical workers at San Francisco State to refuse to cross the picket line, and instead "take comp time, vacation time, or be absent without pay" in support of the strike.²⁶⁵ And strike sanction by San Francisco Labor Council, representing 125 unions in the area, brought broader Bay area labor support to AFT Local 1352's strike.²⁶⁶ The International Longshore and Warehouse Union (ILWU), a union with a leftist reputation, supported AFT Local 1352's strike by joining the picket line and opening up jobs for striking students and faculty on the docks to help them make end's meet. On February 1, 1969, ILWU members converged on San Francisco State to join the picket line. The ILWU also pledged \$99.99 per month to AFT Local 1352 to help support the strike financially.²⁶⁷ Finally, AFT Local 61, the union representing public school teachers in San Francisco, supported the faculty strike by donating money to

²⁶⁵ Clerical Workers Organizing Committee Flyer, Radcliff Collection, folder 29, box 1.

²⁶⁶ Lembke and Dreyfuss, "S.F. State Reopens; Teachers' Strike Gets Union Sanction," *Los Angeles Times*, January 7, 1969.

²⁶⁷ *The Partisan*, February 2, 1969 1, vol. 1, Official Strike Bulletin, AFT Local 1352, Radcliff Collection, folder 26, box 1; Buck Hosman to AFT Local 1352 members, January 27, 1969, Radcliff Collection, folder 26, box 2; Anton Interview; Chrisman Interview; Alvarado Interview.

AFT Local 1352, allowing AFT Local 1352 to use their mimeograph machines, and joining the picket line.²⁶⁸

For students, joining the picket line, however, day after day for two weeks, was somewhat monotonous, and, so, in order to infuse some energy into the student side of the strike, and in defiance of Hayakawa's ban on campus protests, the Third World Liberation Front called for a mass rally on January 23, just one week before the end of the fall semester. Nearly one thousand students, faculty and community members gathered, and, predictably, the police were called. However, what was surprising was that 200 police arrived ready to make mass arrests. Over all, 435 individuals were arrested, "constituting the single largest mass bust in the history of San Francisco," according to Jason Ferreira.²⁶⁹ Among the arrested included a number of leaders of the Third World World Liberation Front.

This new strategy to ensnare students in the legal system, and not simply arrest a few students at a time, would have a debilitating impact on the strike. The mass arrest, as Jason Ferreira has argued, helped to "undercut the political movement and momentum surrounding the TWLF and their demands." By the end of the strike, nearly 700 people had been arrested. The energies of many strikers were now, by necessity, focused on raising money for bail and legal expenses and preparing for

²⁶⁸ Radcliff Interview; Bierman, Interview by Peter Carroll, 117; *The Partisan*, February 2, 1969, 1, no. 1, Official Strike Bulletin, AFT Local 1352, Radcliff Collection, folder 26, box 1; James E. Ballard, AFT Local 61 President, to AFT Local 61 Members, January 13, 1969, Radcliff Collection, folder 3, box 2; AFT Local 61 Press Release, January 13, 1969, Radcliff Collection, folder 3, box 2.

²⁶⁹ Ferreira, "All Power to the People," 165.

trial.²⁷⁰ When the college resumed for the spring semester in mid-February after a two-week break, the strike was definitely weaker.

Influenced by Black Power politics in the late 1960s, a handful of black faculty at San Francisco State formed the Black Faculty Union at the beginning of the spring semester, in mid-February, 1969, as a space for black faculty to organize independently. Robert Chrisman, who became chair of the Black Faculty Union, in 1968 had just been hired into a split appointment in Black Studies and the English Department. Chrisman was also involved in AFT Local 1352; he remembers that he joined the union right away after he was hired, and in 1969 he became an AFT Local 1352 Vice President.²⁷¹ Nathan Hare, the chair of Black Studies, was also involved in the Black Faculty Union. While Chrisman became active in AFT Local 1352, Hare tended to be more involved with the Black Students Union.

A confrontation between Black faculty and Hayakawa at the beginning of the spring semester would ultimately result in Nathan Hare's dismissal from San Francisco State. On Friday, February 14, Hayakawa gave a speech to 200 faculty gathered at the main auditorium, an event that under normal conditions would have been attended by a greater proportion of the faculty. As Hayakawa addressed the crowd, the striking faculty picketed outside, and a handful of black faculty and students, including Nathan Hare, Jerry Varnado, Milton Stewart, and Robert Prudhome, decided to disrupt the event by walking to the front of the room and

²⁷⁰ Ibid., 167-168.

²⁷¹ Chrisman Interview; AFT Local 1352 Newsletter, April 15, 1969, Sampson Collection, folder 19, box 1.

engaging in a verbal confrontation with Hayakawa. Hare challenged Hayakawa on the presence of police around the auditorium, while Hayakawa yelled at Hare and the others to “get the hell out of here!” Hayakawa responded that the police would not be removed unless Hare left the building. The police then moved forward and arrested Hare and the three others. As a result of the disruption, Hayakawa suspended Hare, who would not be hired back to chair the Black Studies department.²⁷² The firing of Hare was a major loss for the strikers.

AFT Local 1352, in the meantime, had continued negotiations, and by mid-February had reached a tentative settlement that proved controversial because the students had not yet settled their strike. The agreement included a grievance procedure, steps toward lowering teaching load, and an agreement not to lay off over a 100 faculty the next semester.²⁷³ On Sunday, March 2, AFT Local 1352 members gathered for their most difficult meeting yet. They, after all, had a settlement before them that did not also consist of a settlement of the student demands, and most faculty had gone on strike in solidarity with the students, and not out of concern for their bread and butter demands. However, they also had a reality before them in which the student strike had fizzled. The previous Friday, moreover, Hayakawa had informed striking faculty that if they did not return to work on Monday, they would all be

²⁷² Sheldon J. Nyman, “Hayakawa Bargains,” *The Gater*, February 17, 1969, Strike Collection; Barlow and Shapiro, *An End to Silence*, 304; Anton Interview; Daryl Lembke, “Negro Loses Out on S.F. State Post,” *Los Angeles Times*, February 17, 1969.

²⁷³ *Ibid.*, 169-170; Bierman Interview.

fired.²⁷⁴ Many of the striking faculty had been out since November 6, without pay, and were struggling financially. Because the students had not settled, the vote was close; 112 voted to return to work, while 104 voted to continue the strike. The vote was particularly tense because some non-striking AFT members also voted, including Leo McClatchy, the head of the Academic Senate at the time. When McClatchy was about to cast his ballot, strikers yelled at him that he should not vote because he had not gone on strike. John Glanville, a mild-mannered older Philosophy professor who had been blacklisted from teaching at Catholic Universities for his participation in a faculty strike at St. Johns University in Brooklyn, was particularly upset that McClatchy would dare to vote. Radcliff recalled,

My colleague, John Glanville, goes over and as McClatchy's trying to drop the ballot in the box —and old-fashioned cardboard box with a slit in it, you know—he grabs McClatchy's hand and John's about six-four or something and he holds Leo McClatchy's hand with a ballot over his head and he says, 'Shame, Leo, Shame, Leo. Shame, Leo' ...and then finally he takes his hand away from Leo. Leo puts his ballot in the box and that's it. The vote was to go back.²⁷⁵

Some who voted not to end the strike, including four out of seven members of the AFT's negotiating committee, vowed to continue until the student demands were settled. But the next day, students in the BSU told this much smaller group to go back to work, that they didn't want to see the faculty fired, and the student strike was about to end anyway. On March 20, the Third World Liberation Front agreed to settle the student strike. In 1969 a School of Ethnic Studies would be established, composed of

²⁷⁴ Ferreira, "All Power to the People," 170; "SF State Teachers Vote to Return to Positions Today," *Los Angeles Times*, March 3, 1969.

²⁷⁵ Radcliff, Interview with Harvey Schwartz, 82.

Black Studies, Asian American Studies, and La Raza Studies departments. This was, in many ways, a major victory. This was the first College of Ethnic Studies in the country, and, as scholars have shown, would help to spark a movement to establish Black and Ethnic Studies movement across the country. Just across the bay at UC Berkeley, inspired by the strike at San Francisco State, students went on strike for Ethnic Studies beginning on January 2, 1969.²⁷⁶

However, the students did not win a number of other important demands. Nathan Hare did not become chair of the department, George Murray was never reinstated as an instructor in the English department and, perhaps most importantly, the striking students did not win an autonomous School of Ethnic Studies, one in which the TWLF obtained “the exclusive authority to determine the direction of the new School of Ethnic Studies and its various departments.”²⁷⁷

And though faculty won a few demands, the union was not, ultimately, able to prevent reprisals against some of the most active faculty strikers. Bill Stanton, a founder of the Ad Hoc Faculty Committee, for instance, was not re-hired. Anatole Anton, a professor of Philosophy active in the Ad Hoc committee, was also not re-hired until some time in the 1980s. Morgan Pinney, who would fight for gay rights within the AFT and was the only member of the School of Business to join the strike,

²⁷⁶ Daryl E. Lembke, “Police Called to Quell UC Demonstration,” *Los Angeles Times*, January 30, 1969.

²⁷⁷ Ferreira, “All Power to the People,” 172.

was also fired.²⁷⁸ And Lucille Birnbaum, a faculty member in the History department, was denied tenure in the fall of 1968 for her participation in the Ad Hoc Faculty Committee-led strike prior to the start of AFT Local 1352's strike.²⁷⁹ Additionally, the striking faculty members were allowed to return to teach, but as new employees without credit for their years of service and teaching.²⁸⁰ They did, however, immediately take their case to the courts, and had their credit restored the following year. In an interview years later, Eric Solomon and Peter Radcliff contended that the college administration engaged in political reprisals against faculty who had gone on strike, denying tenure to many strikers.²⁸¹ Radcliff maintained, "in certain cases it just seemed, the cases for tenure were so strong, or cases for promotion. I was denied promotion when I came up for promotion to associate professor. And I had some publications and a good teaching record and so on." Radcliff discovered that though the Vice President of Academic Affairs recommended Radcliff for tenure, Hayakawa intervened to deny him tenure.²⁸²

Many leaders of the student movement spent time in jail after the conclusion of the strike. Most of the student strikers charged with various crimes were arrested in the mass arrest of 435 people on January 23; they were charged with disturbing the

²⁷⁸ Stanton Interview; Anton Interview; Radcliff, Interview by Harvey Schwartz, 83; "Illegal Dismissal Violates AFT Pact," *Daily Gater*, March 10, 1969, Strike Collection; "Teachers to Resume Picketing at S.F. State," *Los Angeles Times*, March 20, 1969.

²⁷⁹ Lucille Birnbaum, "Memorandum on the judgment of non-tenure and threat of suspension of Lucille Birnbaum, Assistant Professor of History, San Francisco State College," December 8, 1968, Sampson Collection, folder 36, box 1; Lucille Birnbaum, Interview by Author, Berkeley, California, May 3, 2012.

²⁸⁰ Daryl Lembke, "199 Teachers Fired—but Offered Jobs Again," *Los Angeles Times*, February 7, 1969.

²⁸¹ Radcliff Interview; Solomon Interview.

²⁸² Radcliff Interview.

peace, failure to disperse, and unlawful assembly. Of those charged, the courts convicted 104 and acquitted 67. Though some strikers served a few days to a couple months in prison, many served longer sentences. TWLF leaders Hari Dillon and Roger Alvarado and BSU leader Bridges Randall all served a year in jail, while white SDS and PLP leader John Levin served six months. BSU activists Danny Glover spent a couple of months in jail, while another BSU leader, Jack Alexis, was deported to Trinidad. Convicted of a felony, BSU leader Nesbitt Crutchfield spent nearly two years in jail and prison, one of the longest periods of any of the strikers.²⁸³

Time spent incarcerated took an emotional toll on the strikers. Hari Dillon remembers the time he spent in San Bruno jail as difficult, that the prison conditions were horrible. He recalled, “I think the hardest thing for me...It’s a long time to be separated,” continuing, “there’s the part about not having your freedom...the little things.” Time in jail was particularly hard for Dillon because his son was born while he was in jail.²⁸⁴ Nesbit Crutchfield vividly remembered his time spent in the prison at Vacaville and the county jail as though it had happened yesterday. Still just a young man, he remembered how was scared he was of prison: “prison scared me. The experience of having these steel doors close behind you...that these people have, your life is literally in their hands, that scared me.” Crutchfield had an exploratory sentence, for which he could, if determined to be “incorrigible,” spend as long as sixteen years in prison. Crutchfield wanted to leave no doubt that he was not

²⁸³ Dillon Interview; Crutchfield Interview; Philip Hager, “SF Student Trials Strain Justice System,” *Los Angeles Times*, November 24, 1969; Biondi, *The Black Revolution on Campus*, 74; “Year in Jail for Strikers,” *Daily Gater*, June 27, 1969.

²⁸⁴ Dillon Interview.

incurable: Crutchfield recalled, “my strategy was to join everything I could possible join...I joined church, I was in a choir, I had two jobs” in the library and the kitchen, and he had a therapist and a psychiatrist. He emphasized that another inmate, who had spent 20-25 years of his life behind bars, “adopted” him. This other inmate became his “protector” and his “big brother,” helping him to survive his time in prison.²⁸⁵

Conclusion

When looking back at this strike, many hold it up as a historic and militant action, a moment in time when faculty and students came together to wage the longest student and faculty strike in the U.S. until that point. And in many ways the strike was a success. Not only was the first College of Ethnic Studies established, but the struggle at San Francisco State inspired students of color in high schools and colleges across the country to make similar demands for a curriculum relevant to their lives. It was also clearly a transformative political experience for both students and faculty. Faculty and students still talk about the strike as if it happened yesterday, and many of the faculty involved in the strike went on to successfully establish the legal right for faculty to organize in California. Eric Solomon, who as of 2011 was representing retired union members on the San Francisco State negotiating committee of the California Faculty Association, in a recent interview stressed that the union

²⁸⁵ Crutchfield Interview.

would not get anywhere in its negotiations unless it organized more closely with students and seriously considered striking.

This chapter contributes to the scholarship on the history of the AFT by demonstrating that the AFT's racial politics were not monolithic in the late 1960s. Whereas much of the AFT leadership was supportive of the Civil Rights Movement, the union's moderate racial politics distanced meant that it distanced itself from the movements of color as they became more racially and tactically militant in the late 1960s. Scholars point to the AFT-affiliated United Federation of Teacher's active opposition to community control in New York City in the late 1960 as evidence of the disconnect between the AFT and movements of people of color in the late 1960s. However, AFT Local 1352's strike in solidarity with the Black Students Union and the Third World Liberation Front at San Francisco State underscores that many local leaders and rank-and-file activists opposed the AFT's moderate racial politics. The faculty strike at San Francisco State provides a fuller, more nuanced picture of the history of the American Federation of Teachers in the late 1960s.

Finally, in this chapter I argue that AFT Local 1352 was helping to revive and redefine social unionism. The union's strike at San Francisco State was, first and foremost, an action meant to challenge racism in higher education. Faculty, by declaring an official union strike, took great risks to their economic and professional standing in academia. The striking faculty helped to strengthen the student strike in the midst of intense police brutality, ultimately aiding in the establishment of Black Studies and the College of Ethnic Studies at San Francisco State. AFT Local 1352's

brand of social unionism was deeply shaped by the movements of people of color as they turned toward militancy in the late 1960s and 1970s; the union's alliance with student activists promoting Black Power and a Third World leftist politics signaled the possibilities of a new kind of unionism capable of challenging various forms of social injustice by closely organizing alongside community and social movement activists. By waging this strike in solidarity with the Black Students Union and the Third World Liberation Front, moreover, AFT Local 1352 joined the broader labor insurgency of the late 1960s and 1970s, which attempted to fuse the social movements of the period with the labor movement. By pushing the union movement to the left, AFT Local 1352 butted up against conservative trends within the larger labor movement, trends that facilitated the decline of the labor movement over the next few decades. This strike, though a bit messy and not an unqualified success, perhaps also represents some promise of a revitalized labor movement—one that makes connections with social movements in order to promote social and economic justice on a broad scale.

Chapter 3: Bringing the Feminist Movement into the Union: Feminism in the California Federation of Teachers in the 1970s

“If the union movement is to survive and grow and again become a force for social change, it needs women. Women coming into the labor movement will do more than fight for their own rights. Together with minorities, they are two-thirds of the labor force. In alliance they can turn the unions around and build rank and file control.”¹

- Joyce Maupin, Union Women’s Alliance to Gain Equality, 1979

Introduction

In February, 1974 fourteen women coaches in the Newport-Mesa School District went on strike for equal pay with male coaches. Dodie Anderson, a coach at Lincoln Intermediate School, helped to lead the strike. She explained to the local press that the coaches had tried other means before deciding to strike, that for six years they had been asking the local school board for equal pay, to no avail. The Newport-Mesa AFT local even filed a complaint with the Equal Employment Opportunities Commission in California in 1973. Finally, the women coaches struck for two and half weeks, and the local board caved to their demands.² This strike was not an isolated incident. It was part of a larger history of feminist organizing within

¹ Rochelle Gatlin, “A ‘Society of Outsiders’: Union W.A.G.E., Working-Class Feminism, and the Labor Movement,” in Ronald Charles Kent, Sara Markham, David R. Roediger, and Herbert Shaprio, eds., *Culture, Gender, Race, and U.S. Labor History* (Westport: Greenwood Press, 1993), 63.

² Allison Deere, “Women Coaches Win Battle,” *Daily Pilot*, January 29, 1974, The Marjorie Stern Collection (hereafter Stern Collection), part 2, folder 13: Women’s Rights Committee: Sexism in education and careers, misc. research papers, 1971-76, box 2, Walter P. Reuther Library (hereafter Reuther Library), Wayne State University, Detroit, Michigan.

the American Federation of Teachers in California in the 1970s, the subject of this chapter.

The feminist movement in the late 1960s and 1970s inspired the emergence of feminism within the California Federation of Teachers (CFT). But feminism within the CFT took a particular shape that distinguished it from the larger feminist movement. Feminists within the CFT developed a political orientation influenced by their role both as teachers and as union activists. Because they were teachers and union activists, women in the CFT sought to incorporate women's rights into collective bargaining as well as other organizing for workplace rights. As teachers they also confronted sexist curriculum. They demanded that textbook companies revise textbooks by eliminating sexist references to women and girls, and by incorporating the historical contributions of women. This dual focus—on collective bargaining/workplace rights and curriculum—signified that feminists within the CFT viewed their own self-interest as workers to be as important as helping their students grow up in a society in which men and women were treated equally. In other words, the women within the CFT advanced a version of labor feminism shaped both their position as union activists and by their role as teachers.

Though feminists within the CFT largely focused their efforts on collective bargaining and challenging sexist class materials in the early to mid-1970s, they were also engaged in the larger feminist movement. Most prominently, feminists in the CFT and the American Federation of Teachers (AFT) organized around the Equal Rights Amendment in the early 1970s, which stipulated, “equal rights under the law

shall not be denied or abridged by the United States or any state on account of sex.”³

They were also active in the formation of the Coalition of Labor Union Women, spoke up in support of abortion rights, passed resolutions in support of Angela Davis, and supported the passage of legislation to advance women’s rights.

Within the AFT in the 1970s, as in the labor movement more generally, women’s caucuses were essential organizing vehicles to advance feminist politics. No doubt inspired by the larger feminist movement, in 1970 women in the American Federation of Teachers formed the Ad Hoc Committee for Women’s Rights at the AFT’s national convention in Pittsburg, the following year to be institutionalized and redubbed the AFT Women’s Rights Committee. In 1972 women in California followed suit when they formed the CFT Women in Education Committee. Multiple women’s caucuses were formed in local and state unions within the AFT throughout the country during the 1970s.

Women led feminist organization in the AFT and the CFT. Though women predominated as teachers, men comprised the majority of union leaders in California and nationally within the AFT. Unlike the case in some unions, male teacher union leaders did not present a major roadblock to the advancement of women’s rights within the AFT. But nor did they play a major leading role in this organizing. Female rank-and-file teachers, organizing staff, and elected officers led the way in forming the women’s caucuses. They carried out the arduous day-to-day tasks of organizing women’s conferences, scrutinizing sexist curricula, drafting model contract language

³ Miriam Schneir, ed., *Feminism in Our Time: The Essential Writings, World War II to the Present* (New York: Vintage Books, 1994), 371.

in support of women's rights, writing women's rights resolutions for AFT conventions, and so on. As is the case for the history of feminist movements more generally, women teachers shouldered the major burden of organizing for women's rights within the AFT. As women, they knew from their own personal experiences that sexism in the teaching profession negatively impacted their lower social status at work, but also within their own unions.

The official status of the women's caucuses within AFT meant that they constituted a "loyal opposition" within the union. The women's caucuses within the CFT and the AFT were officially affiliated with their parent unions. Rather than being independent feminist caucuses free to act as they autonomously determined, their status as official caucuses meant that they often relied on their unions to sanction their activities. Their official status within their unions had both negative and positive effects. On the one hand, they had access to financial resources and communication networks that enhanced the effectiveness of their organizing. On the other hand, their official status meant that they often needed to wait for the approval of male-dominated executive bodies before moving forward with organizing. The impact of this reliance constrained their public criticism of their own union leadership. It also meant that they could not officially act in support of causes or issues that had not first been agreed upon by their unions, either by executive bodies or at state and national union conventions. Dennis Deslippe and other scholars have described the Coalition of Labor Union, formed in 1974, as a "loyal opposition" within the labor movement

due to its official link with the AFL-CIO; the women's caucuses within the AFT can also be described as a "loyal opposition."⁴

The position of the women's caucuses as the loyal opposition within the AFT contrasted with the status of Union WAGE (Women's Alliance to Gain Equality) as radical outsiders, a group of labor feminists in California able to act autonomously due to their independence from the labor movement.⁵ Despite these negative effects, however, the official affiliation of the women's caucuses with the AFT allowed them to more successfully advance women's rights on a broad scale difficult to imagine had they been independent. That said, the existence of independent groups of feminists like Union W.A.G.E. was also important for developing and publicizing working class-based critiques of sexism without the constraints imposed by labor unions.

The focus of this chapter is on feminism within the California Federation of Teachers in the 1970s, particularly the statewide Women in Education Committee, but I also discuss the formation and activism of the AFT's Women's Rights Caucus at the national level in the early 1970s. The involvement of women teachers from California in feminist activism within the AFT was not only significant. Marjorie Stern, a teacher from San Francisco AFT Local 61, deserves particular attention for her role at the national level; she was the first chairperson of the national AFT's Women's Rights Committee, holding that position from 1970, the year of the

⁴ Dennis A. Deslippe, *Rights, Not Roses: Unions and the Rise of Working-Class Feminism, 1945-80* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2000), 144.

⁵ Gatlin, "A 'Society of Outsiders,'" 62-63.

committee's formation, until 1974, when Albert Shanker replaced David Selden as AFT president. Additionally, it is important to examine the AFT's Women's Rights Caucus due to the relationship between the CFT and the AFT. The California Federation of Teachers tended toward being more politically progressive than the AFT. A part of the CFT's progressivism lies in the activities of its Women in Education Committee and its influence on national union politics.

Of the literature on the history of the AFT, Marjorie Murphy's *Blackboard Unions* and John Lyons *Teachers and Reform* are the only studies that significantly address feminism and women's activism in the AFT. Recognizing the feminization of the teaching profession in the U.S. in the twentieth century, Murphy centers gender in her analysis. She interprets the early years of teacher unionism—the early twentieth-century, leading up to and going beyond the formation of the AFT in 1916—as feminist. Murphy tells of Margaret Haley's involvement in the early teacher union movement. Not only was Haley a leader of the Chicago Federation of Teachers, the “most powerful and influential” of the teacher unions in the country in the early twentieth century, but Haley also played a leading role in establishing the AFT in 1916 and organized within the National Education Association to prioritize female teachers above male administrators.⁶ Murphy argues that Haley and other women in Chicago not only helped to found the modern teacher unions, but also organized in solidarity with other women workers and participated in the women's suffrage

⁶ For more on Margaret Haley see Kate Rousmaniere, *Citizen Teacher: The Life and Leadership of Margaret Haley* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2005); Marjorie Murphy, *Blackboard Unions: The AFT and the NEA, 1900-1980* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1990), 61, 65.

movement.⁷ Murphy defines this activism as feminist in part because women teachers in the early twentieth-century U.S. “were scorned for stepping out of the feminine role at the same time they were harassed for not being professional enough.”⁸

In response to male dominance in the AFT leadership from its founding in 1916, women teachers have organized to advance their rights in the union. In 1916, when Charles Stillman became the first president instead of Margaret Haley of the newly-formed American Federation of Teachers, this represented, argues Murphy, the AFT’s “privileging of male leadership from its inception,” as well as the dominance of high school teachers rather than elementary school teachers in the union.⁹ Though Haley and elementary school teachers in general were, to some extent, sidelined at the founding of the AFT, women teachers continued to push the envelope, criticizing the high salaries of AFT leadership and challenging male labor movement leadership, including their own leadership in the AFT. In 1924, when Charles Stillman resigned as president, Florence Rood, a teacher in St. Paul, became the president. Other women were elected to leadership positions within the AFT, signifying what Murphy describes as “the revolt of the women teachers” in the 1920s—a temporary return of women as AFT leaders. However, from the 1930s onward men returned to lead the AFT, and by the time of the feminist challenge within the AFT in the 1970s, men comprised a disproportionate percentage of the leadership.¹⁰

⁷ Murphy, *Blackboard Unions*, 74.

⁸ *Ibid.*, 19.

⁹ *Ibid.*, 84-85.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, 116-119.

Murphy's discussion of feminism in the AFT in the 1970s is unusual in the literature, if brief.¹¹ In just a few pages, Murphy mentions a few women teachers from California who helped to promote feminism within the AFT, signaling the importance of California in national feminist politics within the AFT. However, Murphy's emphasis is on the national Women's Rights Committee; the formation of state and local women's caucuses lies outside of the scope of her study, including the California Federation of Teacher's Women in Education Committee.

While Murphy notes a few issues that women promoted, including maternity leave, day care, and the Equal Rights Amendment, at the AFT convention in Pittsburgh in 1970, the efforts of feminists within the CFT to eradicate sexism in the curriculum was also an issue that became central to their organizing both at the national level and in California.¹² Furthermore, their emphasis on the curriculum reflects their commitment to a version of social unionism inflected with a militant feminism. Their focus extended outward from advancing their rights as workers on the job to organizing to support social justice on a broader scale.

In *Teachers and Reform: Chicago Public Education, 1929-1970*, John Lyons, like Murphy, centers gender in his examination of the history of teacher unionism in

¹¹ Much of the literature on the AFT was published in the 1970s, with the exception of a few recent books: Robert J. Braun, *Teachers and Power: The Story of the American Federation of Teachers* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1972); Stephen Cole, *The Unionization of Teachers: A Case Study of the UFT* (New York: Praeger, 1969); William Edward Eaton, *The American Federation of Teachers, 1916-1961: A History of the Movement* (Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press, 1975); Dennis Gaffney, *Teachers United: The Rise of New York State United Teachers* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2007); John F. Lyons, *Teachers and Reform: Chicago Public Education, 1929-1970* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2008); Philip Taft, *United They Teach: The Story of the United Federation of Teachers* (Los Angeles: Nash Pub., 1974).

¹² Murphy, *Blackboard Unions*, 258–261.

Chicago. Lyons argues that from the 1930s through the 1970s, “teacher unionism was firmly located in the context of women’s work and women’s struggles to enhance the status and reward of teaching.” Lyons recounts how elementary school teachers in the 1930s and 1940s used the Chicago Teachers’ Union as a vehicle to demand the single salary schedule, or equal pay between elementary and high school teachers.¹³ Female elementary school teachers challenged the largely male leadership of the Chicago Teachers Union, many of whom were high school teachers, to adopt the single salary schedule. When the union leadership proved hesitant due to the opposition of many male high school teachers, in 1943, elementary school teacher Susan Scully ran for president of the union on a slate of reformers in the union election, calling for democratization and a single salary schedule. As a result of this rank-and-file challenge, led by women, the CTU shifted its stance, going from opposition to support for the single salary schedule. In 1947, the union successfully won the single salary schedule.¹⁴ Lyons’ discussion of this struggle for the single salary schedule fits into his larger argument that “there is a persistent tradition, although a minority one, in the history of teacher unionism in which teachers sought to use unions as vehicles to reform the school system and the wider society.”¹⁵

This chapter on feminism in the AFT also contributes to scholarship that questions depictions of the feminist movement in the 1960s and 1970s as primarily white and middle-class. Alice Echols’ *Daring to be Bad*, which focuses on political

¹³ Lyons, *Teachers and Reform*, 7.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, 93-94, 104-105.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, 4.

differences among liberal, radical, and cultural feminists, largely ignores feminist organizing by women of color as well as working-class women in their unions.¹⁶ Kimberly Springer has added to the literature by considering the emergence of black feminist organizations in the late 1960s and 1970s, which were influenced by black women's experiences with sexism in the Civil Rights Movement.¹⁷ Jennifer Nelson has examined the reproductive rights movement from the perspective of women of color.¹⁸ Maylei Blackwell considers the history of Chicana feminism in the late 1960s and 1970s, with a particular focus on Hijas de Cuauhtémoc, one of the most significant Chicana activist groups of the period.¹⁹ In "The Mountain Movers: Asian American Women's Movement in Los Angeles," Susie Ling discusses struggles for women's rights among Asian American women in Los Angeles who largely enacted their politics in mixed-gender Asian American political organizations.²⁰ And Benita Roth has examined white, black, and Chicana feminist movements together in *Separate Roads to Feminism*, analyzing the distinct ways that white, Chicana, and black women developed and enacted their feminist politics.²¹

¹⁶ Alice Echols, *Daring to Be Bad: Radical Feminism in America, 1967-1975* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1989).

¹⁷ Kimberly Springer, *Living for the Revolution: Black Feminist Organizations, 1968-1980* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2005).

¹⁸ Jennifer Nelson, *Women of Color and the Reproductive Rights Movement* (New York: New York University Press, 2003).

¹⁹ Maylei Blackwell, *¡Chicana Power!: Contested Histories of Feminism in the Chicano Movement* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 2011).

²⁰ Susie Ling, "The Mountain Movers: Asian American Women's Movement in Los Angeles," *Amerasia Journal* 15, no. 1 (1989): 51-67.

²¹ Benita Roth, *Separate Roads to Feminism: Black, Chicana, and White Feminist Movements in America's Second Wave* (Cambridge; New York: Cambridge University Press, 2004).

General studies of the feminist movement in the 1960s and 1970s pay little attention to the impact of feminism on the labor movement, although feminism within the AFT and other unions was also an essential element of the larger feminist movement. A discussion of labor feminism complicates the standard narrative. For instance, Alice Echols argues that by 1975, with the fall of radical feminism, which emphasized the complete restructuring of public and private life, all that was left was cultural feminism, with a focus on creating a female counterculture, and liberal feminism, which sought to incorporate women into the mainstream.²² Labor feminism does not easily fit into this schema. While liberal feminists may have focused on challenging sexism by breaking the glass ceiling, thereby fitting women into the individualistic idea of the “American Dream,” labor feminism was a working class-based version of feminism in which women acted collectively to challenge the class power of their employers. This class-based feminism in the labor movement continued through the mid- to late-1970s, and can be defined as neither liberal feminism nor cultural feminism.

I argue that the new social movements of the 1960s and 1970s helped to redefine the concept of social unionism. Teachers’ activism to advance women’s rights within their unions was part of larger rank-and-file efforts to revive and radicalize the labor movement in this period. Though union activists had challenged discrimination and addressed larger social problems in the decades after the 1930s, in the 1960s and 1970s activists against the U.S. war in Vietnam, civil rights protestors,

²² Echols, *Daring to Be Bad*, 11.

militant people of color, feminists, and queer workers infused the labor movement with a new militancy. They challenged their unions to reject Cold War liberalism and come out against the war. At the same time they sought to eradicate discrimination from their workplaces and their unions. The rhetoric and tactics of these struggles against discrimination in some ways overlapped with and in other ways were distinct from earlier struggles. The political ferment of the period also helped to inspire rank-and-file workers to establish union reform movements to not only radicalize, but also democratize their unions.²³ I argue that in the 1970s labor feminism within the CFT

²³ For histories of the labor insurgency in the 1960s and 1970s, see Herman W Benson, *Rebels, Reformers, and Racketeers: How Insurgents Transformed the Labor Movement* (Brooklyn: Association for Union Democracy, 2005); Aaron Brenner, Robert Brenner, and Calvin Winslow, eds., *Rebel Rank and File: Labor Militancy and Revolt from Below in the Long 1970s* (London; New York: Verso, 2010); Jeffrey W. Coker, *Confronting American Labor: The New Left Dilemma* (Columbia: University of Missouri Press, 2002); Leon Fink and Brian Greenberg, *Upheaval in the Quiet Zone: A History of Hospital Workers' Union, Local 1199* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1989); Michael Flug, "Organized Labor and the Civil Rights Movement of the 1960s: The Case of the Maryland Freedom Union," *Labor History* 31, no. 3 (1990): 322–46; Dan Georgakas and Marvin Surkin, *Detroit, I Do Mind Dying*, 2nd ed (Cambridge: South End Press, 1998); James A. Geschwender, *Class, Race, and Worker Insurgency: The League of Revolutionary Black Workers* (Cambridge; New York: Cambridge University Press, 1977); Laurie Boush Green, *Battling the Plantation Mentality: Memphis and the Black Freedom Struggle* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2007); Michael K. Honey, *Going Down Jericho Road: The Memphis Strike, Martin Luther King's Last Campaign* (New York: W.W. Norton & Co., 2007); Dan La Botz, *Rank and File Rebellion: Teamsters for a Democratic Union* (London; New York: Verso, 1990); Peter B. Levy, *The New Left and Labor in the 1960s* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1994); Penny Lewis, *Hardhats, Hippies, and Hawks: The Vietnam Antiwar Movement as Myth and Memory* (Ithaca: ILR Press, 2013); David M. Lewis-Colman, *Race Against Liberalism: Black Workers and the UAW in Detroit* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2008); Alice Lynd and Staughton Lynd, eds., *Rank and File: Personal Histories by Working-Class Organizers* (Chicago: Haymarket Books, 2011); Gregg Michel, "'Union Power, Soul Power': Unionizing Johns Hopkins University Hospital, 1959–1974," *Labor History* 38, no. 1 (1996): 28–66; Heather Ann Thompson, *Whose Detroit?: Politics, Labor, and Race in a Modern American City* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2001); Albert Vetere Lannon and Marvin Rogoff, "We Shall Not Remain Silent: Building the Anti-Vietnam War Movement in the House of Labor," *Science & Society* 66, no. 4 (Winter /2003 2002): 536–44; Cynthia Ann

and the AFT redefined the liberal social unionism of the AFT to be more militant in its advocacy of the rights of women than it had been previously.

In *The Other Women's Movement*, labor historian Dorothy Sue Cobble shows that labor feminists were actively advocating for the rights of women workers from the 1940s to the 1960s. She argues that the formation of the Coalition of Labor Union Women in 1974 “does not represent the trickling down of feminist consciousness to working-class women. Rather, it was a realization of a long-sought goal of labor feminists.”²⁴ Cobble sides with revisionist historians like Nelson Lichtenstein who take issue with the idea that the labor movement from the 1940s to the 1960s was tamed and conservative, arguing instead for the “continuation of a progressive class-based politics in the labor movement after the 1930s” and a labor movement “willing to engage in considerable conflict with employers over economic and social issues.”²⁵ Cobble makes a convincing case for the resilience and the extensive organizing of labor feminists in the post-WWII period.

Feminists in the AFT were influenced by both earlier labor feminists as well as a newly-emergent feminist movement. As Cobble points out, the victories of the earlier labor feminist movement were partial—in 1970 women still faced an immense amount of discrimination at work and were largely consigned to jobs assigned to

Young, *Soul Power: Culture, Radicalism, and the Making of a U.S. Third World Left* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2006).

²⁴ Dorothy Sue Cobble, *The Other Women's Movement: Workplace Justice and Social Rights in Modern America* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 2004), 201.

²⁵ *Ibid.*, 7.

women in a gender-segregated workforce.²⁶ There was some political continuity concerning the issues labor feminists organized around; for instance, labor feminists in both periods sought accommodations for childbearing and childrearing. But in the 1970s labor feminists in the AFT and in other unions transcended the earlier issues; they fought, as Nancy Maclean has highlighted, for access to jobs traditionally assigned to men through their support for affirmative action.²⁷ In the case of teaching, feminists sought access to faculty jobs at colleges and universities, a male-dominated realm, and at the same time drew attention to male dominance in school administrator positions. Feminists in the AFT also confronted school curricula that taught girls and boys that they were suited only for certain jobs according to their gender. The new feminist movement of the 1960s and 1970s, moreover, led feminists in the AFT to incorporate a new set of strategies into their organizing; most prominently, they utilized consciousness-raising in their efforts to eradicate sexism. Finally, labor feminism in the 1970s was more extensive and, in conjunction with the larger feminist movement, had a more transformative impact on gender relations in the workplace and in the unions than earlier labor feminism.

As Deslippe has demonstrated in *Rights, Not Roses*, the gender composition of a union can influence the success of labor activism in support of women's rights.

Deslippe examines women's activism in two unions from the mid-1940s to 1980, the United Packing House Workers of America (UPWA) and the International Union of

²⁶ *Ibid.*, 9.

²⁷ Nancy MacLean, "The Hidden History of Affirmative Action: Working Women's Struggles in the 1970s and the Gender of Class," *Feminist Studies* 25, no. 1 (Spring 1999): 42–78.

Electrical Workers (IUE), arguing that the UPWA leadership was somewhat confrontational to women's demands for gender equity, while the IUE tended to accommodate women's demands. Part of the reason for this difference was that women were a small minority of the UPWA membership, but they comprised what he calls a "strategic plurality" within the IUE. Because over a third of the IUE's membership were women the largely male leadership relied in part on them for reelection, making the union leadership more responsive to women's demands.²⁸ Deslippe also points out that campaigns to promote women's issues were instigated by women workers, not by male leaders or rank-and-file workers.²⁹ As argued above, it was similarly the case that women spearheaded feminist organizing within the AFT. But the AFT, in contrast to the male-dominated UPWA and IUE, was a union with majority female membership and represented the female-dominated teaching profession. Thus, male AFT leaders, in order to hold onto their own legitimacy and their power, had by necessity to be attentive to the demands of feminists within the union or they might risk loss of support by a majority of their membership.

Public sector unions, including the teachers' unions, witnessed a considerable expansion in the 1960s and 1970s: in 1955 there were fewer than 400,000 union members in the public sector and by the early 1970s there were more than four million.³⁰ In contrast, industrial unions lost power in part due to deindustrialization and the subsequent loss of manufacturing jobs to the South and other countries, as

²⁸ Deslippe, *Rights, Not Roses*, 7-8.

²⁹ *Ibid.*, 165.

³⁰ Lyons, *Teachers and Reform*, 164.

well as the increased use of technology. The struggles for women’s rights in the industrial unions in Deslippe’s study—the IUE and the UPWA—“experienced a pyrrhic victory of sorts,” he writes, because “they converted a hobbled labor movement to their cause but in the process inherited a vehicle for social change increasingly unable to act forcefully in the 1970s and 1980s.”³¹ Industrial unions were in a weakened state in the 1970s and the 1980s, as the loss of jobs due to capital flight translated into a loss in union members. In contrast, the successful organizing by feminist teachers to challenge sexism at work, in the school curricula and, to some extent, within the AFT itself represents a victory with long-lasting effects on the rapidly expanding public sector. In California in the mid-1970s teachers finally gained the right to collective bargaining, setting off battles between the AFT and the National Education Association (NEA) to win union elections establishing themselves as the collective bargaining agent of choice among teachers. This rush to unionize, intensified by the struggle between the AFT and NEA, tapped the energies and resources of union activists at the same time as the feminist challenge within the California Federation of Teachers. The impact was complicated—while some people’s energies were diverted from focusing on women’s rights, the growing strength and militancy of the teacher union movement also infused energy into labor feminism and attracted more union activists.³²

³¹ Ibid., 130.

³² For histories of the National Education Association, see Stuart J Foster, *Red Alert!: Educators Confront the Red Scare in American Public Schools, 1947-1954* (New York: P. Lang, 2000); Carol F. Karpinski, “A Visible Company of Professionals”: *African Americans and the National Education Association During the Civil Rights Movement* (New York: Peter

Nancy Gabin's analysis of feminism within the United Auto Workers (UAW) demonstrates the feminist advances made by a union that pursued liberal social unionism as its ideological guide. Though the UAW was a male-dominated union, both in its leadership and its gender composition, the liberalism of its leadership eased, at least to some extent, women's efforts to advance their rights within the union. Gabin engages with other scholars who assert that the labor movement has obstructed rather than facilitated working women's collective action, arguing for a more complex understanding of labor feminism.³³ On the one hand, argues Gabin, the UAW did indeed marginalize women in the union hall and at work. The union never made gender equality a priority in collective bargaining, "at times asserting the interests of the male majority at the expense of women auto workers." On the other hand, the UAW acknowledged and sought to address sexism in the auto plants earlier than many other unions, institutionalized the Women's Bureau in the mid-1940s and

Lang, 2008); Murphy, *Blackboard Unions*; Liston F. Sabraw and William P. Bacon, "The California Teachers Association as a Legislative Lobby, 1955-1974," *California Journal of Teacher Education* 5, no. 1 (April 1978): 42-54; Michael John Schultz, *The National Education Association and the Black Teacher: The Integration of a Professional Organization* (Coral Gables: University of Miami Press, 1970); Wayne J. Urban, *More Than the Facts: The Research Division of the National Education Association, 1922-1997* (Lanham: University Press of America, 1998); Wayne J. Urban, *Gender, Race, and the National Education Association: Professionalism and Its Limitations* (New York: RoutledgeFalmer, 2000); Wayne J. Urban, "Courting the Woman Teacher: The National Education Association, 1917-1970," *History of Education Quarterly* 41, no. 2 (Summer 2001): 139-66; Edgar Bruce Wesley, *NEA: The First Hundred Years: The Building of the Teaching Profession*. (New York: Harper, 1957); Allan M. West, *The National Education Association: The Power Base for Education* (New York: Free Press, 1980).

³³ Gabin cites Kessler Harris, "Where Are the Organized Women Workers?," *Feminist Studies* 3, no. 1-2 (Autumn 1975): 92-110; Ruth Milkman, "Organizing the Sexual Division of Labor: Historical Perspective on 'Women's Work' and the American Labor Movement," *Socialist Review*, no. 49 (1980): 95-150; Heidi Hartmann, "Capitalism, Patriarchy, and Job Segregation by Sex," *Signs* 1, no. 3 (Spring 1976): 137-169.

had made some gains in collective bargaining in support of women's rights prior to the civil rights and feminist movements.³⁴

The liberal social unionism that Gabin depicts was an ideology shared by the disproportionately male leadership of the AFT, and her argument about the ability of the UAW to both obstruct and facilitate women's rights applies to the AFT as well. Feminists took advantage of the liberal social unionism of the AFT leadership, in the process redefining social unionism for themselves as more militant in its advocacy of feminism.

While Deslippe and Gabin consider feminism in the context of male-dominated industrial unions, other scholars have examined labor feminism in the post-WWII period in the context of traditionally female-dominated professions, including telephone operating, flight attendant work, clerical work, garment work, and waitressing.³⁵ The work of these scholars provides insight into the ways that the

³⁴ Nancy Felice Gabin, *Feminism in the Labor Movement: Women and the United Auto Workers, 1935-1975* (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 1990), 5.

³⁵ For more on women in male-dominated unions and workplaces, also see Mary Margaret Fonow, *Union Women: Forging Feminism in the United Steelworkers of America* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2003); Susan Eisenberg, *We'll Call You If We Need You: Experiences of Women Working Construction* (Cornell: ILR Press, 1999). For histories of women in female-dominated workforces and unions, see Kathleen M. Barry, *Femininity in Flight: A History of Flight Attendants, Radical Perspectives* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2007); Dorothy Sue Cobble, *Dishing It Out: Waitresses and Their Unions in the Twentieth Century* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1991); Toni Gilpin, *On Strike for Respect: The Clerical and Technical Workers' Strike at Yale University, 1984-85* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1995); Venus Green, *Race on the Line: Gender, Labor, and Technology in the Bell System, 1880-1980* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2001); Alice Kessler-Harris, *Out to Work: A History of Wage-Earning Women in the United States* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1982); Ruth Milkman, ed., *Women, Work, and Protest: A Century of US Women's Labor History* (Boston: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1985); Christine Reiko Yano, *Airborne Dreams: "Nisei" Stewardesses and Pan American World Airways* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2011).

process of feminization was distinct depending on the type of work performed. For instance, Kathleen Barry's discussion of flight attendants shows how the feminization and racialization of the flight attendant corps was fundamentally shaped by the fact that they worked for the private sector. In the 1970s, feminist flight attendants challenged the eroticization of their work; to increase their profit, airline companies advertised female flight attendants as sexually appealing to attract customers.³⁶

Teachers working in the public sector faced a different set of sexist practices; they did not have to deal with their portrayal in advertising, but they were viewed as role models for and guardians of the children they taught, particularly in the elementary schools, with the result that they were actually de-sexualized. The literature on labor feminism in female-dominated work demonstrates, moreover, that feminist women still had to challenge union hierarchies dominated by men. Barry charts flight attendant efforts in the 1950s through the 1970s to challenge male dominance in their unions, first by forming independent flight attendant unions free of domineering male pilots, and then by addressing a disproportionate number of male flight attendants in union leadership positions.³⁷

In the 1970s feminists in the AFT in California and nationally formed women's caucuses to advance women's rights within their union. These women, who shouldered the burden of this activism, placed a dual focus on challenging the sexism they experienced as workers and confronting the sexism that pervaded school curricula. Their organizing drew on earlier labor feminist struggles, and ultimately

³⁶ Barry, *Femininity in Flight*, 174–176.

³⁷ *Ibid.*, 73, 83.

helped to infuse labor feminism with a new militancy shaped by the emergence of the feminist movement in the 1960s and 1970s. With the help of anti-war and civil rights activists, militant people of color, queer workers, and an assortment of radicals, feminists also helped to redefine and revive social unionism.

Feminization and Racialization of Teaching

Though the U.S. labor force has historically been segregated by gender and race, over the course of the late nineteenth and twentieth centuries the specific nature of this segregation has changed dramatically. The kind of work women have performed as well as the number of women in the workforce has shifted: in 1900, for instance, one out of every five women worked for wages, with the remainder doing unpaid household labor. By 1990 three out of every five women worked for wages. According to historian Julia Kirk Blackwelder, over the course of the twentieth century women also worked for wages for more years of their lives, as wage labor, particularly for white women, “evolved from an atypical to an anticipated behavior.”³⁸ Women have generally been confined to working for wages in feminized forms of labor, such as work that involved taking care of children or the elderly, cleaning and cooking, customer service, clerical work, nursing, teaching, and other kinds of work that required personal service. However, there were always some poor white women but more women of color who did manual labor, particularly in agriculture. There also have been moments in U.S. history when women were encouraged to do work

³⁸ Julia Kirk Blackwelder, *Now Hiring: The Feminization of Work in the United States, 1900-1995* (College Station: Texas A&M University Press, 1997), 3.

traditionally performed by men in larger numbers, such as during World War II when masses of women attained work in munitions and other factories while men previously performed this work were enlisted in the army.³⁹ The racialization and feminization of the labor force and teaching provide an understanding of the context for the emergence of labor feminism within AFT and the labor movement more broadly.

The reasons for major shifts in the labor market are both economic and political. From the late 19th century to the late 20th century the major area of employment for all workers has shifted from agriculture to manufacturing to service. By the 1970s the service sector surpassed manufacturing, and by the end of the 1980s services made up 65 percent of the national income.⁴⁰ Blackwelder argues that women starting working for wages in larger numbers in large part because of the needs of the economy; women were accustomed to performing labor in the service sector, which is both racialized and feminized. During the 1950s, according to Blackwelder, “the demand for nurses, teachers, and clerical workers mushroomed, and the laws of occupational segregation dictated that women fill these jobs.”⁴¹ During the 1960s the number of women in the waged workforce increased from 37.7 percent to 43.3 percent. In combination with these economic changes, changes in the law and the emergence of the feminist movement of the 1960s and 1970s expanded women’s

³⁹ Ruth Milkman, *Gender at Work: The Dynamics of Job Segregation by Sex During World War II* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1987).

⁴⁰ Blackwelder, *Now Hiring*, 7.

⁴¹ *Ibid.*, 161.

expectations and opportunities. More women actively chose to enter the workforce and when they did, they increasingly expected to be treated equal to men.⁴²

As women entered the paid workforce, however, they continued to shoulder the responsibility of childcare and housework.⁴³ The percentage of women with children working for wages increased from the 1960s to the 1970s: in 1960, 18.6 percent of married women with children under the age of six, 39 percent of married women with children ages six to eighteen, and 34.7 percent of women with no children worked for wages. In 1970 30 percent with children under six, 49.2 percent with children from six to eighteen, and 42.2 percent of married women with no children worked for wages.⁴⁴ Additionally, in the 1960s and the 1970s women began to believe that they had more options, that they did not need to stay in unhappy marriages, and as a consequence the number of female-headed households increased. In 1960, 19.1 percent of households and by 1970 23.6 percent of households were headed by women.⁴⁵ At the same time, men were not taking on a significantly greater share of childcare, and neither was the government.⁴⁶ The increasing proportion of female-dominated households and women with children in the waged workforce laid the groundwork for labor feminists to prioritize the issues of working mothers.

In order to understand how the feminization of jobs happens in distinct ways, it is instructive to compare teaching and flight attendant work. Barry argues that the

⁴² Ibid., 177.

⁴³ Ibid., 193.

⁴⁴ Ibid., 195.

⁴⁵ Ibid., 239.

⁴⁶ Ibid., 197.

“wages of glamour,” defined as it was by an “idealized allure and domesticity,”⁴⁷ accrued to flight attendants, making the profession culturally attractive to young white women (the only women the airlines would hire until the civil rights and feminist challenges of the 1950s-1970s). However, these “wages of glamour” came at a cost. Barry argues, “Airlines considered stewardesses obsolete upon marriage or reaching their mid-thirties and offered them scant long-term benefits or promotional opportunities if they managed to stay for more than a few years.”⁴⁸ As representatives of glamour in the sky flight attendants often faced sexual harassment by male customers, pilots, and co-workers.⁴⁹ With a few exceptions, as Christine Reiko Yano demonstrates, women of color were almost entirely excluded from the profession, because they were supposedly unable to satisfy this idea of glamour.⁵⁰ Flight attendant work was higher-status public contact work reserved for white women, “while racially subordinate groups would be segregated in low-status, behind-the-scenes service jobs,” asserts Barry.⁵¹

The feminization and racialization of the flight attendant workforce share some similarities with the situation for teachers. The process of feminization of teaching began in the mid-nineteenth century when women began to outnumber men as teachers in the public schools. By 1900 women accounted for over two-thirds of

⁴⁷ Barry, *Femininity in Flight*, 37.

⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, 4.

⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, 5-7.

⁵⁰ Yano, *Airborne Dreams*.

⁵¹ Barry, *Femininity in Flight*, 12.

teachers, and by 1920 women held five out of every six teaching positions.⁵² The men who continued to teach mostly did so as high school teachers, while women worked as elementary school teachers. Like flight attendants, teachers in the twentieth-century worked in a high-status position, defined by their influence on children and their educational backgrounds (not by glamour). But like flight attendant work, teaching was low paid and there were few avenues for advancement; while women did most of the teaching, men were hired into higher-ranked and better-paid positions as principals and school superintendents.⁵³ Both flight attendant work and teaching were actively feminized because airlines and school districts could pay women less than men. Despite this, teaching, like flight attendant work, served as an avenue for social mobility for women. Marjorie Murphy calls teaching the “aristocracy of labor” for women.⁵⁴

The feminization of teaching was further justified by women’s alleged innate skills to care for and guide children. In other words, women’s supposedly maternal and nurturing nature helped them to mold the personalities of the children they taught.⁵⁵ Prior to the turn of the twentieth century when new educational requirements were introduced as requirements for teaching, writes Murphy, “deportment, moral

⁵² Jackie M. Blount, *Fit to Teach: Same-Sex Desire, Gender, and School Work in the Twentieth Century* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2005), 13.

⁵³ Marjorie Stern, “A Guide for AFT Members: Teacher Unions and Women’s Rights,” Stern Collection, part 2, folder 11: Women in Education Committee: Pamphlets, no date (ca. 1971-73), box 2; “CFT Women-In-Education Conference in L.A.,” *California Teacher* 25, no. 6, February, 1974, Arnold Collection.

⁵⁴ Murphy, *Blackboard Unions*, 4.

⁵⁵ Karen Marie Harbeck, *Gay and Lesbian Educators: Personal Freedoms, Public Constraints* (Malden, MA: Amethyst, 1997), 106.

character, social obedience, domestic virtue, and firm habits were virtues in teaching, whereas over exertion in academic subjects was sometimes actually frowned upon.”⁵⁶ These ideas of what made good teachers also derived from societal views about the natural intellectual differences between men and women. Women were allegedly limited intellectually, whereas men’s advanced intellects and proclivity for good business sense meant that they should work as principals and school superintendents overseeing the work of a largely female workforce.⁵⁷ Even after the introduction of educational requirements, the fact that women were supposed to be naturally gifted at caring for children contributed to the female-dominated composition of the teaching workforce in the elementary schools; the few men who worked as teachers taught at the more academically rigorous high schools.⁵⁸ After World War II, the proportion of women working as elementary school teachers remained constant, but improved access to educational opportunities brought by the G.I. Bill increased the number of men teaching in high schools, where they generally earned higher salaries than women.⁵⁹

Sexuality heavily shaped the feminization of teaching. Marriage restrictions were common in some women’s occupations, including for flight attendants and teachers. However, while female flight attendants could still be fired into the 1960s if they married, in the 1940s marriage restrictions for teachers largely eroded.⁶⁰ This

⁵⁶ Murphy, *Blackboard Unions*, 12.

⁵⁷ Harbeck, *Gay and Lesbian Educators*, 106.

⁵⁸ Blackwelder, *Now Hiring*, 50.

⁵⁹ Murphy, *Blackboard Unions*, 213.

⁶⁰ Harbeck, *Gay and Lesbian Educators*, 106.

marriage restriction existed because women were expected, upon marriage, to focus their lives on caring for their husbands and their children. The American Federation of Labor even argued in the early twentieth-century that a family wage earned by men would support women; teachers were not exempted.⁶¹ Because of this, prior to the 1940s the vast majority of women teachers were unmarried. In 1920, according to the U.S. census, 91 percent of women teachers were single, widowed, or divorced, though some women married in secret.⁶² As a result, the most numerous long-term teachers in the early twentieth-century were either single heterosexual women or lesbians.⁶³ Working as teachers was one avenue that allowed lesbians to become financially independent of men. As a result of the combination of the marriage restriction and the high-status of teaching, according to Blount, rather than being pitied some unmarried women actually were admired.⁶⁴

In the 1940s this all changed as school districts did away with marriage restrictions. One primary reason for the change was that fewer single women wanted to work as teachers. During World War II, many women left teaching to work in higher-paid factory jobs. Additionally, in the post-WWII period the number of pink-collar jobs expanded (particularly secretarial and clerical work). Women's experience during the war and the economic shift lifted women's expectations and their options

⁶¹ Murphy, *Blackboard Unions*, 71–72.

⁶² Blount, *Fit to Teach*, 159.

⁶³ Harbeck, *Gay and Lesbian Educators*, 169.

⁶⁴ Blount, *Fit to Teach*, 46; for historical context on marriage restrictions and women workers, see Lois Scharf, *To Work and to Wed: Female Employment, Feminism, and the Great Depression* (Westport: Greenwood Press, 1980).

with regard to waged labor.⁶⁵ In a report issued in 1940, the National Education Association's Committee on Tenure challenged the dismissal of married teachers as a violation of tenure rights. The report asserted that marriage restrictions were out of step with other countries, which, with the exception of Hitler's Germany, encouraged married women to work outside of the home. The NEA's report concluded, "if higher education necessarily involves celibacy or sterility, the seriousness of the situation for society cannot be exaggerated."⁶⁶ The 1940s clearly marked a major turning point in dominant views about the appropriateness of married women working for wages.

With the lifting of marriage restrictions and the dawn of the Cold War, schools scrutinized the sexuality and gender of teachers more closely. After World War II lesbian and gay teachers were dismissed in much larger numbers than they had been previously. In Florida in the late 1950s through the mid-1960s, as Stacy Braukman and Karen Graves have shown, gay and lesbian teachers were targeted *en masse*. Gay and lesbian teachers could not be allowed to continue teaching in the schools not only because they were supposed to serve as role models for children, but also because of an irrational fear that they would recruit children to homosexuality.⁶⁷

Class and race worked together to restrict the composition of the teaching workforce as well. In the early twentieth century, the introduction of new educational requirements to become a teacher restricted access to teaching to largely white,

⁶⁵ Blount, *Fit to Teach*, 76.

⁶⁶ Murphy, *Blackboard Unions*, 78.

⁶⁷ Karen Graves, *And They Were Wonderful Teachers: Florida's Purge of Gay and Lesbian Teachers* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2009), xvii. Also see Stacy Lorraine Braukman, *Communists and Perverts Under the Palms: The Johns Committee in Florida, 1956-1965* (Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 2012).

middle-class women. For the most part, white working-class women, as well as working-class women of color and immigrants, could neither afford to pay for an education, nor could they afford the time away from waged labor that pursuing an education required. Discrimination in educational institutions, moreover, meant women of color faced an added barrier to fulfilling the new educational requirements. Progressives in the early twentieth-century U.S. introduced Americanization into the public school systems, which required a new kind of teacher, one that could introduce immigrant children in particular to American culture and values. Murphy stresses, “Americanization required American teachers, not daughters of immigrants.”⁶⁸ Alongside restrictions on immigrant women becoming teachers, women of color were also generally barred from teaching white children, serving to racialize the teaching profession as white, with a few exceptions. Black women, for instance, could teach African American children in racially segregated schools. But the lower funding for black schools meant that proportionally fewer black women than white women could find work as teachers.⁶⁹ Other women of color, including Mexican and Mexican American women, had great difficulty finding work as teachers. In addition to outright discrimination, Blackwelder argues that the existence of legalized segregation actually meant that more black women found jobs as teachers than other women of color.^{70 71}

⁶⁸ Murphy, *Blackboard Unions*, 39.

⁶⁹ Blackwelder, *Now Hiring*, 70.

⁷⁰ *Ibid.*, 72.

⁷¹ *Ibid.*, 72; For more on the history of African American teachers, see David S. Cecelski, *Along Freedom Road: Hyde County, North Carolina and the Fate of Black Schools in the*

By the time the feminist movement took off in the early 1970s, occupational segregation by gender in teaching and in the workforce more generally was still pervasive. In 1971, one-third of women were employed as clerical workers, seventeen percent of women worked in the service sector (excluding domestic workers), 13 percent of women worked in factories, and only 14 percent of women were professional or technical workers, including 2 million teachers. Not only that, but in 1971 women made 59.5 cents for every dollar that men earned.⁷² Women, moreover, still occupied the vast majority of elementary school teaching positions, working under male supervisors, while just under half of teachers at the secondary level were women. Men also filled the majority of faculty positions at colleges and universities. This was the context for the emergence of labor feminism within the American

South (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1994); Adam Fairclough, *A Class of Their Own: Black Teachers in the Segregated South* (Cambridge: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2007); Michèle Foster, "Constancy, Connectedness, and Constraints in the Lives of African-American Teachers," *NWSA Journal* 3, no. 2 (Spring 1991): 233–61; Michèle Foster, *Black Teachers on Teaching* (New York: New Press, 1997); Michael Fultz, "African American Teachers in the South, 1890-1940: Powerlessness and the Ironies of Expectations and Protest," *History of Education Quarterly* 35, no. 4 (Winter 1995): 401–22; Darlene Clark Hine, *Speak Truth to Power: Black Professional Class in United States History* (Brooklyn, N.Y.: Carlson Pub, 1996); Mildred J. Hudson and Barbara J. Holmes, "Missing Teachers, Impaired Communities: The Unanticipated Consequences of *Brown v. Board of Education* on the African American Teaching Force at the Precollegiate Level," *The Journal of Negro Education* 63, no. 3 (Summer 1994): 388–93; Sonya Yvette Ramsey, *Reading, Writing, and Segregation: A Century of Black Women Teachers in Nashville* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2008); Barbara J. Shircliffe, *Desegregating Teachers: Contesting the Meaning of Equality of Educational Opportunity in the South Post Brown* (New York: Peter Lang, 2012); Vanessa Siddle Walker, *Their Highest Potential: An African American School Community in the Segregated South* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1996); Vanessa Siddle Walker, "African American Teaching in the South, 1940-1960," *American Educational Research Journal* 38, no. 4 (Winter 2001): 751–79.

⁷² Marjorie Stern, "Education and Employment," in "Women's Rights Report," *American Teacher*, [n.d.], Stern Collection, part 2, series 1, folder 15: Equal Rights Amendment: Clippings, 1970-1974", box 1.

Federation of Teachers. In an understated fashion, the AFT's Women's Rights Committee looked at these facts and remarked, "there is certainly discrimination somewhere."⁷³

Feminism in the Labor Movement in the 1970s

Feminists within the AFT who began to organize women's committees were responding to the pervasiveness of sexism in the teaching profession. Their organizing was also influenced by the feminist movement, as they drew inspiration from the earlier efforts of working-class women fighting gender inequity at work and in the labor movement. The larger feminist movement shaped the politics of labor feminism in the 1960s and 1970s, but labor feminism was also quite distinct. Labor feminists chose their workplaces and their unions as sites of struggle, and in the process formulated a unique working class-based feminism that emphasized working women's collective action in confrontation with male supremacy and employer power. As in the larger feminist movement, working women led the feminist challenge within the labor movement, but in contrast to many other feminist organizations at the time they did so in a mixed-gender setting. As they pushed male-dominated unions to take the cause of women's rights seriously, they sometimes faced outright hostility by the male leadership. But at other times they experienced a

⁷³ Marjorie Stern, "A Guide for AFT Members: Teacher Unions and Women's Rights," Stern Collection, part 2, folder 11: Women in Education Committee: Pamphlets, [n.d.] (ca. 1971-73), box 2.

sense of solidarity and responsiveness that made their unions powerful vehicles to advance the rights of working women.

Many women involved in the feminist movement of the 1960s and 1980s developed a critique of sexism through their activism in other movements. For example, women in the Student Non-Violent Organizing Committee, a civil rights organization, issued a position paper on women in the movement in 1964 critiquing the sexual division of labor within the organization, publicly challenging sexism within the movement.⁷⁴ Women in the New Left also called attention to male chauvinism within the Students for a Democratic Society in 1965 when SDS members Casey Hayden and Mary King issued the now famous statement, “Sex and Caste.”⁷⁵ Women often found themselves, despite years of involvement in the movement, performing the grunt labor (taking minutes, copying, making the coffee, etc.), while men often took leadership roles involving making political decisions and talking to the media. Other women who became active in the feminist movement drew on their previous organizing experiences within the labor movement for workers’ rights in general, as well as for the rights of women workers in particular.⁷⁶

In response to the sexism they experienced in society as well as in leftist political organizations and labor unions, women increasingly formed groups to fight specifically for women’s rights in the late 1960s. The formation of the more mainstream National Organization for Women in 1966 is often pointed to, but

⁷⁴ Clayborne Carson, *In Struggle: SNCC and the Black Awakening of the 1960s* (Cambridge, Mass: Harvard University Press, 1995), 147.

⁷⁵ Echols, *Daring to Be Bad*, 34.

⁷⁶ Barry, *Femininity in Flight*, 186–187.

women, with the help of some men, organized for the rights of welfare recipients in the welfare rights movement throughout the 1960s and into the 1970s, forming the National Welfare Rights Organization in 1966.⁷⁷ The welfare rights movement fought for the rights of people in poverty, who were disproportionately women and people of color. The movement not only represented the increased emphasis on economic justice within the civil rights movement and among Black Power activists, but it also could be considered part of the larger feminist and labor movements. Women in the welfare rights movement called attention to the value of their unwaged labor in the home, and their organizing for improved welfare translated into a demand for a guaranteed annual income.⁷⁸

Though resembling earlier efforts to confront sexism in U.S. society in their demand to end women's secondary status, the feminist movement of the 1960s and 1970s differed from earlier women's activism. Feminists in the new movement, according to Cobble, "demanded that sexual divisions give way as well to sexual hierarchies, that the political be redefined to include the personal and the sexual, that

⁷⁷ Annelise Orleck, *Storming Caesars Palace: How Black Mothers Fought Their Own War on Poverty* (Boston: Beacon Press, 2005), 98.

⁷⁸ Premilla Nadasen, *Welfare Warriors: The Welfare Rights Movement in the United States* (New York: Routledge, 2005), 39-40. For histories of the movement for welfare rights, also see Jennifer Frost, *An Interracial Movement of the Poor: Community Organizing and the New Left in the 1960s* (New York: New York University Press, 2001); Felicia Ann Kornbluh, *The Battle for Welfare Rights: Politics and Poverty in Modern America* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2007); Premilla Nadasen, *Rethinking the Welfare Rights Movement* (New York: Routledge, 2012); Annelise Orleck and Lisa Gayle Hazirjian, eds., *The War on Poverty: A New Grassroots History, 1964-1980* (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 2011); Frances Fox Piven, *Regulating the Poor: The Functions of Public Welfare*, updated ed. (New York: Vintage Books, 1993); Frances Fox Piven and Richard A. Cloward, *Poor People's Movements: Why They Succeed, How They Fail* (New York: Vintage books, 1979); Mary Eleanor Triece, *Tell It Like It Is: Women in the National Welfare Rights Movement* (Columbia: University of South Carolina Press, 2013).

men be confronted *directly* about their behavior at home as well as at work.”⁷⁹ The new feminist movement, moreover, had distinct political strands. According to Alice Echols, the “politico” feminists viewed sexism as an epiphenomenon of capitalism, believing that the end of capitalism would necessarily bring about women’s liberation; liberal feminists sought integration into mainstream society; radical feminists argued that women constituted a sex-class and that gender, rather than class, was the primary contradiction in society.⁸⁰ Black feminists, argues Kimberly Springer, were the “first to theorize and act upon the intersection of race, class, and gender.”⁸¹ Echols argues that after 1975 radical feminism was eclipsed by cultural feminism, which “turned away from opposing male supremacy to creating a female counterculture.”⁸² Consciousness-raising was a popular tool used among feminists in the late 1960s and 1970s; it involved women gathering in small groups to discuss the various ways they faced oppression in a patriarchal society. Hearing people’s experiences with sexism helped to raise the consciousness of women in the room. Consciousness-raising reflected a bottom-up ethos among feminists of the period because it emphasized that women’s personal experiences were key in understanding structures of oppression. Women did not need to rely on experts to tell them about their own oppression.⁸³

⁷⁹ Cobble, *The Other Women’s Movement*, 225.

⁸⁰ Echols, *Daring to Be Bad*, 3.

⁸¹ Springer, *Living for the Revolution*, 2.

⁸² Echols, *Daring to Be Bad*, 4–5.

⁸³ Kathie Sarachild, “Consciousness-Raising: A Radical Weapon,” *Feminist Revolution*, compiled by Redstockings (New York: Random House, 1978): 144-150.

Labor feminism in the late 1960s and 1970s grew out of earlier efforts by labor feminists to improve the conditions of women workers. Cobble elucidates the politics of labor feminists from the 1940s to the 1960s. While they challenged women's second-class status in the U.S. workforce, labor feminists in the 1940s through the early 1960s did not fundamentally challenge the sexual division of labor. Rather than questioning women's traditional role as caretakers or their responsibility for household labor, labor feminists in this period sought to make women's waged labor and responsibility in the home compatible by calling for publicly funded childcare as well as improved social benefits for working mothers, such as paid maternity leave and health insurance coverage inclusive of childbirth.⁸⁴ In the post-WWII period, labor feminists also fought for wage justice for women. They led campaigns to improve women's wages through collective bargaining, but also sought improved minimum wage statutes and equal pay protections.⁸⁵ They challenged the dismissal of women workers who became pregnant, arguing that pregnant women should have the right to transfer to another job if they so desired and that they should be provided with the necessary equipment and clothes to perform their job.⁸⁶

The organizing by labor feminists from the 1940s to the 1960s achieved many successes. By the 1940s, for example, marriage restrictions for working women were largely tossed out. The number of states with equal pay laws increased from just two

⁸⁴ Cobble, *The Other Women's Movement*, 123.

⁸⁵ *Ibid.*, 94.

⁸⁶ *Ibid.*, 127.

in 1940 to 22 in 1963.⁸⁷ The 1960s witnessed a dramatic increase in legislation improving the rights of working women. Feminist victories in the early to mid-1960s included the establishment by President John F. Kennedy of the Commission on the Status of Women in 1961 to assess women's status and needs, the passage of the Equal Pay Act in 1963, and the prohibition of sex discrimination in Title VII of the Civil Rights Act of 1964.⁸⁸ The Equal Pay Act of 1963, though inadequate to the task of equalizing pay between men and women in many ways, came about due to the efforts of labor feminists who had been fighting for equal pay for women for many years. Labor feminist Esther Peterson, in her position as head of the Women's Bureau and as Assistant Secretary of Labor to President Kennedy, helped to push for the enactment of the Equal Pay Act. Though the Equal Pay Act, an amendment to the Fair Labor Standards Act of 1938, exempted employers with fewer than twenty-five workers and provided for only a gradual elimination of unequal pay between men and women, it was nonetheless a major victory that came about in part due to the efforts of women active in the labor movement.⁸⁹

The inclusion of a prohibition on sex discrimination in employment in Title VII of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 was a major, if unexpected, event for the history of labor feminism in the 1960s. On February 8, 1964 Howard Smith, a conservative Democrat from Virginia, proposed an amendment to include "sex" in the list of prohibitions against discrimination in Title VII. While some supporters of the

⁸⁷ Deslippe, *Rights, Not Roses*, 44.

⁸⁸ Cobble, *The Other Women's Movement*, 145.

⁸⁹ *Ibid.*, 163–167.

inclusion of “sex” in the provisions of Title VII genuinely supported an end to gender-based discrimination at work, according to Cobble, others hoped that the inclusion of sex would damage the prospects of the passage of the Civil Rights Act in its entirety. After floor debate, the amendment succeeded, and despite fears to the contrary, the Civil Rights Act passed in 1964. Title VII of the Civil Rights Act now prohibited discrimination based on sex, race, ethnicity, religion, and national origin.⁹⁰ The law went into effect in 1965, and by August, 1967, according to Deslippe, working women had filed 2,500 sex discrimination complaints with the Equal Employment Opportunities Commission, against both their employers and their unions.⁹¹ In his study of the union movement and feminism, Deslippe argues that, “the massive number of Title VII-based complaints and lawsuits brought by rank-and-file workers against their unions and employers was key to the ascendancy of support for gender equality between 1964 and 1975.”⁹²

Though a boon for the feminist movement, Title VII of the Civil Rights Act had significant limitations. First and foremost, it had strong language on discrimination in employment and hiring but had weaker language on pay inequity.⁹³ The Equal Employment Opportunities Commission, established to enforce the law, had little actual enforcement power. According to Deslippe, the EEOC could receive complaints, investigate, issue findings, and seek voluntary settlement. The EEOC, in other words, did not have the direct power to compel either unions or employers to

⁹⁰ Ibid., 174-177.

⁹¹ Deslippe, *Rights, Not Roses*, 67.

⁹² Ibid., 175.

⁹³ Cobble, *The Other Women's Movement*, 177.

eradicate discrimination. The EEOC could persuade the Civil Rights Division of the Justice Department to pursue charges or advise complainants to pursue relief in federal court. Additionally, the EEOC was understaffed and lacked sufficient funding, resulting in a large backlog of discrimination complaints. By 1972, only about six percent of charges were resolved favorably.⁹⁴ The strength of the EEOC was enhanced somewhat in 1971 when Congress passed an amendment to Title VII allowing the EEOC to seek out and pursue suits on its own authority.⁹⁵ Title VII, moreover, did not apply to workers in state and local governments, and thus excluded college faculty and teachers at public schools.⁹⁶

The younger generation of labor feminists active in the late 1960s and 1970s saw that there was still much to be done to advance the rights of women workers, diverging in some important ways from the politics of earlier labor feminists. Legislation needed to be strengthened and actually enforced, while working women continued to face unequal working and living conditions compared to men. The labor feminists of the late 1960s and 1970s shared some similarities with the politics of earlier labor feminists, as they organized around issues like pay equity and childcare. At the same time, many women prioritized new issues, such as affirmative action and improved representation in union leadership. Larger political issues, including the Equal Rights Amendment (more on the history of labor's complex relationship to the

⁹⁴ Deslippe, *Rights, Not Roses*, 118.

⁹⁵ *Ibid.*, 129.

⁹⁶ CFT Resolution to Amend Title VII, 1971 California Federation of Teachers Convention, Stern Collection, part 2, series 1, folder 7: Conventions of the C.F.T: 1971, Drafts of Resolutions, box 1.

ERA later) and access to safe and legal abortions and widely available contraception, received attention by labor feminists. And in the late 1970s and 1980s unionists pointed to the persistence of a workforce segregated by gender and instead of only calling for equal pay for equal work now sought equal pay for work of comparable worth.⁹⁷

In the late 1960s and 1970s, a medley of labor feminist groups surfaced, with some officially affiliated with labor unions and others purposely independent of unions. In March, 1974 three thousand union women gathered in Chicago to form the Coalition of Labor Union Women (CLUW). Cobble explains that the founding of CLUW represented the “the realization of a long sought goal of labor feminists: the creation of a national organization of trade union women” rather than “the trickling down of feminist consciousness to working-class women.”⁹⁸ As an organization CLUW was formally affiliated with the AFL-CIO, and membership in CLUW was limited to current union members. Deslippe refers to CLUW as the “loyal opposition” within the AFL-CIO. “CLUW members,” asserts Deslippe, “supported a legislative program that reflected a social unionist commitment to gender equality without publicly embarrassing labor leaders.”⁹⁹ In addition to CLUW, labor feminists organized numerous conferences on working women within their own unions and state labor federations, a significant sign that the labor movement was becoming more responsive to the rights of women workers. For example, in 1973 in San Francisco,

⁹⁷ Cobble, *The Other Women's Movement*, 219.

⁹⁸ *Ibid.*, 202.

⁹⁹ Deslippe, *Rights, Not Roses*, 144; For more on CLUW, see Diane Balser, *Sisterhood & Solidarity: Feminism and Labor in Modern Times* (Boston, MA: South End Press, 1987).

the California Federation of Labor sponsored its first statewide conference on women's rights.¹⁰⁰

Working-class women also formed organizations independent of unions to advance their rights, which meant that they were free to organize and put forward a political message unrestrained by union leaders. For example, secretaries and clerical workers set up 9 to 5 in 1973 in Boston as a community organization that organized in opposition to the sexist treatment women experienced in office work. By the end of the 1970s 9 to 5 joined with eleven other groups in various cities, including Chicago, New York, and San Francisco, to form the National Association of Working Women, and in 1981 affiliated with the Service Employees International Union as SEIU Local 925.¹⁰¹ Earlier, inspired by both the civil rights and poor people's movements, household workers came together to form the National Committee of Household Employees in 1965. Women of color made up the vast majority of household workers.¹⁰² Responding in part to the eroticization of flight attendants, flight attendants formed Stewardesses for Women's Rights in 1972, attempting to redefine their image as safety professionals and challenge degrading working conditions.¹⁰³ These independent groups challenged the exploitation of women's bodies at the same time that they confronted the gendered construction of women's labor. Cobble argues,

¹⁰⁰ "300 Attend Conference on Women," *California Teacher* 24, no. 10, June/July, 1973, Jan Arnold Papers (hereafter Arnold Papers), folder: State Level (CFT), box: Arnold/CFT, Labor Archives and Research Center (hereafter San Francisco Labor Archives), San Francisco State University, San Francisco, CA.

¹⁰¹ Cobble, *The Other Women's Movement*, 212.

¹⁰² *Ibid.*, 200.

¹⁰³ Barry, *Femininity in Flight*, 189–190.

“in doing so, they expanded the vocabulary of workplace rights and helped redefine once again the meaning of discrimination.”¹⁰⁴

As an independent and politically radical organization of labor feminists based in California, Union Women’s Alliance to Gain Equality (Union WAGE) merits attention. The genesis for the formation of Union WAGE came out of a conversation between Jean Maddox and Anne Draper at a NOW-sponsored conference, called “Breaking the Shackles,” at UC Berkeley in March, 1971. The two acknowledged the lack of panels about working women, and within two weeks Joyce Maupin, Draper, and Maddox founded Union WAGE in San Francisco in 1971. Maddox served as president, Draper as Vice President, and Maupin as “resident writer and publicist,” according to Cobble.¹⁰⁵ The founders and many of the members of Union WAGE identified with the Socialist Left.¹⁰⁶ They confined the group’s membership to women, but men could become associate, non-voting members. Unlike CLUW, union membership was not a requirement for membership in Union WAGE. According to Rochelle Gatlin, Union WAGE “viewed itself as an organization that would infuse class consciousness into the women’s movement and feminism into the labor movement, joining and radicalizing both of them.”¹⁰⁷ From its founding, Union WAGE consisted of older women with long histories of involvement with the trade union movement who wanted to democratize and radicalize the labor movement, and

¹⁰⁴ Cobble, *The Other Women’s Movement*, 207.

¹⁰⁵ *Ibid.*, 194.

¹⁰⁶ Jan Arnold, Interview by Author, Oakland, California, September 13, 2013 (hereafter Arnold Interview). Arnold became president of Union WAGE in the latter half of the 1970s.

¹⁰⁷ Gatlin, “A ‘Society of Outsiders,’” 63.

younger, radical women who formed their politics primarily through the civil rights and women's movements.¹⁰⁸ In the early 1970s, Union WAGE organized in support of the "Labor ERA," the Labor Equal Rights Amendment, which called for preserving protective legislation for women by extending it to all workers. A high point for the group came in 1975 when it organized the West Coast Conference for Working Women (co-sponsored by two socialist-feminist groups, the San Francisco and Berkeley-Oakland Women's Unions). Over five hundred women attended to discuss affirmative action, women's caucuses, and unions.¹⁰⁹

Union WAGE's status as a radical outsider lacking official connection with the union movement freed it to act autonomously, but not without some complications. Many Union WAGE members, for instance, decided to become involved with the Coalition of Union Women chapter in San Francisco in 1975, leading to a split in Union WAGE. The split reflected many of Union WAGE's members' desire for a firmer connection with organized labor, while other members valued the freedom that came with independence. Gatlin remarks that the split produced a second stage in Union WAGE's history, "characterized by greater independence from and criticism of the trade union establishment, including CLUW, as well as more interest in women's issues not directly related to the workplace."¹¹⁰

One important way that Union WAGE contributed to union feminist ideas was through its newspaper, also called *Union WAGE*, issued on a bimonthly basis. In

¹⁰⁸ Ibid., 62.

¹⁰⁹ "We Lose WAGE", *Off Our Backs* 12, no. 8, August/September 1982.

¹¹⁰ Gatlin, "A 'Society of Outsiders,'" 65.

1979, complications again arose, when the Executive Board fired the newspaper editor, and decided that the organization should once again focus more narrowly on workers' issues rather than women's issues more generally. Union WAGE would only last a few more years, ceasing to exist in 1982.¹¹¹

Labor feminists active in the 1960s and 1970s drew on earlier efforts by labor feminists while also taking inspiration from the broader feminist movement. The new labor feminists continued to organize in support of issues promoted by earlier labor feminists (childcare and parental leave, for instance), but departed from earlier labor feminists by challenging the exploitation of women's bodies and confronting the sexual division of labor, both in the home and in the labor force. And in contrast to the larger feminist movement, the new labor feminism was a working class-based version of feminism that simultaneously challenged male supremacy and employer power. Working women helped to reshape social unionism in the late 1960s and 1970s by infusing it with a new feminist militancy. The broader labor feminist movement provided the context for the emergence of feminism with the American Federation of Teachers.

Feminism in the American Federation of Teachers

Women union activists established the national Ad Hoc Women's Rights Committee within the American Federation of Teachers in 1970, seeking to combine their dedication to both feminism and unionism. The ad hoc committee would soon

¹¹¹ "We Lose WAGE", *Off Our Backs* 12, no. 8, August/September 1982.

become permanent, concentrating its efforts on challenging sexist curricula, advancing the rights of women teachers on the job, and engaging the teachers' union in the broader feminist issues of the day. Women's caucuses in the AFT, at the national and state levels, were the primary organizing vehicles for the promotion of feminism. The AFT's Women's Rights Committee was comprised almost exclusively of women. Though some men played an obstructionist role and other men were supportive of women's rights within the union, it was women who shouldered the burden of addressing gender inequities within the union, at work, and in society.

Women first formed the AFT's Women's Rights committee at the AFT annual convention in Pittsburgh in 1970. Marjorie Stern, who would act as chairperson of the committee until 1974, remembers that she helped to form an ad hoc committee, assisted by "radicals" from her local (Local 61 in San Francisco), during the section of the convention led by the Civil Rights Committee. Most of the discussion at the convention centered on the "civil rights of black people," recalls Stern, prompting the women to push for women's rights as well.¹¹² Members of the ad hoc committee met three times during the convention to draft and discussion various resolutions on women's rights.¹¹³

When women tried to address sexism at the convention, some delegates pushed back, serving as evidence of the need for feminist organizing within the AFT.

¹¹² Marjorie Stern, Interview by Paula O'Connor, "Marjorie Stern Oral History," April 30-31, 1996, Transcript (hereafter Stern Oral History), American Federation of Teachers Oral Histories Collection, Reuther Library, 103, 108.

¹¹³ "Convention Acts on Women's Rights," *The American Teacher*, [n.d.], Stern Collection, part 1, folder 2: Women's Resolutions, 1970 AFT Convention (other resolutions to be found), box 2.

During the floor debates discussing resolutions on women's rights, some men responded with laughter and argued against passage of certain elements of the resolutions. For example, convention delegates argued against providing paid maternity leave. Stern recalls that Walter Tice, from the AFT local in Yonkers, New York, who had a broken leg at the time of the convention, "kept hobbling up to the mike" to speak against paid maternity leave. "He made fun of us. He just made us feel so small, and as I say we weren't prepared for this." Stern remembers that she went up to Tice during the convention and, facetiously (one presumes), threatened to break his other leg if he did that at the next convention. Apparently acknowledging the error of his ways, Stern recalls that at the following year's convention, in 1971, Tice approached her to brag about the "wonderful maternity leave provision" that his local successfully negotiated into their contract.¹¹⁴ Though the word 'paid' was deleted from the resolution on maternity leave proposed at the 1970 convention, according to the *American Teacher*, the official newspaper of the AFT, the resolution that did pass required that there would be "no loss of rights for teachers on maternity leave and that the length of maternity leave be decided upon between a woman and her physician."¹¹⁵

At the AFT convention in 1971, women faced further obstructionism by convention delegates when they brought up reproductive rights and the gender composition of AFT organizing staff. Convention delegates voted to delete part of a

¹¹⁴ Stern Oral History, 104.

¹¹⁵ "Convention Acts on Women's Rights," *The American Teacher*, [n.d.], Stern Collection, part 1, folder 2: Women's Resolutions, 1970 AFT Convention (other resolutions to be found), box 2.

resolution calling for “free, easily available, contraceptive information and materials for all those in schools (adult and student),” and “free abortions to all women requesting them (adult and student).” Speaking against the sections on reproductive rights, one male delegate remarked, “there’s enough for us to do in schools today,” and then went on to list various clerical tasks to buttress his argument that teachers should not be expected to provide contraceptive materials to students. Though several women spoke about the problems of pregnant girls, the convention delegates voted to delete these sections of the resolution.¹¹⁶ During the discussions on maternity leave, contraception and abortion, one delegate recalled, “I noticed those around me nudging each other so that any talk about pregnancy, maternity and so forth was treated as if someone was telling a dirty story. It was a puritanical reaction.”¹¹⁷

AFT Local 61, the teachers’ union in San Francisco, attempted to bring a resolution to the 1970 convention drawing attention to the fact that there were no female AFT organizers on staff at the national level conducting organizing and election campaigns, despite the majority status of women in teaching. The resolution said that the next five national representatives hired by the AFT must be women, three of whom “must be from a combination of minority group backgrounds.” The AFT’s Civil Rights Committee and the Ad Hoc Women’s Rights Committee drafted substitute resolutions taking out the quota, perhaps out of concern that it would doom the resolution to failure. At the time many labor activists, especially in more liberal unions like the AFT, were supportive of some affirmative action policies but were

¹¹⁶ Ibid.

¹¹⁷ Murphy, *Blackboard Unions*, 259.

ambivalent about or opposed to quotas.¹¹⁸ In place of the quotas, the substitute motion proposed by the Civil, Professional, and Democratic Rights Committee called for the AFT to “actively seek women including those of minority group background” to be hired and required that a report be given at the next convention about these efforts. The Ad Hoc Women’s Rights Committee’s substitute motion was a little firmer in its language; it called for the AFT to “openly publicize” administrative and national staffing positions and to “actively recruit” women, including those of minority group backgrounds, to fill the positions. It also required a progress report on January 30, 1971 in addition to a full report at the next convention. Despite the watering down of the original resolution, the substitute resolutions were ruled out of order because they supposedly duplicated language in an earlier resolution requiring the AFT’s Executive Council “to observe the equal employment opportunity provisions of the AFT constitution with respect to employment of national organizers.” On the contrary, the substitute motions contained stronger—and not duplicative—language, calling for the AFT to more actively recruit women to hire onto the national staff. It is thus unclear why the resolution was ruled out of order.¹¹⁹

To top it off, when two female AFT members from Los Angeles reported to delegates at the 1970 convention about being discriminated against at a local restaurant-bar, some delegates responded with dismissive laughter. Virginia

¹¹⁸ Dennis Deslippe, *Protesting Affirmative Action: The Struggle Over Equality after the Civil Rights Revolution* (Baltimore, Md: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2012).

¹¹⁹ “Proposed Resolution and Suggested Amendments on Hiring Women as National Staff Representatives – 1970 AFT Pittsburgh, Pa. Convention,” Stern Collection, part 1, folder 2: Women’s Resolutions, 1970 Convention (other resolutions to be found), box 2.

Mulrooney, from AFT Local 1021 in Los Angeles, reported on the convention floor that she and another woman from the same local, Jean Trapnell, were refused service at the bar of a local restaurant because the bar did not serve “unescorted ladies,” and then asked convention delegates to boycott the establishment. Of the response by convention delegates to this plea, Mulrooney related, “I was rather disappointed and surprised and confused that the reaction on the floor was laughter.”¹²⁰

It is also important to note that the convention did pass resolutions supportive of women’s rights. United Federation of Teachers Local 2, the AFT local in New York City, brought one resolution which called for the establishment of “day care centers so that women teachers may continue in their profession.” The same resolution resolved “that discriminatory class-room material be eliminated, that lesson plans on the history of women’s rights movement and suffrage be provided.” Convention delegates passed a second resolution brought by AFT Local 6 from Washington, resolving that the AFT support the Equal Rights Amendment and “the struggle for the continuance of protective-rights labor laws, and their extension to *all* workers, female and male.” This resolution also resolved that the AFT follow the equal employment opportunity provisions of the AFT’s constitution in its hiring of national organizers.¹²¹ The support given to the ERA in 1970 was a departure from the stance in opposition to the ERA by much of the labor movement. Moreover, the fact that the AFT convention went on record in 1970—during its first substantive

¹²⁰ “Convention Acts on Women’s Rights,” *The American Teacher*, [n.d.], Stern Collection, part 1, folder 2: Women’s Resolutions, 1970 AFT Convention (other resolutions to be found), box 2.

¹²¹ *Ibid.*

conversation about women's rights—calling for the elimination of sexist curricula in the schools signifies that feminists in the AFT were not only concerned about the rights of women on the job, but also, as teachers, addressed the needs of their students at the same time. The resolutions that did pass at the 1970 AFT convention reflect the relatively progressive politics of the AFT with regard to women's rights, while some decisions taken by the delegates regarding paid maternity leave, reproductive rights, and the gender composition of paid staff indicated that the feminist push within the union was much needed.

The ad hoc committee within the AFT became the permanent Women's Rights Committee in 1971, with Stern, from Local 61 in San Francisco, playing an influential role in its formative years. As chairperson of the Ad Hoc Committee, one of the first tasks Stern performed in November, 1970 was to write to AFT President David Selden with recommendations on the implementation of the resolutions passed at the AFT Convention in Pittsburgh. Stern suggested that Selden write to all AFT locals that contract negotiations should include women's rights, in alignment with the resolutions passed at the convention. Importantly, despite the fact that the resolution on the hiring of women as national AFT organizers was ruled out of order at the 1970 convention, Stern encouraged Selden to not only "consider the employment of women as national staff," but also to "encourage experienced, well qualified AFT women to apply for such jobs." Furthermore, Stern requested information necessary for hiring more women as national AFT staff, including job descriptions and qualifications for each job, and the national office's "plan or program for recruitment,

including recruitment among racial or cultural minority groups.” Stern also requested information pertaining to a “training program for new recruits or in-service training for advancement,” to assure that more women are actually provided with the training required for staff positions.¹²²

Then in January, 1971 the AFT Executive Board established the AFT’s Women’s Rights Committee as a subcommittee of the Civil Rights Committee to help to implement the resolutions passed at the 1970 convention, and “collect and channel information affecting women’s rights and sex discrimination in education.” Stern and Rosa McGhee, AFT National Vice President from Chattanooga, Tennessee, who was also a member of the AFT’s Civil Rights Committee, were appointed to chair the committee. The initial term of the Women’s Rights Committee was aligned with the term of the current Executive Council or until the new Executive Council convened in 1972.¹²³ The Women’s Rights Committee would become independent of the Civil Rights Committee and permanent at the AFT’s Convention in 1972.¹²⁴ The AFT Executive Council appointed a total of seven people as members of the committee, from five of the AFT’s organizing regions, with the exception of the South, and representing all levels of education, chosen, according to Stern, “for their interest and commitment to unionism and feminism.”

¹²² Marjorie Stern to David Selden, November 15, 1970, Stern Collection, part 1, folder 1: Ad Hoc Committee for Women’s Rights, 1970 AFT Convention, Pittsburgh, box 2.

¹²³ “Women’s Rights Committee Appointed by Executive Council,” Stern Collection, part 1, folder 3: Women’s Rights Committee, proceedings, recommendations, notes, 1971-74, box 2.

¹²⁴ No Author (likely Marjorie Stern), Summary of Women’s Rights Committee Work, Stern Collection, part 2, folder 12: Women’s Rights Committee: Research papers and notes, 1972-73, box 2.

Though the AFT Women's Rights Committee was limited in its capacity to advance feminism within the union, it nonetheless was able to make several significant changes during the first half of the 1970s. Stern noted, a "a national committee living so far apart and composed of full-time classroom teachers and organizers can only stimulate, communicate, and—by AFT Constitution—recommend." Despite these limitations, in a review of organizing for women's rights in the AFT she wrote in 1973, Stern argues that the Women's Rights Committee was nonetheless able to successfully achieve several of its goals in its first couple of years of existence. These include the provision of day care at the AFT's 1972 convention and a separate women's rights committee ("instead of the whole Civil Rights Committee") at the 1972 convention to consider convention resolutions. The AFT's Women's Rights Committee also organized "an experimental regional conference on women in education" in Detroit in 1972, with 12 states represented and over a hundred participants. At least partially as a result of the Women in Education conference in Detroit, women established a plethora of women's rights committees within the AFT at both the state and local levels, with California being one of six states where a state-level women's rights committee was formed.¹²⁵

During the first half of the 1970s the AFT Women's Rights Committee sought to thoroughly integrate feminism into the AFT's organizing. The AFT Women's Rights Committee provided resources on feminist organizing to state federations and

¹²⁵ Marjorie Stern, "An Insider's View of the Teachers' Union and Women's Rights," *The Urban Review*, 1973 6, Nos. 5-6 (double issue), Stern Collection, part 2, folder 11: Women in Education Committee: Pamphlets, [n.d.] (ca. 1971-73), box 2.

local unions within the AFT on such topics as organizing local women's rights caucuses, challenging sexist curricula, and incorporating women's rights into contract bargaining. In a letter to AFT President David Selden on October 8, 1973, Stern wrote that one key aspect of the committee's organizing was "informing locals, both those which are bargaining agents and those which are not, about contract items, statistics, and legislation affecting women workers." The AFT Women's Rights Committee also made sure childcare was provided for delegates to AFT conventions in the early to mid-1970s, helping to facilitate increased participation by women union activists with children. According to Stern, members of the AFT Women's Rights Committee conducted educational research, "preparing curricula and lesson plans; informing about women's studies programs; suggesting curricula for educational training institutions and human relations workshops for teachers; investigating the socialization of girls; [and providing information about] the history of women in the labor movement."¹²⁶

One important way that the AFT Women's Rights Committee, considering its limited capacity, sought to reach a broad audience within the union was to organize conferences and workshops on women's rights, regionally and nationally. Additionally, the AFT Women's Rights Committee organized to include workshops and presentations on women's rights at national AFT conventions and other AFT meetings as a way to reach AFT activists not as inclined to attend conferences

¹²⁶ Marjorie Stern, Chairwoman Women's Rights Committee, to David Selden, President, and Members of the Committee on Human Rights and Community Relations, October 8, 1973, Stern Collection, part 2, folder 12: Women's Rights Committee: Research Papers and Notes, 1972-73, box 2.

specifically on women's rights. The Women in Education conference held in Detroit in May of 1972 was the first national conference organized by the AFT Women's Rights Committee. Over a hundred people (mostly women) attended the conference, learning about such topics as "changing sexist practices in school and classroom, developing non-discriminatory contract items, encouraging the participation of women in local leadership roles, and determining and eliminating sexist curricular materials."¹²⁷ Speaking at the conference, AFT President Selden spoke of his own stereotype that men were easier to organize into the AFT than were women, arguing that "the battle within the AFT for equality is an old one...this meeting is a sign that we live in times of great social change." Selden also paid tribute in his speech to Stern's commitment to advancing the cause of women within the AFT for the past several years. Another man speaking at the conference, Patrick Daly, an AFT Vice President from Michigan, "welcomed the educators to the Saturday evening session and told them that 'in your efforts to liberate women, I hope you try to liberate us too—the men.'" ¹²⁸ This quote is telling. Daly puts the onus on women to advocate for women's liberation, reflecting most men's hands-off approach to the struggle for women's rights within the AFT. Despite the rhetorical support for women's rights by Selden and Daly at the Women in Education Conference in 1972, it was indeed

¹²⁷ No Author (likely Marjorie Stern), "Summary of AFT Women's Rights Committee Work," Stern Collection, part 2, folder 12: Women's Rights Committee: Research Papers and Notes, 1972-73, box 2.

¹²⁸ "AFT Women's Rights Committee Holds First National Assembly," *The United Teacher*, June 11, 1972, Stern Collection, part 1, series 2, folder 8: Women in Education Conference, clippings, box 2.

women who shouldered the burden of advancing feminism within the teachers' union, and the labor movement more broadly.

Though the Women in Education Conference was a major step in the advancement of women's rights within the AFT, it was not without its problems, particularly with regard to race. Rosa McGhee, member of the AFT Women's Rights Committee and AFT Vice President, criticized a historical slide on women's struggle for equality, charging it with "racist overtones" for excluding the contributions of black women liberators. McGhee remarked, "the black woman has made definite contributions to her race and to her country," naming several black women who should be highlighted for their important role in U.S. history (women like Harriet Tubman, Mary McLeod Bethune, Sojourner Truth, and educator Charlotte Hawkins Brown).¹²⁹

The AFT Women's Rights Committee planned a variety of conferences on women's rights. In May of 1973, for example, the Committee organized the Women in Higher Education conference in Boston, which included workshops on a variety of issues affecting women faculty members; these include affirmative action in higher education, parental leave and the provision of childcare, women's studies, and equal pay.¹³⁰ During the summer of 1973, in order to increase accessibility and attract more AFT members, the Women's Rights Committee organized regional conferences

¹²⁹ Ibid.

¹³⁰ Program for Women in Higher Education Conference, Stern Collection, part 1, folder 14: Women and Higher Education Conference May 11-13, 1973, Boston (conference publications to be found), box 2.

throughout the country on women's rights.¹³¹ Additionally, the committee decided at a meeting in October, 1973, "that all AFT regional conferences and workshops contain a session on women's rights, and that these be integrated into general plenary sessions conducted in whole or part by a member of the Women's Rights Committee from that region."¹³² The Women's Rights Committee did not have the immediate authority to implement this decision, though it appears as if the committee was able to incorporate women's rights into many AFT conventions and conferences in the early to mid-1970s. For instance, women's rights were on the agenda twice for the AFT's QuEST (Quality Educational Standards in Teaching) Consortium gathering in 1973, including one session on women's studies.¹³³

Female AFT members from California played a prominent role in feminist politics within the AFT at the national level. First and foremost, Marjorie Stern deserves special attention. From AFT Local 61 in San Francisco, Stern helped to form and then chair the AFT Women's Rights Committee from 1970 to 1974. She was also very active in the California Federation of Teacher's Women in Education Committee throughout the 1970s.

Stern was born of Jewish parents in 1919. Her mother died during that year's Influenza epidemic, just four months after Stern's birth. After her mother's death,

¹³¹ Draft Program for Summer Workshops, Summer 1973, Stern Collection, part 1, folder 17: AFT Summer Workshops, 1973, box 2.

¹³² Recommendations of Women's Rights Committee, Meeting in New York City, October 27, 1973, Stern Collection, part 1, folder 3: women's rights committee, proceedings, recommendations, notes, 1971-74, box 3.

¹³³ Marjorie Stern to Members of the Women's Rights Committee, January 19, 1973, Stern Collection, part 1, folder 3: Women's Rights Committee, Proceedings, Recommendations, Notes, 1971-74, box 3.

Stern lived with foster parents; her foster father was Irish-Catholic and her foster mother was Norwegian-Lutheran.¹³⁴ When he remarried, Stern's father brought the family back together—including her two brothers, one of which was six years older and the other one and a half years older than Stern—when Marjorie was twelve years old. When the family came back together again, Stern remembers that it felt as if she, her father, and her brothers were all strangers to each other.¹³⁵ She met Charles Stern, who she married in 1939 when she was twenty, and had four children with him. Thirty years later, she and her husband divorced.¹³⁶ Stern did not go to college until she was 35. Though at first she wanted to become a social worker, she decided to become a teacher, becoming involved in the AFT. Her involvement in the teachers' union in San Francisco seemed to have accelerated after she attended the AFT convention in 1964 as a delegate. She went on to be elected to the union's executive committee and also became the first woman on the local's negotiating team.¹³⁷ Stern recalls that during this period she was “like a silent” partner on the executive board. As the local's secretary, she hardly spoke: “I was writing down everybody's wise and foolish motions...and so I didn't speak out.”¹³⁸

It is important to note that Stern became involved in the union's Progressive Caucus in 1964 after meeting Jim Ballard, the president of the San Francisco

¹³⁴ Stern Oral History, 2-3.

¹³⁵ Ibid., 9.

¹³⁶ Ibid., 20-26.

¹³⁷ Ibid., 56-73

¹³⁸ Ibid., 76-77.

Federation of Teachers, AFT Local 61.¹³⁹ The Progressive Caucus, comprised as it was of most of the union's leadership at the national and state levels, was the dominant political caucus within the union. Stern's involvement in the Progressive Caucus was likely one reason why she was chosen to be the first chair of the Women's Rights Committee in 1970. Her politics and her loyalties were thought to be in alignment with the rest of the union leadership. The way Stern discusses both her involvement in the Progressive Caucus and AFT members active in opposition caucuses sheds light on her union politics; for instance, her references to union reformers in the union were somewhat dismissive, though not entirely unfriendly, indicating a somewhat mixed perspective toward people not in the leadership. Stern refers to AFT members in the mid- to late-1960s: "Then there was this little young Turk group that my friend Luisa came in and broke off, and they harassed Jim [Ballard, AFT Local 61 president,] and us for several years afterward, but they were good union people. They were the ones that always wanted to go on strike, go on strike, go on strike."¹⁴⁰ In the context of talking about a teachers' strike in San Francisco in 1968, she declares, "by this time the caucus opposition had dropped off to nothing but some crazy radicals."¹⁴¹ Her use of the words "harassed" and "crazy radicals" perhaps reflects her alignment with the liberal union leadership in contrast to rank-and-file radicals who wanted to "go on strike" all of the time.

¹³⁹ Ibid., 56-58.

¹⁴⁰ Ibid., 62.

¹⁴¹ Ibid., 82.

As an advocate of women's rights in a male-dominated union (and a male-dominated Progressive Caucus), however, Stern could relate to AFT activists critical of the AFT leadership. Talking about the formation of the Ad Hoc Women's Rights Committee at the 1970 AFT convention, for instance, Stern recalled, "I formed a temporary women's caucus, sort of goaded in the back and assisted by some of the women radicals from my local. But I felt their issues were good...even though they were radical."¹⁴² Though the AFT's Women's Rights Caucus was formally affiliated with the union, and Stern was a member of the Progressive Caucus, her experiences with feminist organizing in the union made her at least somewhat critical when the union leadership was intransigent on women's issues. Prior to forming the AFT Women's Rights Caucus, Stern became involved in an attempt to establish a San Francisco-based commission on the status of women, "much to the derision of my executive board," she asserted. And at the 1970 AFT convention, Walter Tice, who repeatedly spoke in opposition to paid maternity leave, was somebody Stern knew because they were both involved in the Progressive Caucus. At the same time, however, her allegiance to the Progressive Caucus made it at first difficult for her to imagine forming a women's rights committee. Though Stern "could not see running women's rights into a fully-formed women's caucus in competition with the Progressive Caucus," she soon came around and played a major leading role in the women's caucuses in the AFT and in the California Federation of Teachers.¹⁴³

¹⁴² Ibid., 103.

¹⁴³ Ibid., 108.

Other women from California—most of whom appear to be white—also stand out as advocates for women’s rights at the AFT’s convention in 1970. Virginia Mulrooney and Jean Trapnell, both from AFT Local 1021 in Los Angeles, were the two women mentioned above who spoke out on the AFT convention floor urging delegates to boycott a local restaurant-bar for refusing them service on account of their gender. Alberta Maged of Local 61 in San Francisco spoke out about the need to provide contraceptive information in the schools.¹⁴⁴ Local 61 from San Francisco was the local that brought the resolution mandating the hiring of more women onto the AFT’s national staff as organizers, which was ultimately ruled out of order. Women union activists from California, then, played a significant role in the formative years of feminist organizing within the AFT.

The AFT in California, particularly the AFT local in San Francisco, under the leadership of Stern, continued to play a significant role in advancing feminist politics within the AFT at the national level in the early 1970s. For example, the Executive Board of the San Francisco Federation of Teachers (SFFT), AFT Local 61, voted to send six resolutions on women’s rights to the 1971 AFT convention. These included resolutions to provide free contraceptive information in the schools; a resolution on the Equal Rights Amendment and Protective Legislation; one supporting paid maternity leave; a resolution supporting the power of the Equal Employment Opportunities Commission to enforce the Civil Rights Act of 1964; a resolution about covering teachers in Title VII of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 (they were specifically

¹⁴⁴ Murphy, *Blackboard Unions*, 160.

excluded); and the provision of childcare centers and early childhood education programs.¹⁴⁵ The fact that the San Francisco Federation of Teachers, AFT Local 61 was pushing for paid maternity leave and the provision of contraceptive information, although the previous year's convention specifically voted these two issues down, points to the progressive role that Local 61 played in feminist politics at the national level within the AFT.

The AFT Women's Rights Committee, first formed in 1970 at the union's national convention in Pittsburgh, thus served as a catalyst for feminist organizing nationally, as well as at state and local levels. The national committee, though it had a limited capacity, organized regional and national conferences on women's rights, provided informational pamphlets on a range of topics (from challenging sexist curricula to negotiating about women's rights), and successfully integrated feminism into AFT conventions, workshops, and meetings not specifically about women's rights. Women from California, particularly Stern, played a formative role in this organizing at the national level. Stern helped to found the AFT Women's Rights Committee, serving as chair from 1970 until 1974. Stern resigned as chair in 1974 when Albert Shanker was elected president of the American Federation of Teachers, replacing incumbent and former political ally David Selden in a contested election. In an interview, Stern explained her resignation, "I resigned because I felt that Al Shanker would want to appoint his own chair as a new president, and I thought that

¹⁴⁵ San Francisco Federation of Teachers, AFT Local 61, Executive Board Minutes, June 21, 1971, Arnold Collection, folder: 1970-71-AFT, box: Arnold/CFT.

was only right.”¹⁴⁶ According to historian Marjorie Murphy, Stern was also a support of Selden’s bid to be re-elected president of the AFT, perhaps also contributing to her decision to resign.¹⁴⁷ After she resigned, Stern persisted in her efforts to bring feminism into the AFT, this time by concentrating on teacher unionism and feminism in California.

The Women in Education Committee, California Federation of Teachers

The AFT’s Women’s Rights Committee helped to catalyze feminist organizing in state federations and AFT locals across the country, including in California. In 1972, feminist union activists established the Women in Education Committee, affiliated with the California Federation of Teachers, to advance the rights of women teachers, eradicate sexist curricula, and engage the teachers’ union in California in the broader feminist movement. Feminist organizing in the CFT coincided with the union’s efforts to, first, establish the legal right to collective bargaining for teachers and other public employees in California, and, second, once this right was won in 1975, a race to unionize teachers across the state in competition with the National Education Association. This flurry of organizing in the 1970s was intense; many women within the CFT were helping to unionize teachers at their own schools. Feminists within the CFT were advancing feminist politics at an opportune and formative moment in the history of teacher unionism in California. They integrated women’s issues into the first collective bargaining agreements for teachers.

¹⁴⁶ Stern Oral History, 106.

¹⁴⁷ Murphy, *Blackboard Unions*, 260.

Feminists also helped to infuse the CFT's unionism with a new feminist militancy, influenced by the broader feminist movement. At the same time, when the AFT lost elections to the NEA in the late 1970s, the total AFT membership in California declined by nearly one third. Feminists within the CFT, then, were either confined to organizing where the AFT won union elections, or they had to make the choice to become active in their NEA local after the AFT lost the union representation election. CFT Women in Education Committee leader Gretchen Mackler, for example, became involved in the Alameda Education Association when the AFT lost the union election in the Alameda School District in 1975.¹⁴⁸

The Women in Education Committee was structurally quite different from the AFT's Women's Rights Committee. Founded at the California Federation of Teachers convention in May, 1972, the Women in Education was comprised of sixteen members initially, while the AFT Women's Rights Committee had seven members. Additionally, while the members of the AFT's Women's Rights Committee were appointed, the delegates at the CFT conventions elected the members of the Women in Education Committee biannually. Additionally, the women who made up the CFT's Women in Education Committee were largely involved in their local unions, both as rank-and-file union activists and locally based elected leaders. The members of the Women in Education Committee elected Wanda Faust, from the Poway Federation of Teachers, as its first chairperson. Various levels of education

¹⁴⁸ Gretchen Lipow, Interview by Author, Alameda, CA, September 19, 2013 (hereafter Lipow Interview). Gretchen Lipow used to go by Gretchen Mackler during her involvement in the CFT's Women in Education Committee in the 1970s.

were represented on the committee, including early childhood education, elementary schools, jr. high, high schools, community colleges, the state colleges, and universities.¹⁴⁹ Like the AFT Women's Rights Committee, initially the Women in Education Committee consisted only of women. The fact that the Women in Education committee was comprised of so many more people than the AFT Women's Rights Committee, who were from a cross section of educational levels, undoubtedly both increased the capacity and reach of the Women in Education Committee.

Over the course of the 1970s, the structure of the Women in Education Committee changed slightly. By 1977, the number of members on the committee went from sixteen to 20, for instance.¹⁵⁰ It is unclear when paraprofessionals—who were educational workers other than teachers, such as teachers' aides and classroom assistants—gained representation on the Women in Education Committee, but by June, 1975, Linda J. Cook, from Local 61 in San Francisco, and Susan G. Hoyo, from AFT Local 2317 in Cerritos, served as the paraprofessional representatives.¹⁵¹ According to Fred Glass, paraprofessionals became the first non-teacher bargaining unit within the CFT in 1977.¹⁵² In October, 1975, the Women in Education Committee discussed restructuring the committee to establish northern and southern regional sections, each with its own chair; by 1977 (and likely earlier) the change had

¹⁴⁹ "CFT Women's Committee Meets Next Month," *California Teacher* 23, no. 10, June, 1972, Arnold Collection, folder: CFT, 1971-72, box: Arnold/CFT.

¹⁵⁰ Marjorie Stern to Catherine C. Sturrock, June 15, 1977, Stern Collection, part 2, series 3, folder 17: Correspondence: CFT Women in Education, 1977 (Jan. – July), box 5.

¹⁵¹ Membership list for CFT's Women in Education Committee, June, 1975, Stern Collection, part 2, folder 7: Women in Education Committee: Membership lists, 1972-1978, box 2.

¹⁵² Glass, *A History of the California Federation of Teachers, 1919-1989*, 35.

gone into effect.¹⁵³ In 1977 Gretchen Mackler was the chair for the north, and Estelle Ricketson was the chair for the south.¹⁵⁴ In November, 1975, the CFT Executive Board decided to make the chair of the Women in Education Committee an ex-officio member of the Executive Board.¹⁵⁵

The makeup of the Women in Education Committee and the person holding the position of chair changed over the course of the 1970s as well, though one constant was the fact that women appeared to make up nearly the entire membership throughout the 1970s. The one exception to this rule was the presence of Robert Holden as Secretary from 1975 to 1977. Holden came from AFT Local 1934, a community college local in San Diego.¹⁵⁶ The presence of one man on the committee is the exception that proves the rule—the fact that women comprised the membership of the CFT’s Women in Education Committee lends further credence to the argument that women shouldered the responsibility for advancing women’s rights within the teachers’ union.

The topics discussed at the first meeting of the Women in Education Committee on July 22, 1972 provide a sense of the committee’s priorities. Educating

¹⁵³ Gretchen Mackler to Women in Education Committee Members, September 26, 1975, Stern Collection, part 2, series 3, folder 15: Correspondence: CFT Women in Education Committee, 1974-78, box 5.

¹⁵⁴ CFT Women in Education Committee Ballot Results, November 8, 1977, Marie-Whipp, Secretary-Treasurer, CFT to CFT Women in Education Committee, Stern Collection.

¹⁵⁵ Marie Whipp, Secretary-Treasurer of CFT to Marjorie Stern, Chair of the Women in Education Committee, November 4, 1975, Stern Collection, part 2, series 3, folder 15: Correspondence: CFT Women in Education Committee, 1974-78, box 5.

¹⁵⁶ *Ibid.*; Women in Education Membership List, April 1976, Stern Collection, part 2, series 3, folder 16: Correspondence: CFT Women in Education, box 5.; CFT Women in Education Committee Minutes, December 3, 1977, Stern Collection, part 2, folder 8: Women in Education Committee: Minutes and notes, 1974-77, box 2.

union activists about women's issues was a significant component of the committee's work. Those present at the meeting discussed the possibility of dedicating a column to women's issues in the CFT's newspaper, *The California Teacher*, as well as the distribution of information to AFT locals throughout California. Negotiating priorities, particularly parental leave, were also an important topics. Curricular matters were also discussed; Pat Stanyo, from AFT Local 1021 in Los Angeles, volunteered to coordinate the committee's work around women's studies, while Wanda Faust volunteered to coordinate representations of women in textbooks. Gretchen Mackler and Virginia Mulrooney (the woman who spoke out against sexism at the local bar at the AFT Convention in Pittsburgh in 1970) volunteered to work on the issue of establishing women's committees in local unions. Lastly, at this first meeting, the Women in Education Committee discussed planning workshops on women's rights in southern and northern California in October, 1972.¹⁵⁷

Like the AFT Women's Rights Committee at the national level, the CFT's Women in Education Committee concentrated a significant portion of its energies on organizing conferences and workshops in order to educate and train AFT members in women's rights. One of the first projects of the committee was to organize two regional conferences on women's rights in October, 1972, one in Los Angeles and the other in Berkeley. Wanda Faust and Gretchen Mackler reported on the Equal Rights Amendment, while Mary Bergan, the CFT lobbyist, discussed lobbying against

¹⁵⁷ CFT Women's Rights in Education Committee, July 22, 1972, Meeting Minutes, Stern Collection, part 1, series 2, folder 6: Committee on Women's Rights in Education, California Federation of Teachers 1972, correspondence, newsletters, box 3.

sexism in textbooks. Judy Bodenhausen, CFT Vice President, discussed model maternity leave provisions that the Berkeley AFT presented to the school board. In Berkeley, Sandra Mack, a CFT Vice President from San Francisco, “discussed the double discrimination of racism and sexism in the schools.”¹⁵⁸ The Women in Education Committee continued to hold conferences and workshops specifically on women’s rights, but also held workshops at general CFT conventions and meetings. For instance, at the May 1972 CFT convention in San Diego, the Women in Education committee led a workshop, also called “Women’s Rights in Education,” with Wanda Faust serving as the discussion leader, and Stern, Virginia Mulrooney, Gretchen Mackler (Alameda, AFT Local 1528 and member of Union WAGE), and Brenda Andrews (Vice President of AFT Local 1891, Colson-Cordova) as the discussants.¹⁵⁹

Feminist Organizing at Work

The workplace-based organizing by feminists in the American Federation of Teachers is one significant way that labor feminists distinguished themselves from the broader feminist movement in the 1970s. The Women in Education Committee within the CFT sought to improve the rights of women teachers at work; members of the committee, in particular, encouraged AFT locals to incorporate women’s issues

¹⁵⁸ “First Women’s-Rights Conferences Held in Los Angeles and Berkeley,” *California Teacher* 24, no. 3, November 1972, Arnold Collection, folder: State Level (CFT), 1972-73, box: Arnold/CFT.

¹⁵⁹ California Federation of Teachers, Convention Program, San Diego, California, May 1972, Arnold Collection, folder: CFT Convention, 1972, box: Arnold/CFT.

into collective bargaining. These issues included equity between women and men in salaries, hiring and promotion, and fringe benefits (e.g. retirement and health benefits). They organized for access to quality childcare and parental leave. They also confronted sexist practices in education, from sexist curriculum to sex-tracking in school counseling.

California's 1975 Rodda Act, the Educational Employment Relations Act, empowered and simultaneously limited feminist organizing within the AFT. The act finally gave teachers in the public schools and community colleges the right to collective bargaining, setting off a substantial campaign to unionize teachers across California. Prior to the Rodda Act, under the Winton Act, which went into effect in 1965, teachers' unions in California only had the right meet and confer with schools, not serve as the exclusive bargaining agent for teachers. This system only provided teachers with the legal right to have their unions recognized by and to meet with school districts. Recommendations could be forwarded to the school board, which was under no legal obligation to enact the recommendations.¹⁶⁰ The long-awaited Rodda Act repealed the Winton Act, giving certified classified employees from kindergarten to the community colleges, including teachers, the right to be represented for the purposes of collective bargaining. The Rodda Act also limited the scope of bargaining to the terms and conditions of employment (e.g. benefits, wages,

¹⁶⁰ Carol A. Ventrillo, Chapter 6. "Collective Bargaining in California's Public Sector," in Joyce M. Najita and James L. Stern, eds., *Collective Bargaining in the Public Sector: The Experience of Eight States* (Armonk, N.Y.: M.E. Sharpe, 2001), 141.

etc.), and only provided unions the right to consult on educational objectives, including curriculum.¹⁶¹

With collective bargaining, feminists were able to demand the formal inclusion of women's issues into union contracts, a key aspect of their organizing. At the same time, however, the Rodda Acts relegated feminists' struggle to confront sexist curriculum to the same arena as before—organizing outside of collective bargaining to pressure the schools and the state to do away with sexist curricula. Gretchen Lipow (then Mackler), member of the Women in Education Committee since its founding in 1972 and later chair of the committee, remembers her disappointment in the exclusion of curricular matters from the Rodda Act.¹⁶² Additionally, the Rodda Act specifically excluded public universities in California from representation. As a result, feminists within the CFT could not bargain over women's issues at the University of California and the California State University system.¹⁶³

The unionization campaign in the late 1970s resulting from the passage of the Rodda Act required an enormous commitment in time and energy from AFT activists, leadership, and staff, including from many of the activists in the CFT's Women in Education Committee. In 1977, for instance, Stern wrote to the members of the Women in Education Committee, "you are probably too busy working for your local's victory this year in a collective bargaining campaign, or building your local's

¹⁶¹ Ibid., 145-146.

¹⁶² Lipow Interview.

¹⁶³ Glass, *A History of the California Federation of Teachers, 1919-1989*, 34.

strength for eventual coverage by a collective bargaining law to wonder why we have had no meetings of the CFT Women in Education Committee.” This clearly indicates that the work of the Women in Education Committee was de-prioritized in the context of a flurry of organizing. In the same letter, however, Stern included a list of women’s issues to propose in new contracts, reflecting the groundwork that had been laid by the Women in Education committee since its formation in 1972.¹⁶⁴ A short time later, in October, 1977 Stern specifically withdrew her name for consideration as chair of the Women in Education Committee because, in her own words, “I wish to devote as much time as possible to my own local 2121 in its effort [sic] to win bargaining rights.” At the time, she was helping with the unionization drive at the community college in San Francisco, where she was teaching at the time.¹⁶⁵

The diversion of the energies of members of the Women in Education Committee toward collective bargaining campaigns did not go without criticism. For instance, Jane Murray, a member of the Culver City Federation of Teachers, complained about the lack of organizing at the statewide level during the collective bargaining campaigns: “I am writing to you on behalf of a growing number of AFT women in the L.A. area who are concerned with the lack of leadership that the state Women in Ed. Committee is giving to local committees.” She continued, “in this year of CB [collective bargaining] women need guidance to formulate good strong

¹⁶⁴ Marjorie Stern to Members of Women in Education committee, [n.d.], Stern Collection, part 2, series 3, folder 16: Correspondence: CFT Women in Education, box 5.

¹⁶⁵ Marjorie Stern to Marie Whipp, Secretary-Treasurer of CFT, October 23, 1977, Stern Collection, part 2, series 3, folder 18: Correspondence: CFT Women in Education, Aug. ’77 – April ’78, box 5.

contract policies in maternity, working conditions, etc...I don't see how our committee can ignore these things."¹⁶⁶ Though the Women in Education Committee continued to provide informational material to AFT locals, the time and energy necessary to organize unionization campaigns meant that less time was devoted to the work of the Women in Education Committee.

Workplace Issues: Childcare and Parental Leave

Feminists in the California Federation of Teachers, and the AFT more generally, made family issues a central element of their organizing from the founding of the CFT's Women in Education Committee in 1972 through the late 1970s. Paid parental and the provision of affordable, quality childcare were particularly prominent issues in their organizing. Through their organizing, members of the CFT's Women in Education Committee and the AFT's Women's Rights Committee were able to gain access to childcare at union conventions, conferences, and workshops. They also demanded childcare and access to paid parental leave for teachers at work, making it easier for working mothers to pursue teaching as a career. Blackwelder explains, "shared responsibilities and egalitarianism described the ideal two-parent [heterosexual] family, but significant gender differences persisted as women continued to perform the larger share of household and child care activities."¹⁶⁷

¹⁶⁶ Jane Murray to the Chair of the Women in Education Committee, January 1, [n.d.], Stern Collection, part 2, series 3, folder 16: Correspondence: CFT Women in Education Committee, 1974-78, box 5.

¹⁶⁷ Blackwelder, *Now Hiring*, 193.

The years between 1960 and 1980 saw an influx of mothers working in the waged workforce.¹⁶⁸ Not only that, but in 1971 a third of all women who left teaching “did so for reasons relating to maternity,” according to Patricia Carter, which helps to explain why the provision of quality, affordable childcare became an important issue for labor feminists within the AFT.¹⁶⁹ Meanwhile, the government, at all levels, did not simultaneously ensure increased access to childcare or the right of parents to take paid leaves to give birth or care for their children. And, of course, at the same time these working mothers continued to shoulder the burden of childcare and household labor.

Though working women had a greater need for affordable childcare, the government did not rise to the challenge. In 1971, the Comprehensive Child Development Act barely made it through both the House and the Senate, only to be vetoed by President Nixon. If it had passed, the Act would have provided childcare to the poor for free, and to the lower and middle classes on a sliding scale. Nixon explained his veto by arguing that the bill “would commit the vast moral authority of the National Government to the side of communal approaches to child rearing over against the family-centered approach.”¹⁷⁰

With the federal government refusing to act, activists in labor unions took up the slack by demanding childcare at work. Feminists in the CFT and the AFT made the provision of childcare an organizing priority. As early as 1971, the California

¹⁶⁸ Ibid., 195.

¹⁶⁹ Patricia Anne Carter, *“Everybody’s Paid But the Teacher”: The Teaching Profession and the Women’s Movement* (New York: Teachers College Press, 2002), 132.

¹⁷⁰ Cobble, *The Other Women’s Movement*, 197.

Federation of Teachers went on record in support of the provision of free, quality childcare. A resolution passed at the AFT convention in 1971 called for childcare services to be high quality. The resolution, for instance, called for the childcare to be “operated under public-school auspices and coordinated with existing public-school education,” it called for “trained, licensed teachers, paraprofessionals, and ancillary personnel,” an “educationally desirable ratio of children to teachers,” “safe, healthful buildings and play space,” and it called for the childcare to be widely available.¹⁷¹

One CFT resolution, passed in 1972 by the CFT State Council, called for “free children’s centers, both pre-school and extended day, [to be] set up at the places where people live, work, or study.” The resolution went on, “be it further resolved that to this end, the CFT will carry on an active campaign in the state legislature for the reordering of state and local priorities so that funds will be available for this essential program.”¹⁷²

Feminists in the AFT called for the establishment of childcare centers to make it feasible for parents, particularly women, to work outside of the home. The AFT Women’s Rights Committee as well as the CFT’s Women in Education Committee pointed to New York as a model. In New York’s United Federation of Teachers negotiated a contract provision which, according to a resolution passed at the 1973 CFT convention, “authorized the establishment of 50 day-care centers for members;

¹⁷¹ Marjorie Stern, “California’s Childcare Centers,” Stern Collection, part 2, series 1, folder 5: Children Care Centers, 1968-73, box 1.

¹⁷² CFT State Council Resolution, January, 1972, Stern Collection, folder 8: Conventions of the C.F.T: 1974, Policy Statements, folder 8: Conventions of the C.F.T: 1974, Policy Statements, box 1.

(sic) children as well as for the children of community residents, especially in ghetto areas.”¹⁷³ Additionally, in New York as of 1971, in each classroom at these childcare centers there were two qualified teachers, three paraprofessionals with fifteen boys and girls under six years old.¹⁷⁴

The CFT’s Women in Education Committee and the AFT’s Women’s Rights Committee provided guidelines to AFT locals for bargaining over parental leave. Sometime between 1971 and 1973, the AFT Women’s Rights Committee issued a “Guide for Improving Maternity Leave, or Pregnancy, Childbirth, and Child Rearing Leave Contract Clauses” which outlined the ways that mothers were discriminated against. These discriminatory practices included mandating that a pregnant employee go on leave at any specific time, because “she is entitled to work as long as she is physically qualified.” Similarly, any requirement stipulating a specific time frame for when the employee can return to work after giving birth was discriminatory. It was also discriminatory if an employer affords “employees a shorter period of leave due to disability resulting from pregnancy or childbirth than that allowed for other disabilities.” (The Equal Employment Opportunities Commission mandated that disabilities stemming from pregnancy should be treated as standard disabilities by employers).¹⁷⁵ Other discriminatory acts, according to the same guide, included: failure to allow the employee to return to their old job, limiting retention of seniority,

¹⁷³ Women’s Rights Resolution, amended, Arnold Collection, folder: 1973 CFT Convention, box: Arnold/CFT.

¹⁷⁴ Memorandum, Carl Megel to AFT President Dave Selden, Re: Conference on Day Care, July 8, 1971, Stern Collection, part 2, series 1, folder 5: Children Care Centers, 1968-73, box 1.

¹⁷⁵ Deslippe, *Rights, Not Roses*, 185.

requiring a minimal amount of service before taking pregnancy leave, non-payment of disability benefits for absence due to pregnancy, childbirth, or miscarriage, and not paying for the costs of the physician if the costs are paid for other treatment.¹⁷⁶ In order to ensure that these discriminatory practices do not take place, feminists in the Women in Education Committee and the AFT Women's Rights Committee urged AFT locals to negotiate improved rights and benefits for women on pregnancy leave. Though demanding maternity leave for pregnant mothers was certainly more prominent, the CFT's Women in Education Committee also called for "parental leave" to apply to men and women, tenured and non-tenured educators, and adoptive parents

In addition to demanding the provision of childcare for teachers and community members, feminists in the AFT also successfully organized to make their own union provide free child care at conventions, workshops, and meetings. For example, in her summary of the work of the AFT's Women's Rights Committee, Marjorie Stern noted, "a quality child care program for the children of delegates and staff is set up for the 1972 convention with the cooperation of the host local, St. Paul."¹⁷⁷ To facilitate this work, AFT Women's Rights Committee sent out a questionnaire to convention delegates attending the AFT convention in St. Paul in 1972 to figure out how extensive delegates' need for children. The effect of providing

¹⁷⁶ Marjorie Stern and Nancy Kaye, AFT Committee for Women's Rights, "A Guide For Improving Maternity Leave, or Pregnancy, Childbirth and Child Rearing leave Contract Clauses," Stern Collection, part 2, folder 11: Women in Education Committee: Pamphlets, [n.d.] (ca. 1971-73), box 2.

¹⁷⁷ Marjorie Stern, Brief Summary of Women's Rights Committee Work, Stern Collection, part 2, folder 12: Women's Rights Committee: Research papers and notes, 1972-73, box 2.

free child care to convention delegates was the increased likelihood that more women would become union activists.¹⁷⁸

Pay Equity

In addition to organizing for child care and parental leave, feminists challenged pay inequities in the schools. Male teachers have historically been paid more than female teachers in the United States. In the twentieth century, women have comprised the majority of teachers, particularly at the elementary school level. Men have been much more likely to teach at the high school level and at colleges and universities. In the early twentieth century, according to Murphy, high school teachers were often paid a third more than elementary school teachers. The G.I. Bill, passed in 1944, helped men who had fought in the second world war by providing them with tuition and helping with living expenses while in college. As a result, men started competing with women for the better-paid teaching positions in the high schools, and the proportion of male high school teachers increased. In 1953-1954, the median income levels for women teachers was \$2,394, while men earned a median income of \$3,456 per year – this despite the fact that women tended to be slightly older than men and to have more seniority.¹⁷⁹

In the 1970s women working as teachers continued to experience pay inequity. The number of women teaching in elementary schools still far outnumbered

¹⁷⁸ “Exploring Childcare Services for 1972 AFT Convention,” Stern Collection, part 1, folder 18: Childcare at AFT Conventions, 1971-73, box 2.

¹⁷⁹ Murphy, *Blackboard Unions*, 213.

the number of men: in 1975, 85% of elementary school teachers were women.¹⁸⁰ In the 1970s men still earned more than women: for the 1975-1976 school year elementary school teachers earned \$12,280 compared to \$12,937 annually for high school teachers.¹⁸¹ Aside from the lower pay women elementary school teachers received compared to men working in high schools, female teachers experienced inequitable pay in a number of other ways. For instance, women were often not paid an equal amount to men for extra duties they performed, such as overseeing or instructing students' extra-curricular activities; these include physical education, drama, music, debate, and so on.¹⁸²

Pay equity for women working as coaches was a particularly salient issue for feminists in the AFT. After successfully managing to get the school district to "include women's physical education as part of the extended day program" in 1973, the AFT local in San Diego worked cooperatively with the San Diego Teachers Association to demand that the school district pay female coaches the same as male coaches.¹⁸³ The *California Teacher*, the official CFT newspaper, related in its December, 1973 issue that the CFT similarly organized in Santa Ana, Glendale,

¹⁸⁰ Barbara H. Wootton, "Gender Differences in Occupational Employment," *Monthly Labor Review* 120 (April, 1997), 17.

¹⁸¹ National Center for Education Statistics, "Estimated Average Annual Salary of Teachers in Public Elementary and Secondary Schools: Selected Years, 1959-60 through 2008-09," http://nces.ed.gov/programs/digest/d09/tables/dt09_078.asp, accessed April 7, 2014.

¹⁸² Marjorie Stern, "Women's Rights Committee, AFT, What Teachers Unions Can and Do Bargain For Women Teachers," Stern Collection, part 2, folder 11: Women in Education Committee: Pamphlets, [n.d.] (ca. 1971-73), box 2.

¹⁸³ Women in Education Hold Meeting in L.A.," *California Teacher* 25, no. 3, November, 1973, Arnold Collection, folder: California Teacher, 1973-74, box: Arnold/CFT.

Newport-Mesa, Napa, and the Cambrian Elementary school district to attain pay equity for female coaches.¹⁸⁴

The struggle by women coaches for equal pay in the Newport-Mesa school district took a particularly dramatic turn, culminating in a two-and-one-half week-long strike by fourteen female coaches in January-February, 1974. Prior to withholding their labor, the women coaches, with the help of the Newport-Mesa AFT local and the local president Maya Decker, had repeatedly attempted to bring the issue of pay equity to the school district for six years, from around 1968 to 1973. Maya Decker was engaged with the statewide Women in Education Committee, leading a workshop at the 1973 statewide Women in Education conference, “Introduction to Feminism in the Classroom.”¹⁸⁵ In 1973, the coaches and the Newport-Mesa AFT local meticulously documented their hours spent coaching, the number of students they coached, and the pay received for each coach (male and female) at each middle school in the district. The union found that the women coached, on average, six sports while being paid a one-time amount, while the men coach three sports and are paid for each sport; they also found that the women coached more students. The women earned one-third of the pay of the men while teaching more students.¹⁸⁶ They also complained that they had no say in planning the

¹⁸⁴ Women in Ed. Plan Action Program,” *California Teacher* 25, no. 4, December, 1973, Arnold Collection, folder: California Teacher, 1973-74, box: Arnold/CFT.

¹⁸⁵ “Women in Education Hold Meeting in L.A.,” *California Teacher* 25, no. 3, November, 1973, Arnold Collection, folder: California Teacher, 1973-74, box: Arnold/CFT.

¹⁸⁶ Allison Deere, “Women Coaches Win Battle,” *Daily Pilot*, January 29, 1974, Stern Collection, part 2, folder 13: Women’s Rights Committee: Sexism in education and careers, misc. research papers, 1971-76, box 2.

sports program, that they had been “handed a copy of the boys’ sports program and been told to ‘work around it’ in planning their own.”¹⁸⁷ From 1971 to 1973, they brought their complaint to individual principals, to the Board of Education, and to the Director of Personnel, each time receiving no response. They then, in the summer of 1973, with the help of the AFT, filed a complaint of inequity with the Equal Employment Opportunities Commission at the federal level, and with the Fair Employment Practices Commission in California. They informed the district about these suits. They still received no response.¹⁸⁸

At their wits’ end, in January 1974, the coaches and the union then informed the district that pay must be equalized with male coaches by January 25, 1974, retroactive to September, 1972, or they would withhold their labor. Responding at the last minute, on January 25, the district informed the coaches and the union that they would provide the women coaches with pay equal to the men, but would only make the pay retroactive to September, 1973—not to September, 1972, which was their demand. The women coaches met on January 30, 1974 and decided that they would not accept the settlement unless they were paid retroactively to 1972. In a flyer, they declared, “we have been compromised, appeased, but not granted our fair share. We

¹⁸⁷ Maya Decker, Newport-Mesa Federation of Teachers to the Board of Education of the Newport-Mesa Unified School District, May 21, 1973, Stern Collection, part 2, folder 13: Women’s Rights Committee: Sexism in education and careers, misc. research papers, 1971-76, box 2.

¹⁸⁸ Newport-Mesa Federation of Teachers (AFT) Flyer: “Middle School Women GAA Coaches Hold Out for Pay Equal,” Stern Collection, part 2, folder 13: Women’s Rights Committee: Sexism in education and careers, misc. research papers, 1971-76, box 2.

will wait until we are justly compensated.”¹⁸⁹ In early February, 1974, Dodi Anderson, one of the coaches leading the efforts, remarked that women coaches had been trying to attain “equal pay for equal work and equal time” for six years.”¹⁹⁰

The women coaches, with the backing of their union, went on strike for equal pay for two and a half weeks at the beginning of February, 1974. Fourteen female coaches at all six Harbor Area middle schools refused their after-school coaching duties, halting sports for approximately 1,200 middle schoolers in the Newport-Mesa School District. Their strike affected soccer, flag football, gymnastics, softball, and track and field. After two and a half weeks, the coaches won their main demand: the school district agreed to pay the female coaches an equal amount to the male coaches retroactive to September, 1972. Dodi Anderson commented, “the AFT has been a fantastic help. We could not have won without them.”¹⁹¹

Confronting Sexist Curricula

Feminists within the AFT simultaneously organized for their own rights as teachers while making organizing to eradicate sexism from the curricula of schools, colleges, and universities a top priority. Their organizing to challenge sexist curricula was never peripheral to their general organizing; both the AFT’s Women’s Rights Committee and the CFT’s Women in Education Committee made challenging sexist

¹⁸⁹ Ibid.

¹⁹⁰ Larry Peterson, “N-M Women Coaches Boycott Duties in Pay Dispute,” newspaper clipping, [n.d], Stern Collection, part 2, folder 13: Women’s Rights Committee: Sexism in education and careers, misc. research papers, 1971-76.

¹⁹¹ “Women’s Coaches Victory,” *California Teacher* 25, no. 7, March, 1974, Arnold Collection, folder: California Teacher, 1973-74, box: Arnold/CFT.

curricula a priority right from the start. Their focus on curricular matters is significant because it demonstrates their commitment to their students while they also struggled to improve their own rights and benefits. Feminists' organizing within the teachers' unions to challenge sexist curricula further validates the argument that women's activism within the AFT in the 1970s infused social unionism with a new feminist militancy. By focusing on curricula, after all, feminists within the AFT were helping to break down sexism in society more broadly. This new labor feminism within the AFT was also distinct from earlier feminism; feminists in the AFT actively sought the breakdown of rigid gender roles. As they searched through textbooks for evidence of sexism, they called attention to depictions of girls and boys being confined to expected gender roles. They also organized against gender-based tracking into certain courses and careers by school counselors. Over all, feminist organizing within the AFT sought to disrupt sexism in education, helping to open up a broader range of life possibilities for both girls and boys in the public schools.

The AFT's Women's Rights Committee prioritized organizing against sexism in education from the committee's establishment in 1970. For example, the AFT's Women's Rights Committee, when it was still just an ad hoc committee, helped to pass a resolution at the AFT convention in Pittsburgh in 1970 that read,

“discriminatory class-room material be eliminated, that lesson plans on the history of the women's rights movement and suffrage be provided.”¹⁹² In a guide for AFT

¹⁹² “Convention Acts on Women's Rights,” *The American Teacher*, [n.d.], Stern Collection, part 1, folder 2: Women's Resolutions, 1970 AFT Convention (other resolutions to be found), box 2.

members about women's rights, available in the lead up to the AFT convention in 1971, Stern noted, "the most difficult, and slowest, but most pervasive change to undertake in behavior toward women is a change in attitudes." She continued, "teachers and counselors should be especially careful not to flint off, 'well, girls don't do this,' or 'this is a boy's job.' In the guide, Stern urged teachers to teach about women's role in history. Additionally, the guide noted, "lesson plans have been commissioned by the AFT research department, and, after review by the AFT's Women's Rights Committee, will be offered nationally." The guide encouraged AFT members to "get industrial arts and homemaking teachers to open up their classes to both boys and girls."¹⁹³ These examples make clear that the AFT Women's Rights Committee, in the first two years of its existence, emphasized the importance of challenging sexism in education.

As did the AFT Women's Rights Committee, the CFT's Women in Education Committee placed a heavy focus on organizing against sexist curricula from its founding. Curricular matters played a central role at the committee's very first meeting on July 22, 1972. Pat Stanyo volunteered to coordinate work in support of women's studies, while Wanda Faust would coordinate the committee's work against sexism in textbooks.¹⁹⁴ The first two major conferences that the Women in Education Committee organized, both in October, 1972, one taking place in Berkeley and the

¹⁹³ Marjorie Stern, "A Guide for AFT Members: Teacher Unions and Women's rights," [n.d.], Stern Collection, part 2, folder 11: Women in Education Committee: Pamphlets, [n.d.] (ca. 1971-73), box 2.

¹⁹⁴ CFT Women's Rights in Education Committee, Meeting Minutes, July 22, 1972, Stern Collection, part 1, series 2, folder 6: Committee on Women's Rights in Education, California Federation of Teachers 1972, correspondence, newsletters, box 3.

other in Los Angeles, featured workshops about sexist curricula. For instance, Mary Bergan, the CFT lobbyist, “reported on changes in the method of statewide adoption of textbooks and possible approaches women might take to lobby against the sexism in California dopted (sic) teaching materials.”¹⁹⁵ At the statewide Women in Education Conference in December, 1973, Gretchen Mackler and Sheila Gold led a workshop on “activities and games in the classroom,” and Pat Stanyo led a workshop entitled, “Introduction to Feminism in the Classroom.” Then at the meeting of the Women in Education Committee, in November of 1973, just a little over a year after its founding, “the committee reviewed its position on state adopted textbooks and directed chairperson Gretchen Mackler to testify before the State Board’s Curriculum Commission on November 29.” Mackler was to present evidence of sexism in textbooks. Also discussed at the meeting were “possible legal steps which could be taken to force compliance with new laws making sexist references in textbooks illegal.”¹⁹⁶ Clearly organizing against sexist curriculum was of paramount importance to the CFT’s Women in Education Committee.

Feminists in the AFT and the CFT pointed out the ways that girls and women were portrayed in derogatory or discriminatory ways in textbooks. First, women were often invisible in textbooks, and when they were portrayed were shown as passive and often in stereotyped roles. At a workshop on sexism in textbooks sponsored by

¹⁹⁵ Article Clipping in CFT newspaper, [n.d.], Stern Collection, series 2, part 1, folder 6: Committee on Women’s Rights in Education, California Federation of Teachers 1972, correspondence, newsletters, box 3.

¹⁹⁶ “Women in Education Hold Meeting in L.A.,” *California Teacher* 25, no. 3, November, 1973, Arnold Collection, folder: California Teacher, 1973-74, box: Arnold/CFT.

the Chula Vista Federation of Teachers in California on January 18 and 19, 1974, women from schools at the elementary, junior high, and high schools levels scrutinized textbooks used in their classes for sexism. They found that women were “almost uniformly shown in domestic roles,” and that “both young and adult females were uniformly depicted as incompetent, fearful, and passive.” Additionally, statistics in spelling books for grades one through six show that boys appeared in 696 pictures, while girls appeared in only 265 pictures.”¹⁹⁷ In a study of California textbooks, “75 percent of the characters were referred to as male, and they were treated in greater length and interest.” In these textbooks, “whatever was done, was done by men.” Even inanimate objects in textbooks were characterized using male pronouns.¹⁹⁸

To eradicate sexism in the schools, women in the AFT’s Women’s Rights Committee and the CFT’s Women in Education Committee provided informational material and lesson plans to union members. Marjorie Stern, as chair of the AFT’s Women’s Rights Committee, at some point between 1971 and 1973 put together a 74-page compendium of materials entitled “Changing Sexist Practices in the Classroom,” made widely available to AFT locals. Among the issues covered were: “Sexual Stereotypes Start Early”; “Women’s Lib Comes to Class”; “Twenty Questions on Women Workers”; “Sexism in Children’s Literature: Exploding the Fairy Princess and Other Myths”; “Resources for Women’s Studies”; “A Beginning Women’s

¹⁹⁷ Workshop Announcement, Stern Collection, part 1, series 2, folder 8: Committee on Women’s Rights in Education, CFT 1974, correspondence, box 3.

¹⁹⁸ Pat Strandt, “The Fight for Female Equality in the Schools,” article clipping, [n.p], [n.d.], Stern Collection, part 1, series 2, folder 8: Women in Education Conference, clippings, box 2.

Rights Bibliography”; and so on.¹⁹⁹ Vivian Hall, a member of the CFT’s Women in Education Committee, wrote courses of study around 1974 or so on women in literature and women in history for Westminster High School, which she claims were two of the first courses on such topics at the high school level.²⁰⁰ In a pamphlet issued most likely between 1971 and 1973, feminists in the AFT also encouraged AFT locals and members to “review and analyze texts, library books, and encyclopedias for pictures or reading material discriminatory or derogatory to women.”²⁰¹ In addition to addressing sexist curricula, in a resolution passed at the 1971 CFT convention, the CFT’s Women in Education Committee called for free contraceptive information to be made available to teachers and students in the schools.²⁰² In their informational material in the early to mid-1970s, feminists in the AFT organized for the cessation of vocational gendered tracking, and argued that homemaking classes and industrial arts classes should be open to all genders.²⁰³

In addition to providing information about sexism in curricular materials and lesson plans on women’s role in society, the CFT’s Women in Education Committee organized in the early to mid-1970s in support of legislation to outlaw sexism in

¹⁹⁹ “Changing Sexist Practices in the Classroom,” Stern Collection, part 2, folder 6: Women in Education Committee: Clippings, Pamphlets, 1974-1977, box 2.

²⁰⁰ Vivian Hall, Short Biography, Stern Collection, part 2, series 3, folder 15: Correspondence: CFT Women in Education Committee, 1974-78, box 5.

²⁰¹ “Does Your Local Have a Women’s Rights Committee?” AFT Women’s Rights Committee Pamphlet, Stern Collection, part 2, folder 11: Women’s Rights Committee: Pamphlets, [n.d.] (ca. 1971-1973), box 2.

²⁰² “Resolution 79, Women’s Rights,” CFT Convention, 1971, Stern Collection, part 2, series 1, folder 7: Conventions of the C.F.T: 1971, Drafts of Resolutions, box 1.

²⁰³ “Does Your Local Have a Women’s Rights Committee?” Women’s Rights Committee Pamphlet, Stern Collection, part 2, folder 11: Women’s Rights Committee: Pamphlets, [n.d.] (ca. 1971-1973), box 2.

California's public schools. Senate Bill 1285, effective January 1, 1974, was a CFT-supported bill which required the teaching of women's contributions "to the economic, political, and social development of California and the U.S.A." in elementary and secondary public schools. The CFT also sponsored Assembly Bill 2187 which outlawed any instruction, activity, or curriculum, "which reflect adversely upon persons because of their...sex."²⁰⁴ The CFT sponsored Assembly Bill 1466, a bill "to outlaw sex-tracked counseling and sex-segregated classes in California public schools," effective January 1, 1975.²⁰⁵

During the 1970s feminists in the CFT welcomed further advancements at the federal level for women's rights on the job and in education. Congress passed the Women's Educational Equity Act in 1974, authorizing federal funding for the promotion of educational equity for women and girls throughout competitive grants. Activities promoting equity might include trainings for teachers; "research, development and dissemination of materials, texts, tests, and programs for non-discriminatory vocational education and career counseling for women"; "new and expanded physical education and sports for women"; and so forth.²⁰⁶ Additionally, Title IX was passed as an amendment to the Education Act of 1972, marking a major step in the strengthening of the rights of women and girls in the public schools. It

²⁰⁴California CFT Convention Resolution: "Sexist and Feminist Curricula in California Public Schools," Stern Collection, part 2, folder 13: Women's Rights Committee: Sexism in education and careers, misc. research papers, 1971-76, box 2.

²⁰⁵ CFT Resolution, "Women's Educational Act," Stern Collection, part 2, series 1, folder 16: Equal Rights Amendment: Research papers on legislation, 1967-76, box 1.

²⁰⁶ "Women's Educational Equity Act of 1974," Stern Collection, part 2, series 1, folder 11: Conventions of the C.F.T: 1975, Policy Statements, box 1.

prohibited sex-based discrimination in education programs, and this gave, according to Murphy, “women educators a direct legal foundation for further negotiating women’s issues in their contracts as well as for using federal power to force schools to give women equal opportunity.”²⁰⁷

Not only did the CFT, under the leadership of the Women in Education Committee, work to pass these laws, but the union also organized to enforce them. For example, acknowledging that Congress had not appropriated funds for the Women’s Educational Equity Act, delegates at the CFT convention in 1975 passed a resolution for the CFT to send a letter to all CFT locals and local Women in Education chairpersons urging them to conduct a letter-writing campaign to members of Congress. The CFT also asked its locals to make their school districts aware of the act and urge them to apply for funds. At the same time, the CFT resolved to bring the issue to the 1975 national AFT convention and encourage convention delegates to support full funding for the act, notify all locals of the act, and ask local school boards to apply for funds.²⁰⁸ In 1975 CFT’s Women in Education Committee also encouraged the CFT to organize in support of the laws for gender equity in education passed in California by proposing that the CFT “direct its efforts in the coming year with all possible vigor” to the enforcement of AB 2187 and SB 1285. Part of this work would include “making available and exchanging with interested groups and individuals materials on feminist curricula for use by teachers in implementing these

²⁰⁷ Murphy, *Blackboard Unions*, 261.

²⁰⁸ Ibid.

laws.” This organizing also involved urging locals to meet with community groups to work on enforcement of these laws.²⁰⁹

Feminism and National Politics: The Equal Rights Amendment

Though feminists within the AFT and the CFT focused much of their energies on workplace issues and challenging sexist curricula, they also engaged with larger political issues promoted by the feminist movement. The Equal Rights Amendment (ERA), introduced in Congress every year since 1923, was a particularly significant issue for the feminist movement and the labor movement in the late 1960s through the mid-1970s. The ERA was simple: it read, “equality of rights shall not be denied or abridged by the United States or any state on account of sex.”²¹⁰ In the early 1970s there were intense debates between labor unions and feminist organizations about support for the ERA, with some in the labor movement opposed to the ERA out of concern that it would dismantle protective legislation struggled for over many years. The American Federation of Teachers had a somewhat complex political stance on the ERA, going back and forth from 1970 to 1975. Feminists within the AFT’s Women’s Rights Committee and the CFT’s Women in Education Committee played an active role in influencing the teacher union’s political orientation toward the ERA, finally succeeding in getting the AFT to support what was called the “Labor ERA,” which would have extended protective legislation to all workers, male and female.

²⁰⁹ Proposed CFT Resolution, “Sexist and Feminist Curricula in California Public Schools,” Stern Collection, part 2, folder 13: Women’s Rights Committee: Sexism in education and careers, misc. research papers, 1971-76, box 2.

²¹⁰ Schneir, *Feminism in Our Time*, 371.

Many in the feminist movement, beginning in the late 1960s, rallied around the campaign to pass the Equal Rights Amendment. The National Women's Party, an organization which fought for women's rights, particularly suffrage, first proposed the ERA in 1923. It was introduced in Congress every year since, without ever passing. The burst of feminist activism in the late 1960s and early 1970s vastly improved the prospects for the passage of the ERA, which received broad grassroots support. The ERA was again introduced in the House in 1970, which voted to support passage of the ERA, but the Senate voted it down. The next year, according to Miriam Schneir, when the House again voted in support of the ERA in 1971, "feminists mounted a nationwide campaign of impressive dimension" in preparation for the Senate vote in 1972. This time the Senate approved passage of the ERA, with a vote of 84 to 8. The ERA then went to the states for ratification. Thirty-eight states needed to vote for ratification for the ERA to pass.²¹¹

The campaign around the Equal Rights Amendment proved controversial in labor union circles, with many labor activists, including labor feminists, opposing the ERA. Labor feminists in the 1960s and early 1970s who organized in opposition to the ERA did so out of concern that the ERA would eliminate protective labor laws for women. Protective labor laws included limits on the number of hours employers could require their female employees to work. A full 45 states had maximum daily and/or weekly hours laws in the mid-1960s. Protective legislation also included minimum wage laws for women that exceeded federal and state minimum wages.

²¹¹ Ibid., 370–371.

Other protective laws included restrictions on the amount of weight women could lift, superior rest and lunch breaks, sanitation, restrooms, and seating.²¹² Myra Wolfgang, an international vice president for the Hotel Employees and Restaurant Employees Union (HERE), was perhaps the most well-known opponent of the ERA, chairing a national committee within the labor movement against repeal of protective legislation. Wolfgang argued that passage of the ERA would bring “equality of mistreatment” for working-class women.²¹³ While some labor leaders emphasized the need for protective legislation for low paid workers, some union leaders stuck to traditional ideas that women were less capable of doing certain kinds of work. According to Deslippe, members of the International Union of Electrical Workers (IUE), for instance, “held that the disappearance of protective measures brought by the ERA’s passage would not change the social and biological conditions that made protectionism necessary; it would, however, leave women workers exposed to the demands of employers to do what they could not.”²¹⁴

Prior to 1972, only a handful of unions supported the Equal Rights Amendment. Most prominent among these backers was the United Auto Workers; at their 1970 national convention UAW delegates approved a motion to support the ERA. Previously, the UAW had decreased its support for feminist organizations organizing to pass the ERA. In 1967, for instance, when the National Organization of Women officially endorsed the ERA, Caroline Davis, the director of the UAW’s

²¹² Cobble, *The Other Women’s Movement*, 184.

²¹³ *Ibid.*, 192.

²¹⁴ Deslippe, *Rights, Not Roses*, 112.

Women's Department, resigned her position as secretary treasurer of NOW in protest and out of loyalty to the labor movement.²¹⁵ But by 1970 the UAW had clearly shifted its stance, becoming the first union in the country to endorse the ERA.²¹⁶ In arguing for the UAW's new pro-ERA position, Caroline Davis pointed to the ways that protective legislation could undermine working women's rights when "unscrupulous employers" used these laws to discriminate against women by denying women hiring and promotional opportunities.²¹⁷

Some in the labor movement supported what they called a "Labor ERA" in the early 1970s, often to the chagrin of union leaders and members opposed to the ERA *and* to feminists diligently working for passage of the ERA as is. Proponents of the Labor ERA called for the extension of protective legislation to all workers, both men and women. The Labor ERA appears to have been particularly popular in California, in part due to the efforts of Union Women's Alliance to Gain Equality (Union WAGE).²¹⁸ According to an article published in Union WAGE's newspaper in 1972, the stakes were high in California due to the existence of protective labor laws stipulating a higher minimum wage, overtime pay of time-and-one-half after eight hours of work in a day, and some other 50 labor standards.²¹⁹ Joyce Maupin, one of Union WAGE's founders, criticized the "middle class women's movement" for its support of the ERA, arguing that its adherents "generally see the problem of working

²¹⁵ Schneir, *Feminism in Our Time*, 370.

²¹⁶ Gabin, *Feminism in the Labor Movement*, 2.

²¹⁷ Deslippe, *Rights, Not Roses*, 159.

²¹⁸ Gatlin, "A 'Society of Outsiders,'" 64.

²¹⁹ "Fight Goes on for Protective Legislation," *Union W.A.G.E.*, no. 11, May – June 1972, Arnold Collection, folder: CFT Convention, 1972, box: Arnold/CFT.

women in terms of the advancement and promotion of individuals.”²²⁰ At the same time, members of the National Organization of Women picketed the California Labor Federation for its support of the Labor ERA, a political stance taken in part due Union WAGE’s campaign for the Labor ERA. The Labor ERA actually did pass the state legislature, only to face Governor Ronald Reagan’s veto in 1971. Ultimately, despite the fears of feminist supporters of the ERA concerned about the Labor ERA, the California State Legislature ultimately did ratify the ERA in 1972, and in 1973 some (though not all) state protective laws were extended to male workers.²²¹

The political stance of the AFT on the Equal Rights Amendment was complicated, as the union changed its position three times in the first half of the 1970s. Historians, including Cobble and Murphy, have pointed out that the AFT was one of the earliest union supporters of the ERA. It is certainly true that delegates at the AFT convention in 1970 officially went on record in support of the ERA, at a time when only a handful of labor unions supported the ERA. In 1970 Carl J. Megel, the AFT’s Legislative Director, even spoke before the U.S. Senate Committee on the Judiciary in support of the ERA, highlighting that because more than 50 percent of teachers were women they experienced lower wages, a result of sexism.²²² However, not acknowledged by historians is the AFT’s reversal of its position on the ERA the following year, at its national convention in 1971. Stern, writing in the AFT’s *The*

²²⁰ Gatlin, “A ‘Society of Outsiders,’” 64.

²²¹ Cobble, *The Other Women’s Movement*, 194.

²²² Carl J. Megel, Legislative Director, AFT, “Statement for Committee on the Judiciary United States Senate,” May 7, 1970, Stern Collection, part 2, series 1, folder 25: Equal Rights Amendment: Statements on various unions pro or con the E.R.A., 1970-73, box 1.

American Teacher in March, 1972, explained the AFT's new opposition to the ERA. She emphasized that teachers did not generally benefit from protective labor legislation, noting that there were several benefits of the ERA for women teachers and educational equity more generally. Among other things, the ERA would, for instance, necessitate "equal consideration in pay, promotion, retention, and hiring in colleges and universities" where men far outnumbered women. Nonetheless, the AFT reversed its position on the ERA in order to "unite with the cause of labor on this issue." Stern explained, "I do not believe we should be party to blanket obliteration by one constitutional amendment of all state labor laws affecting women without securing those protective and eliminating those discriminatory."²²³

The California Federation of Teachers supported the Labor ERA, and played a part in encouraging the AFT to oppose the ERA and instead support a Labor ERA. At the CFT's convention in 1971, delegates passed a resolution going on record opposing the ERA, and resolved to bring a resolution to the next AFT convention that the AFT do the same. The resolution read, in part, "be it further resolved that the AFT urges the continuance and strengthening of protective labor laws, and their extension to all workers, female and male, in all jobs."²²⁴ In April 1971, Raoul Teilhet, CFT president, spoke before the state legislature to encourage opposition to California's ratification of the ERA, arguing "equality must not mean a loss of decent working

²²³ Marjorie Stern, Chairwoman, AFT Women's Rights Committee, "Teachers' Mailbox," *American Teacher*, March 1972, Stern Collection, part 2, series 1, folder 15: Equal Rights Amendment: Clippings, 1970-1974", box 1.

²²⁴ "Resolution to be submitted to the AFT Convention-1971," Stern Collection, part 2, series 1, folder 7: Conventions of the C.F.T: 1971, Drafts of Resolutions, box 1

conditions for women.” Mary Bergan, CFT lobbyist, went before the state legislature in May, 1972 to support Assembly Bill 1710, which, had it not been vetoed by Governor Ronald Reagan, would have “made applicable to men the special occupational privileges that are not only available to adult women.” Bergan conveyed to the Assembly Ways and Means Committee that approval of AB 1710 “will make it possible for the CFT to support the [ERA].”²²⁵

At the AFT’s national convention in 1972, the union once again changed its stance on the ERA. The delegates approved a resolution stating the AFT supported passage of the Equal Rights Amendment, and further resolved that the “AFT and its state federations and locals work actively to introduce and/or augment truly protective legislation for both working men and women.” The resolution further stated, “in those states in which truly protective laws for women exist all protective laws should be extended to all workers prior to ratification of the [ERA].”²²⁶ The AFT’s new position, then, was qualified support for the ERA. By the time of the AFT convention in August of 1972, Congress had already sent the ERA to the states for ratification earlier that year, in March, 1972. Thus, by the time the AFT decided to support the ERA at the national level, Congress had already passed the ERA. The AFT had essentially missed the opportunity to help with the campaign to obtain Senate approval. At the same time, it was still pushing a Labor ERA at the state level,

²²⁵ “Part I: CFT Platform and the Action Taken,” *California Teacher* 24, no. 6, February, 1973, Arnold Collection, folder: State Level (CFT), box: Arnold/CFT.

²²⁶ Equal Rights Amendment Resolution, AFT Convention in St. Paul, Minnesota August 21-25, 1972, Stern Collection, part 1, series 2, folder 9: Women in Education Conference-evaluations, box 2.

encouraging states to extend protective legislation still in existence to all workers before deciding to endorse the ERA.

In order to grasp this change in the AFT's position on the ERA, it is necessary to understand the legal context. In August 1969, the U.S. Equal Employment Opportunities Commission ruled that state laws restricting employment opportunities for women conflicted with Title VII of the Civil Rights Act, which outlawed discrimination in employment based on sex. Federal courts subsequently began striking down protective legislation, "casting doubt on the constitutionality of any sex-based state laws," according to Cobble.²²⁷ In this context many in the labor movement, including in the AFT, began to change their stance toward the ERA. In fact, in October, 1973 the AFL-CIO changed its position from one of opposition to support for the ERA. After 1973, many labor unions, including those that had previously opposed the ERA, began to organize to get 38 states to ratify the ERA.²²⁸

The AFT's support for a Labor ERA set the union apart from the mainstream feminist movement in the 1970s. While organizations such as the National Organization for Women were very actively organizing in support of the ERA, the AFT, on the urging of feminists within the union, saw in the passage of the ERA a major threat to protective legislation for women workers. The AFT therefore took a position that it could not support the ERA unless the protective laws were extended to all workers, men and women. It was only starting in 1973 that feminists in the CFT and the AFT began to support passage of the ERA while simultaneously organizing to

²²⁷ Cobble, *The Other Women's Movement*, 190.

²²⁸ *Ibid.*, 194–195.

extend protective legislation to all workers. Congress had already sent the ERA to the states for ratification, and by February 1973, 26 states had already ratified the ERA, including California.²²⁹ The AFT's support for the Labor ERA points to the difference between the working class-based feminism of women in the AFT and the mainstream feminist movement.

A majority of the membership of the CFT's Women in Education Committee in the early to mid-1970s appeared to be, which perhaps influenced the issues it prioritized. Some of the leaders of the Women in Education Committee active from the committee's formation in 1972 through the mid- to late-1970s appeared to be white, women like Mackler, Stern, Mulrooney, Pat Stanyo and Wanda Faust. Etta Blackmon and Betty Parish were two African American members of the committee active in 1973.²³⁰ Perhaps the apparent majority-white status of the committee helps to explain why the committee challenged sexism in teaching and in the school curricula head on, but did not, at least consistently, also attempt to integrate anti-racism into its organizing. For example, the committee did not always simultaneously address racial bias at the same time that it challenged the promotion of gender-based stereotypes in school textbooks.

²²⁹ "Part I: CFT Platform and the Action Taken," *California Teacher* 24, no. 6, February, 1973, Arnold Collection, folder: State Level (CFT), box: Arnold/CFT.

²³⁰ Photo of "Meeting of Women's Rights Committee on ERA," *California Teacher* 24, no. 6, February, 1973, Arnold Collection, folder: State Level (CFT), 1972-73, box: Arnold/CFT.

Affirmative Action

In his commencement address at Howard University in 1965, President Lyndon B. Johnson declared that the nation seeks “not just equality as a right and a theory, but equality as a fact and as a result.”²³¹ Title VII of the Civil Rights Act, passed in 1964, prohibited discrimination in employment on the basis of race, color, religion, sex, or national origin. Proponents of affirmative action throughout the 1970s demanded that more proactive steps be taken to, as Johnson put it, bring about “equality as a fact” in U.S. society. The issue of affirmative action was particularly relevant to feminists within the AFT with regard to the hiring of women as faculty at colleges and universities, where men far outnumbered women in all faculty positions, but particularly tenured positions. Despite laws outlawing gender-based discrimination in hiring, according to an American Council on Education Study, from 1968 to 1973 the percentage of women in faculty positions only increased from 19.1 percent to 20 percent.

At the national level, the AFT supported some affirmative action policies while expressing opposition to numerical requirements. The AFT, like other labor liberals, supported what Deslippe refers to as “soft affirmative action”: soft affirmative action policies in employment-related matters included recruitment and training programs to increase the representation of underrepresented groups (the emphasis of labor liberals was often on African Americans) in jobs where they were not present. The AFT opposed what Deslippe calls “hard affirmative action,” or

²³¹ Deslippe, *Protesting Affirmative Action*, 2.

quotas—mandated numerical goals to increase the proportion of underrepresented groups on the job. In contrast, the California Federation of Teachers supported hard affirmative action, reflecting the relatively more progressive feminist and anti-racist politics within the CFT compared to the AFT. The AFT’s opposition to hard affirmative action demonstrates that labor liberals within the union at the national level were limited in their responsiveness to the demands of feminists and anti-racists. Deslippe’s argument that “labor liberalism’s compatability with the rights revolution had stretched to the breaking point”²³² with regard to affirmative action very much applies to labor liberals in the AFT.

Affirmative action proved to be controversial in the labor movement in the mid-1970s. Conservative unionists, particularly the skilled trades, construction unions, and unions in the South, tended to actively oppose affirmative action. Deslippe argues, “labor conservatives experienced affirmative action as a loss of privilege, status, and traditional family and ethnic mutualism.” Liberal unionists, including the leadership of the AFT, took a more complicated political stance toward affirmative action. Liberal unionists, who had been supportive of civil rights demands and later would support feminist demands around hiring, promotion, and pay equity, tended to support soft affirmative action policies, while opposing hard affirmative action.²³³ Labor liberals also generally actively opposed hard affirmative, for various reasons. Deslippe explains that union opponents of quotas claimed they “diluted skill levels by bringing poorly trained workers on jobs, frustrated the practice of recruiting

²³² Ibid., 48.

²³³ Ibid., 7.

family members, burdened the current workforce for the past misdeeds of others, and failed to create new jobs or increase wages.’²³⁴

Labor liberals, including the Coalition of Black Trade Unionists and the Coalition of Labor Union Women, closed ranks with labor conservatives on the question of seniority. In the mid-1970s, in the context of a recession and massive layoffs resulting in the firings of recent affirmative hires, affirmative action advocates challenged the ‘last hired, first fired’ principle intrinsic to seniority systems negotiated by labor unions. Olga Madar, from the Coalition of Labor Union Women and the UAW, claimed in the summer of 1975 that critics of seniority were “supportive of management’s long opposition to seniority systems and a return to the law of the jungle at the workplace.”²³⁵ Both labor liberals and conservative trade unionists were relieved when, in the mid-1970s, a series of court decisions stipulated that affirmative action could not be favored at the expense of seniority systems at work.²³⁶

Albert Shanker, first as president of New York’s United Federation of Teachers (UFT) in the early 1970s and then as president of the American Federation of Teachers beginning in 1975, was very outspoken in expressing the AFT’s opposition to hard affirmative action. Under Shanker’s leadership in 1973, the UFT

²³⁴ Ibid., 15.

²³⁵ Ibid., 47–48.

²³⁶ Ibid., 172. Also see Nancy MacLean, “The Hidden History of Affirmative Action: Working Women’s Struggles in the 1970s and the Gender of Class,” *Feminist Studies* 25, no. 1 (Spring, 1999): 42–78; Nancy MacLean, *Freedom is Not Enough: The Opening of the American Workplace* (New York and Cambridge: Russell Sage Foundation, Harvard University Press, 2006).

Executive Board passed a resolution opposing some forms of affirmative action. The resolution read, in part, “whereas, the UFT supports the recruitment of minority group teachers to enable them to enter the profession in increasing numbers through the merit system; and whereas, the integrationist and merit approach is destroyed by the imposition of quotas in employment,” and then resolved that the “UFT will continue to support sound and meaningful efforts such as the career ladder program and other recruitment efforts to enable minority group teachers to enter the profession as first-class citizens on the basis of merit.”²³⁷ The references to integrationist politics and merit in the resolution point to the political distance between the UFT and advocates of racial militancy in the early 1970s. Though the focus is on race in the resolution, UFT’s stance against hard affirmative action also extended to hard affirmative action policies to promote gender equality. Shanker spoke out against hard affirmative action in his weekly column in the *New York Times*, “Where We Stand.”²³⁸ During ten days of hearings on affirmative action in higher education in 1974, Shanker, serving as the only representative from organized labor, urged members of Congress to reject race- and gender-sensitive programs, and instead support labor’s goal of full employment.²³⁹

The AFT’s position against hard affirmative action led it to support the white plaintiff, Allan Bakke, in the Supreme Court case in 1978, which ultimately outlawed

²³⁷ Resolution on Affirmative Action, UFT Executive Board Meeting, December 17, 73, Stern Collection, part 2, series 1, folder 2: Affirmative Action: Research papers and notes, [n.d.], box 1.

²³⁸ Deslippe, *Protesting Affirmative Action*, 69.

²³⁹ *Ibid.*, 185.

quota systems. Because he was twice denied admission to the UC Davis Medical School, Bakke challenged the UC Davis Medical Center's quota system setting aside 16 percent of first-year positions for affirmative action recipients. In 1978, the Supreme Court issued its decision in *Regents of the University of California v. Bakke* in support of Bakke. Justice Lewis Powell argued that the UC Davis medical center had denied Bakke's constitutional rights as contained in the Equal Protection Clause of the Fourteenth Amendment. At the same time, however, the Supreme Court affirmed the right of colleges and universities to pursue affirmative action policies other than quotas in order to diversify their campuses.²⁴⁰ As president of the AFT and an opponent of quotas, Albert Shanker entered an *amicus curiae* brief on behalf of Allan Bakke, serving to further alienate Shanker and the AFT from both advocates of racial militancy and feminist supporters of affirmative action.²⁴¹

In California, the CFT and United Professors of California, the AFT-affiliated union representing faculty in the California State College System, departed from the AFT's stance by supporting hard affirmative action and opposing the Bakke decision.²⁴² At the CFT's convention in 1972, delegates approved a resolution calling attention to gender inequities in colleges and universities. The resolution supported soft affirmative action policies, such as the elimination of nepotism rules, the opening of tenure-track appointments to part-time faculty (who were disproportionately women), the establishment of free daycare centers, and parental leave provisions for

²⁴⁰ Ibid., 206.

²⁴¹ Murphy, *Blackboard Unions*, 264.

²⁴² Fred Glass, *A History of the California Federation of Teachers, 1919-1989* (South San Francisco: The Federation, 1989), 31.

men and women. The resolution also supported “affirmative action to increase the proportion of women on higher education faculties.”²⁴³ By 1977 the CFT came out against Bakke, and specifically supported quotas. One section of a resolution passed at the CFT’s 1977 convention stated, “without specific objectives, or ‘quotas,’ there is little reason to believe that past discriminatory practices would not be reinstated.” The same resolution noted that while the UC Davis Medical Center’s goal that people of color should comprise 16 percent of new admissions, “the actual percentage of minorities in California was 25%,” and that “in 1976, for the first time in six years, the number of minority students entering medical school decreased.”²⁴⁴ The United Professors of California also opposed Bakke, supported quotas, and urged members to participate in a demonstration against Bakke. The UPC also had an affirmative action committee.²⁴⁵

Conclusion

Though women in the AFT in California and nationally continued to advance a working-class based variation of feminism into the late 1970s and 1980s, the early to mid-1970s marked the highpoint of feminist activism within the AFT. Women formed caucuses, the Women’s Rights Committee at the national level and the

²⁴³ *California Teacher* 24, no. 8, April 1973, Arnold Collection, folder: state level (CFT), 1972-1973, box: Arnold/CFT.

²⁴⁴ Resolution: “The Bakke Decision,” Stern Collection, part 1, series 1, folder 13: Conventions of the C.F.T.: 1977, Preparatory material and notes, box 1.

²⁴⁵ Donna Boutelle, Southern Co-Chairwoman, UPC Women’s Caucus, “Publication Summarizes Federal Policy Regarding Affirmative Action,” *UPC Women’s Caucus Newsletter* 1, no. 1, April, 1973, Stern Collection, part 1, series 2, folder 7: Committee on Women’s Rights in Education, CFT 1973, newsletters, etc., box 3.

Women in Education Committee in California, which served as the main vehicles to organize for women's rights within the AFT. Through these caucuses feminist activists, who were both rank-and-file union activists and elected leaders, organized to improve their working conditions as women workers. Because women continued to shoulder the major responsibility for childcare in the 1970s, feminists within the AFT fought for childcare centers and parental leave policies that would allow them to simultaneously be mothers and pursue teaching as a career. They also challenged pay disparities between male and female teachers, and called attention to the underrepresentation of women as faculty at colleges and universities. From the very beginning of their organizing in the early 1970s, feminists within the AFT and the CFT made challenging sexist curricula a central component of their organizing.

The dual focus on the part of feminists on organizing for their rights as workers and challenging sexist curricula reflected their commitment to their students, as well as their commitment to challenging sexism in society more broadly. The literature on the history of the AFT does not discuss the central role that challenging sexist curricula played in feminist organizing in the union. But this focus on curricula was a defining characteristic of a revived and redefined social unionism.

This history of feminism in the AFT in the 1970s illustrates the impact of the new social movements of the 1960s and 1970s on the labor movement. Influenced by the social movements of the day, labor feminists in the AFT were part of broader efforts to revitalize and democratize the labor movement in the 1970s. As such, feminists in the AFT helped to redefine social unionism in the 1970s. With the

expulsion of radicals from the AFT and the larger labor movement in the 1940s, a version of radical social unionism that prioritized anti-racism and social justice as core elements of labor unionism was tremendously weakened. As a result, though social unionism did not die, it was reshaped to be more politically moderate than its predecessor.

I argue here that the organizing of feminists within the AFT, influenced by the emergence of the broader feminist movement in the late 1960s and 1970s, helped to shift the liberal social unionism of the AFT to become more militant in its advocacy of women's rights. This organizing by labor feminists within the AFT also demonstrated the possibilities and limitations of organizing in a union in which the dominant ideology is liberal social unionism. The liberal social unionism of the AFT's leadership eased the way for advocates of feminists within the union. But there were limits to the feminist politics of liberal social unionists. The AFT at the national level, for instance, actively opposed hard affirmative action policies that would have helped to further eradicate gender-based inequities.

The militance of the CFT's Women in Education Committee and the AFT's Women's Rights Committee was somewhat circumscribed by their official ties to their parent unions. These feminist committees could thus be considered the "loyal opposition" within the AFT, much the same way scholars have described the Coalition of Labor Union Women's relationship to the AFL-CIO. This status as the loyal opposition was in contrast to "radical outsiders" like the San Francisco-based Union Women's Alliance to Gain Equality. The formal link between the AFT's

Women's Rights Committee and the CFT's Women in Education Committee meant that they relied on their unions to officially sanction their activism, sometimes limiting their ability to advance the kind of feminist politics that they might have otherwise. But it also meant that, because of access to the AFT membership, access to financial resources, and their ability to influence collective bargaining, the feminist committees within the CFT and the AFT had an extensive impact on sexism in teaching than they might have had they been completely independent of the AFT.

Chapter 4: “Gay Teachers Fight Back!”: Rank-and-File Gay and Lesbian Teachers’ Organizing Against the Briggs Initiative, 1977-1978

“Many homosexual spokesmen freely admit that homosexual activists want absolute freedom to provide examples of ‘role models.’ In effect, to be legitimized in their perverted lifestyle so they may influence our children to adopt homosexuality.”¹

- California State Senator John Briggs, 1978

Introduction

In 1977-1978 Republican State Senator John Briggs from Orange County was the driving force behind an effort to pass an initiative in California, which, if passed, would have forbid gays, lesbians, and straight supporters of gay rights to teach or work in the public school system. The Briggs Initiative, also known as Proposition 6, was on the California ballot on election day, November 7, 1978. The initiative read, in part,

One of the most fundamental interests of the State is the establishment and preservation of the family unit. Consistent with this interest is the State’s duty to protect its impressionable youth from influences which are antithetical to this vital interest....The State finds a compelling interest in refusing to employ and in terminating the employment of a schoolteacher, a teacher’s aide, a school administrator or a counselor...who engages in public homosexual activity and/or public homosexual conduct directed at, or likely to come to the attention of, school children or other school employees.²

¹ Pamphlet, California Defend our Children, “Save our Children from Homosexuality in our schools! Vote Yes! Proposition 6,” Briggs Collection, folder: Briggs Unsorted, box 2, ONE National Gay and Lesbian Archives (hereafter ONE Archives), University of Southern California, Los Angeles, California.

² “California Voters Pamphlet, General Election, November 7, 1978,” http://librarysource.uchastings.edu/ballot_pdf/1978g.pdf, accessed April 9, 2014.

Though polls taken just a few months prior to the November election showed majority support for the Briggs Initiative, it ultimately failed by a wide margin, with 59% voting no and 41% voting yes.³ As late as August of 1978, according to the *Los Angeles Times*, the California Poll indicated that 61% of voters favored Proposition 6, while 31% opposed it, with 8% undecided.⁴ A massive decentralized, grassroots campaign, spanning the state and led by gays and lesbians, contributed to the defeat of the Briggs Initiative.

In this chapter I examine the successful campaign to defeat the Briggs Initiative, with a focus on the critical role that rank-and-file gay and lesbian teachers and school employees played in the initiative's defeat, both inside and outside of the teachers' unions. In the mid- to late-1970s, gay and lesbian teachers and school employees formed their own groups—the Lesbian School Workers and the Gay Teachers and School Workers in the Bay Area and the Gay Teachers of Los Angeles—and worked independently of the teachers' unions in California to build opposition to the Briggs Initiative. Through these independent groups, gay and lesbian teachers and school workers successfully persuaded the teachers' unions, particularly unions affiliated with the American Federation of Teachers, to actively oppose the Briggs Initiative.

³ "Edition-Time Ballot Returns in Statewide Voting: Prop. 6: 2,222,784 41% Yes; 3,203,076 59% No," *Los Angeles Times*, November 8, 1978.

⁴ "Opposition to Proposition 6 Growing, California Poll Finds," *Los Angeles Times*, October 6, 1978.

Furthermore, this stance taken by the teachers' unions in opposition to the Briggs Initiative set the teachers' unions apart from the rest of the U.S. labor movement; the American Federation of Teachers in California was one of the earliest U.S.-based unions to be influenced by the gay and lesbian movement of the late 1960s and 1970s. In 1973, the labor movement in the Bay Area joined with gay and lesbian rights activists to boycott the anti-union and anti-gay Coors Beer. The Coors boycott alongside the 1977-1978 campaign against the Briggs Initiative marked a turning point in the relationship between the labor movement and the gay and lesbian rights movement. For the first time in the late 1970s, the union movement joined with the gay and lesbian rights movement to publicly condemn political attacks against gays and lesbians in a considerable show of opposition to the homophobic Briggs Initiative. Additionally, the anti-Briggs campaign extended the alliance between the labor movement and the gay and lesbian rights movement beyond the Bay Area to the rest of California.

Gay and lesbian teachers also were involved in broader gay and lesbian-led community organizations working to defeat the Briggs Initiative across the state, in larger numbers in Los Angeles and the Bay Area, but also in rural areas, towns, and suburbs. Though the AFT in California played an important role in the campaign to defeat the Briggs Initiative, it did not lead this organizing. This work by gays and lesbians in the community, alongside the organizing of gay and lesbian teachers and school workers, was critical to the defeat of the Briggs Initiative. While the teachers' unions provided financial support to the campaign against the Briggs Initiative, and

helped to mobilize union members to participate in the campaign, the teachers' unions took their lead from community-based, grassroots gay and lesbian groups.

The Briggs Initiative was a major assault not just on the rights of gay and lesbian teachers and their straight supporters, in particular, but on the labor movement in general. Had it passed, the Briggs Initiative would have superseded union contracts, setting up hearings controlled by school boards to determine whether or not the teacher in question should be fired. Any protections negotiated in union contracts, such as the right not to be discriminated against based on sexual preference/orientation and protections against capricious firing, would have been made irrelevant by the Briggs Initiative.

The disparity in the organizing effort put into Proposition 13, an anti-tax initiative on the California ballot in June, 1978, and Proposition 6 (the Briggs Initiative) illustrates that, though the AFT in California was relatively progressive on the issue of gay rights in relation to the rest of the U.S. labor movement in the late 1970s, it still placed greater concentration on economic issues affecting a majority of the workforce. Considering the clear anti-union component of the Briggs Initiative, one might expect that teachers' unions would have played a major role in the anti-Briggs campaign. However, the leadership of the teachers' unions in California viewed the initiative more as an assault on gays and lesbians than as a union issue. The teachers' unions, like the U.S. labor movement in general, largely focused their energies on economic issues that impacted workplace rights, wages, and benefits. The AFT was much more active in their opposition to Proposition 13. Proposition 13,

which ultimately passed, decreased the state's assessment of property taxes.⁵ The teachers' unions viewed Proposition 13 as an enormous assault on the funding base for the public school system, and dedicated a considerable amount of financial and organizing resources to the initiative's defeat.

Of the literature on the history of Briggs Initiative, little has been written about the role played by queer teachers and the teachers' unions in the campaign to defeat the initiative. In his history on the gay and lesbian rights movement in the U.S., Douglas Clendinen provides an overview of the campaign around the Briggs Initiative, particularly the anti-Briggs organizing in Los Angeles. Clendinen describes the initiative as "the most important of the voter-initiated challenges to gay rights" in the 1970s because of the impact it would have on one of the most populous states in the country.⁶ Randy Shilts, in his biography of Harvey Milk, also examines the Briggs Initiative, with a focus on the important role that Milk, the first openly gay person elected to the San Francisco Board of Supervisors, played in the campaign to defeat the Briggs Initiative. Tina Fetner, in *How the Religious Right Shaped Lesbian and Gay Activism*, discusses the campaign against the Briggs Initiative, but her focus is on ways that the rise of the religious Right shifted the strategies of gay and lesbian activists from making "general claims about civility and justice to one of referencing

⁵ "California Voters Pamphlet, Primary Election," June 6, 1978, http://librarysource.uchastings.edu/ballot_pdf/1978p.pdf, accessed April 9, 2014.

⁶ Dudley Clendinen, *Out for Good: The Struggle to Build a Gay Rights Movement in America* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1999), 378.

the opposing movement as a threat to the lesbian and gay community.”⁷ Though the initiative specifically targeted teachers, neither Clendinen, Shilts, nor Fetner highlight the role that either gay and lesbian teachers or the teachers’ unions played in the initiative’s defeat.

In *Fit to Teach: Same-Sex Desire, Gender, and School Work in the Twentieth Century*, Jackie Blount does, in part, highlight the role gay and lesbian teachers played in the anti-Briggs campaign. Though she touches on the organizing by groups like the Gay Teachers and School Workers and the Lesbian School Workers (two groups I discuss here) in opposition to the Briggs Initiative, she only briefly mentions the American Federation of Teachers and the National Education Association, referring to the opposition of both unions to the Briggs Initiative at the national level, but not examining the shape this opposition took in California.⁸

I examine in some detail the relationship between gay and lesbian teacher groups and the AFT in California, including organizing that went into pressuring the AFT to take a stand against the Briggs Initiative. Organizing by gay and lesbian teachers and school workers was necessary for the teachers’ unions to not only take an anti-Briggs position, but also for the unions to take action to help defeat the initiative. After all, it was one thing to rhetorically oppose the Briggs Initiative, and another to actively take part in the anti-Briggs campaign through financial support, membership mobilization, media work, and so on.

⁷ Tina Fetner, *How the Religious Right Shaped Lesbian and Gay Activism* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2008), 38.

⁸ Blount, *Fit to Teach*, 138–139.

My discussion of gay and lesbian teachers' organizing against the Briggs Initiative in 1977 and 1978 demonstrates that the AFT in California was one of the very first unions in the country to advocate for gay and lesbian rights in the late 1960s and 1970s. However, the literature on the history of teachers' unions in the U.S still lacks a discussion of the role that lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and other queer-identified (LGBTQ) teachers played in the history of teacher unionism.⁹ Other scholars concerned with the history of teachers and teaching, though, have demonstrated that the regulation of teachers' sexuality and the stigmatization of queer teachers have played a prominent role in the history of teaching. Jackie Blount has explained the way perceptions of gay and lesbian teachers have shifted from the nineteenth century through the twentieth-century. Karen Graves and Stacey Braukman have revealed the history of persecutions of gay and lesbian teachers in Florida from the 1950s through the mid-1960s as part of the Red Scare. Graves argues that certain features of the teaching profession set it apart from other types of public employment. Teachers were "especially vulnerable to homophobic

⁹ In this chapter, I use the word "queer" to refer to people who express their gender and sexuality in non-normative ways, but who do not necessarily identify as lesbian, gay, bisexual, or transgender. I also use the word "queer" as an umbrella term to refer lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and other-queer identified people. Usage of "queer" in the context of the 1970s is anachronistic—people in the 1970s usually used the word "queer" as a pejorative to express homophobia. But in the late 1980s people began to reappropriate "queer" to connote a positive identification with community and with a political identity. I use the word "queer" here, despite it being anachronistic, to be inclusive of a broad group of people who identify as lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, or otherwise queer. Additionally, at present people understand the word queer in academic writing about queer studies and queer history as not pejorative.

persecution,” according to Graves, because they worked with children.¹⁰ These scholars’ work demonstrates the importance of sexuality and queer issues to the history of teaching, indicating that the literature on the history of teachers unions is incomplete without an exploration of the discrimination queer teachers have experienced.

The involvement of rank-and-file gay and lesbian teachers and school workers, as well as the role played by the California teachers’ unions, in the campaign to defeat the Briggs Initiative represents a relatively early moment in the history of queer labor organizing in the U.S. With the important exception of work by scholars like Allan Bérubé, Miriam Frank, and, most recently, Philip Tiemeyer, labor history largely omits queer labor.¹¹ Conversely, historians of queer U.S. history have

¹⁰ Karen Graves, *And They Were Wonderful Teachers: Florida’s Purge of Gay and Lesbian Teachers* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2009), xvi.

¹¹ Allan Bérubé, *My Desire for History: Essays in Gay, Community, and Labor History* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2011); Miriam Frank, “Hard Hats & Homophobia: Lesbians in the Building Trades,” *New Labor Forum* 8 (Spring/Summer 2001): 25-36; Miriam Frank, “Lesbian, Gay and Bisexual Caucuses in the United States Labor Movement,” in *Laboring for Rights: Unions and Sexual Diversity Across Nations*, ed. Gerald Hunt (Temple University Press, Philadelphia, 1999); Miriam Frank, “Lesbians and the Labor Movement,” in *Encyclopedia of Homosexuality, 2d Edition: Volume I: Lesbian Histories and Cultures*, ed. Bonnie Zimmerman (Garland, New York, 2000); Philip James Tiemeyer, *Plane Queer: Labor, Sexuality, and AIDS in the History of Male Flight Attendants* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2013). There are two important forthcoming books on queer labor history: Miriam Frank, *Out in the Union: A Labor History of Queer America*, forthcoming (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 2014); Margot Canaday’s current book project is entitled *Perverse Ambitions, Deviant Careers: A Queer History of the Modern American Workplace*. Other scholars and activists that have written about the convergence of queer and labor issues, though not as labor history, include: Monica Bielski Boris, “Identity at Work: U.S. Labor Union Efforts to Address Sexual Diversity Through Policy and Practice” (PhD diss., Rutgers University, 2005); Monica Bielski Boris, “Fighting for Equal Treatment: How the UAW Won Domestic Partner Benefits and Discrimination Protection for its Lesbian, Gay, and Bisexual Members,” *Labor Studies Journal* 35, no. 2 (June 2010): 157-180; Monica Bielski Boris and Gerald Hunt, “The Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, and Transgender Challenge to Labor,” in *Sex of Class: Women Transforming Labor* (Cornell: Cornell University Press,

examined the formation of queer working-class communities, particularly through lesbian and gay bars. But they have not considered queerness at work or in the union movement.¹²

Scholars who have written about queer labor history have thus far largely focused on two topics. First, they have demonstrated how gay men and lesbians have defied gender boundaries by working at jobs traditionally assigned to other genders.¹³ This workplace-based gender crossing has historically been both limiting and liberating. Gay men, for example, who have historically tended to disproportionately work in feminized occupations may have faced discrimination when attempting to find work at traditionally masculinized jobs, while lesbians who began finding work in jobs dominated by men in the 1970s were able to do so because of barriers broken down by the feminist movement.¹⁴ Second, queer labor historians have only begun to

2007); Gerald Hunt, ed., *Laboring for Rights: Unions and Sexual Diversity Across Nations* (Temple University Press, Philadelphia, 1999); Dan Irving, "Contested Terrain of a Barely Scratched Surface: Exploring the Formation of Alliances Between Trans Activists and Labor, Feminist, and Gay and Lesbian Organizing" (PhD diss., York University, 2005); Kitty Krupat and Patrick McCreery, eds., *Out at Work: Building a Gay-Labor Alliance* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2001).

¹² For example, see George George Chauncey, *Gay New York: Gender, Urban Culture, and the Makings of the Gay Male World, 1890-1940* (New York: Basic Books, 1994); Elizabeth Lapovsky Kennedy and Madeline D. Davis, *Boots of Leather, Slippers of Gold: The History of A Lesbian Community* (New York: Penguin Books, 1994).

¹³ I consciously refer to gay men and lesbians here, because queer labor historians have so far not focused on bisexual, transgender, and other queer-identified workers.

¹⁴ Robert L. Allen, *The Brotherhood of Sleeping Car Porters: C. L. Dellums and the Fight for Fair Treatment and Civil Rights* (Boulder: Paradigm Publishers, 2014); Andre J. Alves and Evan Roberts, "Rosie the Riveter's Job Market: Advertising for Women Workers in World War II Los Angeles," *Labor: Studies in Working-Class History of the Americas* 9, no. 3 (Fall 2012): 53–68; Dennis A. Deslippe, *Rights, Not Roses: Unions and the Rise of Working-Class Feminism, 1945-80* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2000); Mary Margaret Fonow, *Union Women: Forging Feminism in the United Steelworkers of America* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2003); Nancy Felice Gabin, *Feminism in the Labor*

consider queer workers' organizing to challenge discrimination both at work and within their unions. While there are early examples of this organizing, queer labor organizing really started in the 1970s, gained some steam in the 1980s, and took off in a bigger way in the 1990s and the 2000s.¹⁵

Allan Bérubé points out that labor historians have analyzed how work has been both racialized and gendered, but not how “work has increasingly been ‘homosexualized’ as queer work, or ‘heterosexualized’ as straight work or even antigay work, such as military service.”¹⁶ Both Bérubé and Tiemeyer have written

Movement: Women and the United Auto Workers, 1935-1975 (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1990); Evelyn Nakano Glenn, *Unequal Freedom: How Race and Gender Shaped American Citizenship and Labor* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2002); William Hamilton Harris, *Keeping the Faith: A. Philip Randolph, Milton P. Webster, and the Brotherhood of Sleeping Car Porters, 1925-37* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1977); Susan Isenberg, *We'll Call You If We Need You: Experiences of Women Working Construction* (Ithaca: ILR Press, 1998); Jane LaTour, *Sisters in the Brotherhoods: Working Women Organizing for Equality in New York City* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2008); Nancy MacLean, *Freedom Is Not Enough: The Opening of the American Workplace* (New York: Cambridge: Russell Sage Foundation; Harvard University Press, 2006); Ruth Milkman, *Gender at Work: The Dynamics of Job Segregation by Sex During World War II* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1987); Barry Reay, *New York Hustlers: Masculinity and Sex in Modern America* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2010); Jim Rose, “‘The Problem Every Supervisor Dreads’: Women Workers at the U.S. Steel Duquesne Works during World War II,” *Labor History* 36, no. 1 (1995): 24–51; Carole Shammas, “Black Women’s Work and the Evolution of Plantation Society in Virginia,” *Labor History* 26, no. 1 (1985): 5–28; Suzanne E. Tallichet, *Daughters of the Mountain: Women Coal Miners in Central Appalachia* (University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press, 2006); Joan S. Wang, “Race, Gender, and Laundry Work: The Roles of Chinese Laundrymen and American Women in the United States, 1850-1950,” *Journal of American Ethnic History* 24, no. 1 (Fall 2004): 58–99; Christine L. Williams, *Gender Differences at Work: Women and Men in Non-Traditional Occupations* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1989); Christine L. Williams, *Still a Man’s World: Men Who Do “Women’s” Work* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1995); Judy Yung, Gordon H. Chang, and H. Mark Lai, eds., *Chinese American Voices: From the Gold Rush to the Present* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2006); Xiaojian Zhao, “Chinese American Women Defense Workers in World War II,” *California History* 75, no. 2 (Summer 1996): 138–53.

¹⁵ Holcomb and Wohlforth, “Fruits of Our Labor: Pride at Work,” 10.

¹⁶ Bérubé, *My Desire for History*, 261.

about work that has been “homosexualized” when performed by men. Bérubé, a community-based gay scholar, played a pioneering role in his research about a very early example of the convergence of queer rights organizing with the labor movement. The Marine Cooks and Stewards Union (MCSU), originally founded to keep Asians workers out, was, by the 1930s, transformed into a radical, anti-racist union with a large gay membership which actively opposed what it called “queen-baiting,” as well as red-baiting and race-baiting.¹⁷ The Marine Cooks and Stewards Union represented stewards who worked on ships, including passenger liners. Bérubé observes, “the stewards who did queer work on the passenger liners were the pastry chefs, waiters, caterers, bedroom stewards, pursers, wine stewards, florists, hairdressers, and telephone operators.”¹⁸ Bérubé underscores that this work performed by white gay men is often reserved for white women, women of color, and men of color—but not straight, traditionally masculine white men. This was the case because the work of being a steward on ship liners was both feminized and racialized, and thus viewed as a degraded form of labor unsuitable for white straight men. However, Bérubé also highlights the refusal by the Matson liners, where many gay white men worked, to hire women and people of color, opening up the steward positions to white, disproportionately gay men.¹⁹ By pointing this out, Bérubé illuminates the ways that the devaluation of certain kinds of labor is nuanced, and how various oppressed groups of workers have been (and continue to be) pitted against each other,

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, 310.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, 261.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, 286–287.

depending on the particular kind of exclusionary practices promoted by employers, and society more generally.

Like Bérubé, Phil Tiemeyer examines a feminized occupation performed disproportionately by gay men. In *Plane Queer*, Tiemeyer traces the history of male flight attendants, showing the ways in which this work, from its inception in the 1930s, has always been queer when performed by men.²⁰ Tiemeyer argues that the acceptance of male flight attendants has followed an uneven trajectory, with the 1930s, 1970s and 1990s being less homophobic toward male flight attendants, and the 1950s and 1980s standing out as “decidedly antagonistic for gay men working as flight attendants.”²¹ Focusing much less on organizing by queer workers, Tiemeyer’s analysis centers more on the impact of legal victories for the rights of male flight attendants. For example, an important turning point was when a straight male prospective flight attendant Celio Diaz used the 1964 Civil Rights Act’s prohibition on sex discrimination in employment to reverse the airlines’ female-only hiring practices.²² This successful court case helped to overturn airlines’ policies against hiring male flight attendants, opening the door in the 1970s to both gay and straight men being hired by airlines as flight attendants. Tiemeyer’s discussion of the impact of the AIDs epidemic on the treatment of gay male flight attendants stands out in

²⁰ Historian Kathleen Barry, in her history of flight attendants in the U.S., shows how flight attendant work has historically been (and continues to be) a female-dominated profession, but she does not include a discussion of how this work, when performed by men, has been viewed as a kind of queer labor: Kathleen M. Barry, *Femininity in Flight a History of Flight Attendants* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2007).

²¹ Tiemeyer, *Plane Queer*, 220.

²² *Ibid.*, 9.

queer labor history. He shows how the onset of AIDS represented a setback for gay flight attendants with HIV or AIDS in the 1980s, as flight attendants were either fired or not hired because of their status as people living with HIV or AIDS, a period of regression after the progress made around queer workers rights in the 1970s.²³

Though labor historians have written about women breaking down gender barriers by working at male-dominated professions, especially as a result of the feminist movement of the 1960s and 1970s, little has been written about lesbians working in these same jobs.²⁴ Jane Latour's *Sisters in the Brotherhoods* considers women's place in male-dominated jobs and unions, such as carpentry, electrical work, fighting, engineering, iron work, and so on. Latour does touch on lesbians in the trades, including their experiences of homophobia in the workplace. For example, Latour points to lesbians' experiences with homophobia in the late 1970s and early 1980s while working as electricians as an important motivation for becoming involved in the women's support group, Women Electricians, for women entering Local 3, the New York City local of the International Brotherhood of Electrical Workers.²⁵ But Latour's focus is on the experiences of women trying to breakdown sexism in male-dominated jobs and unions, not on the experiences of lesbians. Latour's study provides a valuable example of the ways that queer workers' experiences are addressed in the literature about women and men who cross gender boundaries to do work traditionally performed by the other gender.

²³ Ibid., 136.

²⁴ For example, see Isenberg, *We'll Call You If We Need You*.

²⁵ LaTour, *Sisters in the Brotherhoods*, 68.

Miriam Frank, on the other hand, centers an analysis of queer workers' experiences. In "Hard Hats and Homophobia: Lesbians in the Building Trades," Frank stresses that no statistics exist about the precise number of lesbians working in the building trades, but "anecdotes from the informal subcultures of nontraditionally employed women confirm Connie Ashbrook's impression of a wide lesbian presence."²⁶ Frank explains, "in crossing the gender barrier to make a living, many lesbians felt liberated from conventional feminine behaviors."²⁷ But, argues Frank, lesbians, as well as straight women, faced "dyke-baiting" by their male co-workers who felt that their privileges were threatened by the inclusion of women in male-dominated construction trades. Construction unions, moreover, have historically been some of the most conservative, sexist, and racially exclusionary unions in the United States.²⁸ Lesbians and other women were confronted with the need to challenge their own unions' discriminatory actions.²⁹

Rather than focusing on the ways in which teaching may have been "homosexualized" in the late 1970s, here I explore organizing by gay and lesbian teachers. However, this case study about gay and lesbian teachers' organizing against the Briggs Initiative is partially in conversation with Bérubé, Tiemeyer, and Frank

²⁶ Frank, "Hard Hats and Homophobia: Lesbians in the Building Trades," 25.

²⁷ *Ibid.*, 27.

²⁸ Frank, "Hard Hats and Homophobia: Lesbians in the Building Trades"; Freeman, "Hard Hats: Construction Workers, Manliness, 1970 Pro-War Demonstrations"; David A Goldberg and Trevor Griffey, *Black Power at Work: Community Control, Affirmative Action, and the Construction Industry* (Ithaca: ILR Press/Cornell University Press, 2010); Isenberg, *We'll Call You If We Need You*; LaTour, *Sisters in the Brotherhoods*; Lewis, *Hardhats, Hippies, and Hawks*.

²⁹ *Ibid.*, 26–27.

about the ways in which certain kinds of labor are perceived as queer work when performed by the “wrong” gender. Teaching at the elementary school level has, for most of the history of teaching in the U.S., been a female-dominated profession.³⁰ The rhetoric of the pro-Briggs campaign often centered on the supposed threat posed by gay male teachers to the children they taught. The small number of men, whether gay or not, teaching in elementary schools faced the social stigma of crossing the gender boundary to do work assigned to women. The fact that gay men, in particular, were working with children added an additional threatening dimension—not only were gay men, as men, threatening the gendered order by working in a feminized profession, but, according to conservatives, they were in a position to serve as “role models,” making it appear to the children they taught that being gay was in fact perfectly fine. Thus, gay men teaching in the elementary schools were in a position to actively undermine gender norms that dictated the kind of work women and men should perform, but were also, according to the Right, undermining societal norms that taught children that heterosexuality was normal, and that homosexuality was deviant.

Female teachers made up the majority of teachers at the primary and secondary school levels in the late 1970s.³¹ Data are not available indicating whether or not lesbians made up a disproportionate number of women teachers. With a few exceptions (most notably coaching), lesbians working as teachers were not breaking

³⁰ In 1975, 85% of elementary school teachers were women (Barbara H. Wootton, “Gender Differences in Occupational Employment,” *Monthly Labor Review* 120 (April 1997), 17)

³¹ National Center for Education Statistics, “120 Years of American Education: A Statistical Portrait” (U.S. Department of Education Office of Educational Research and Improvement, 1993), <http://www.thebrokenwindow.net/papers/9/93442.pdf>, accessed April 9, 2014.

down gender barriers by working in a male-dominated profession at the elementary and secondary school levels, as were the lesbian and other female construction workers that Frank discusses. However, teaching did provide women the ability to achieve a measure of economic independence over and above many other feminized jobs which paid less and were less secure. The body of literature on the history of queer work and queer labor organizing, being as small as it is, has not considered the extent to which female-dominated professions, including teaching, provided lesbians the opportunities they needed to be economically freed from the constraints of the male-headed nuclear family.

Though lesbian teachers at the elementary and secondary school levels were not breaking down gender barriers by working in a male-dominated profession, they were working in a profession reserved for straight women. The history of the feminization of teaching in the U.S. reveals the ways in which the sexuality of female teachers was regulated. Women teachers were supposed to model proper behavior to their students. Prior to World War II, this meant the de-sexualization of female teachers, who, once married, were supposed to leave teaching to take care of their families. In reality, before World War II, marriage restrictions meant that most long-term teachers were either single or lesbian.³² After World War II, when marriage restrictions were largely broken down in the public schools, the state scrutinized teachers' sexuality more closely to ensure proper deportment on the part of female teachers. Due to society's stigmatization of gays and lesbians, and queer people more

³² Harbeck, *Gay and Lesbian Educators*, 169.

generally, female teachers were expected to model proper moral behavior, and this meant being straight, not gay. According to Blount, “in the decades following World War II, teachers accused of homosexuality faced certain dismissal, if not permanent career ruin.”³³ In a way, like gay male teachers working in the elementary schools, lesbians teachers also helped to making teaching queer by working in a profession reserved for straight women.

Though there is still much work to be done on the topic, scholars have examined, to some extent, the efforts of queer workers to challenge discrimination at work beginning in the 1970s, including their efforts to influence their unions to adopt the struggle for queer rights as an important part of their work. Desma Holcomb and Nancy Wohlforth, in an article published in *New Labor Forum* in 2001, discuss the recent history of queer workers’ struggles. This organizing by queer workers was launched in the 1970s, with San Francisco being an important early site for queer labor organizing. Howard Wallace, a longtime queer labor activist, alongside other gay activists like Harvey Milk, helped to form the Lesbian and Gay Labor Alliance in San Francisco in the mid-1970s as an alliance between labor unions, with the International Brotherhood of Teamsters playing a leading role, and gay activists to drive the anti-union and homophobic Coors beer “out of every gay and lesbian bar in the city.”³⁴ Holcomb and Wohlforth show that the gay-labor alliance to promote the boycott of Coors beer was one of the earliest examples of queer labor organizing.

³³ Jackie M. Blount, *Fit to Teach: Same-Sex Desire, Gender, and School Work in the Twentieth Century* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2005), 4.

³⁴ Holcomb and Wohlforth, "Fruits of Our Labor," 16.

They also discuss the important role that gay and lesbian caucuses played in the 1980s and 1990s in influencing the labor movement to challenge discrimination against queer workers, most prominently by prohibiting discrimination against gay workers and winning domestic partner health benefits in union contracts.³⁵ In an early victory that resulted from this grassroots organizing by queer workers, at its convention in 1983 the AFL-CIO resolved to add “sexual orientation” to non-discrimination clause in the federation’s constitution. Holcomb and Wohlforth show that decades of grassroots efforts led by queer workers culminated first in the founding of Pride at Work in 1994, a national network of queer workers, and, secondly, the formal incorporation of Pride at Work into the AFL-CIO as an official constituency group in 1997.³⁶

Alongside the Coors boycott, the campaign against the Briggs Initiative, as we shall see, was a crucial moment in the gay and lesbian rights movement, but it was also key turning point in queer labor history. The campaign against the Briggs Initiative in California extended this gay-labor alliance beyond the Bay Area to other parts of California. Gerald Hunt and Monica Bielski Boris point out that “gay and lesbian teachers were among the first to push their unions to fight repressive

³⁵ Ibid., 13. Also see Miriam Frank’s article, “Lesbian and Gay Caucuses in the U.S. Labor Movement,” in Gerald Hunt, ed., *Laboring For Rights*.

³⁶ Ibid., 10–11. For more on the Coors boycott, see Randy Shilts, *The Mayor of Castro Street: The Life and Times of Harvey Milk* (New York: St. Martin’s Press, 1982). Howard Wallace died in November, 2012. He helped to found Pride at Work as co-president with Nancy Wohlforth in 1994 (see Cynthia Laird, “Labor Leader Howard Wallace Dies,” *The Bay Area Reporter*, November 22, 2012).

employment norms because they were at risk of being fired if they came out.”³⁷ My research on the Briggs Initiative examines this history in more depth. I argue that the campaign against the Briggs Initiative placed gay and lesbian teachers and the teachers’ unions in California at the forefront of efforts just getting off the ground to make the labor movement more responsive to the needs of queer workers.

Larger changes by the late 1970s in the economy and the makeup of the labor force in the United States help explain why gay and lesbian teachers and their unions were pioneers in queer labor organizing. Why were teachers, and not factory workers, labor’s traditional stronghold, some of the first workers to advocate for queer rights at work? By the late 1970s, manufacturing had been in decline for a number of years at the same time that employment in the service and public sectors was on the rise.³⁸ Stanley Aronowitz points out that between 1959 and the 1980s over 4 million public sector unionized.³⁹⁴⁰ At the same time unionization in the private sector was in decline, and with the beginnings of deindustrialization of the US economy, women and people of color tended to lose their jobs first, as the last hired, first fired. Because

³⁷ Bielski Boris and Hunt, “Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, and Transgender Challenge to American Labor,” 86.

³⁸ Bluestone and Harrison, *The Deindustrialization of America*; Cowie, *Capital Moves*; Cowie, *Stayin’ Alive*; Cowie and Heathcott, *Beyond the Ruins*; Dandaneau, *A Town Abandoned*; High, *Industrial Sunset*; Milkman, *Farewell to the Factory*; Stein, *Running Steel, Running America*; Stein, *Pivotal Decade*.

³⁹ Krupat and McCreery, eds., *Out at Work Building a Gay-Labor Alliance*, 8.

⁴⁰ For more on the history of public sector unionism, see, for example, Freeman, *In Transit*; Goulden, *Jerry Wurf: Labor’s Last Angry Man*; Johnston, *Success While Others Fail*; McCartin, “‘A Wagner Act for Public Employees’: Labor’s Deferred Dream and the Rise of Conservatism, 1970-1976”; McCartin, *Collision Course*; Rubio, *There’s Always Work at the Post Office*; Schaffer, “Where Are the Organized Public Employees? The Absence of Public Employee Unionism from U.S. History Textbooks, and Why It Matters”; Slater, *Public Workers*; “Bringing the State’s Workers In: Time to Rectify and Imbalanced Labor Historiography.”

women and people of color tended worked in the public sector in larger numbers than they did in the private sector, particularly manufacturing, according to Gerald Hunt and David Rayside, “the increasing importance of public sector union members helped to push the labor movement toward a recognition of diversity.”⁴¹ Hunt and Rayside also emphasize that the unions in the private sector in decline tended to “represent traditional views of gender and sexuality.” The shift toward public and service sector unionism, they argue, has increased the importance of unions “likely to represent more flexible views.”⁴²

The new social movements of the 1960s and 1970s helped to revive and redefine social unionism toward an ideology of unionism reminiscent of the variation of social unionism that flourished in the 1930s, prior to the labor-management accord during WWII and before the purge of the Left from much of the labor movement that resulted in the widespread adoption of a more conservative business unionism in the U.S.⁴³ Kitty Krupat points out that the social unionism in the age of the CIO in the 1930s took on a broader range of social justice issues in addition to its economic demands. Krupat argues,

⁴¹ Gerald Hunt and David Rayside, “The Geopolitics of Sexual Diversity: Measuring Progress in the U.S., Canada, and the Netherlands,” *New Labor Forum* 8 (Spring-Summer 2001): 40.

⁴² *Ibid.*, 41.

⁴³ For more on the social unionism of the CIO, see, for example, Elizabeth Faue, *Community of Suffering & Struggle: Women, Men, and the Labor Movement in Minneapolis, 1915-1945* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1991); Staughton Lynd, ed., “*We Are All Leaders*”: *The Alternative Unionism of the Early 1930s* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1996); Nelson Lichtenstein, *Labor’s War at Home: The CIO in World War II* (Cambridge; New York: Cambridge University Press, 1982); Steven Rosswurm, ed., *The CIO’s Left-Led Unions* (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 1992); Robert H. Zieger, *The CIO, 1935-1955* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1995).

One of social unionism's more utopian aims was the development of rank-and-file democracy and leadership. Ideally, rank-and-file democracy would lead to full representation on the basis of race, ethnicity, and gender. But this principle was honored in breach more often than not. Though African Americans and women made strikes during the Age of the CIO, they continued to be underrepresented in the union movement, both in membership numbers and leadership positions.⁴⁴

During WWII more cooperative relationship between the labor movement, employers and the state emerged than had existed in the 1930s. With the onset of the Cold War after WWII, the labor movement purged communists and other leftists, the union activists and leaders most likely to push the labor movement to challenge discrimination, particularly racism.⁴⁵ By the time the AFL and CIO merged in 1955, the labor movement had begun its rightward turn. However, the new social movements of the 1960s and 1970s, combined with the union democracy and rank-and-file reform movements of the 1970s, marked the beginning of efforts to revive

⁴⁴ Krupat and McCreery, *Out at Work*, 5.

⁴⁵ For background on the Communist Party, the labor movement, and racial politics, see Robert W. Cherny, William Issel, and Kieran Walsh Taylor, eds., *American Labor and the Cold War: Grassroots Politics and Postwar Political Culture* (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 2004); Rosemary Feurer, *Radical Unionism in the Midwest, 1900-1950* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2006); Ronald L. Filippelli, *Cold War in the Working Class: The Rise and Decline of the United Electrical Workers* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1995); Robin D. G. Kelley, *Hammer and Hoe: Alabama Communists During the Great Depression* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1990); Robert Rodgers Korstad, *Civil Rights Unionism: Tobacco Workers and the Struggle for Democracy in the Mid-Twentieth-Century South* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2003); George Lipsitz, *Rainbow at Midnight: Labor and Culture in the 1940s* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1994); Mark Naison, *Communists in Harlem During the Depression* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1983); Shelton Stromquist, ed., *Labor's Cold War: Local Politics in a Global Context* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2008); Jeff Woods, *Black Struggle, Red Scare: Segregation and Anti-Communism in the South, 1948-1968* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University, 2004).

the labor movement, which involved pushing it to the left.⁴⁶ Only this time around, as Krupat argues, the influence of the 1960s and 1970s meant that “workers introduced challenging ideas about democratic trade unionism, demanding representation at every level of union structure for women, people of color, differing age groups, and eventually sexual orientations.”⁴⁷ My analysis of the AFT in California similarly confirms that the influence of the social movements of the 1960s and 1970s influenced the labor movement to begin to take the struggle against various forms of discrimination, including homophobia, more seriously. In other words, the movements of the 1960s and 1970s helped to redefine the social unionism of the 1930s by working to center anti-discrimination struggles within the labor movement.

The Rise of the Christian Right

A campaign waged by Anita Bryant in 1977 to overturn a gay rights ordinance in Florida inspired Senator Briggs to bring his own anti-gay legislation to California. In the late 1970s gay and lesbian rights were rapidly becoming a favorite target of the

⁴⁶ On the labor insurgency of the 1960s and 1970s see, for example, Aaron Brenner, Robert Brenner, and Calvin Winslow, eds., *Rebel Rank and File: Labor Militancy and Revolt from Below in the Long 1970s* (London; New York: Verso, 2010); Jeffrey W. Coker, *Confronting American Labor: The New Left Dilemma* (Columbia: University of Missouri Press, 2002); Deslippe, *Rights, Not Roses*; Dan Georgakas and Marvin Surkin, *Detroit, I Do Mind Dying*, 2nd ed (Cambridge, Mass: South End Press, 1998); Michael K. Honey, *Going Down Jericho Road: The Memphis Strike, Martin Luther King’s Last Campaign* (New York: W.W. Norton & Co., 2007); Dan La Botz, *Rank and File Rebellion: Teamsters for a Democratic Union* (London; New York: Verso, 1990); Peter B. Levy, *The New Left and Labor in the 1960s* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1994); David M. Lewis-Colman, *Race Against Liberalism: Black Workers and the UAW in Detroit* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2008); Albert Vetere Lannon and Marvin Rogoff, “We Shall Not Remain Silent: Building the Anti-Vietnam War Movement in the House of Labor,” *Science & Society* 66, no. 4 (Winter /2003 2002): 536–44.

⁴⁷ Krupat and McCreery, eds., *Out at Work*, 9.

newly galvanized Christian Right. Anita Bryant's crusade against gay rights in Dade County, Florida in 1977 reached prominence nationally, proving to be a launching pad for campaigns against gay rights in cities and states across the country from 1977 to 1979.⁴⁸ Bryant, a Christian fundamentalist, former Miss Oklahoma, runner-up for Miss America, and spokesperson for the Florida Orange Juice Commission, led the backlash in 1977 against the Dade County Metro Commission, which had passed an ordinance providing protections against discrimination in housing, employment, and public accommodations based on "sexual preference."⁴⁹ Bryant helped to form the group Save Our Children, with the objective of gathering signatures to put the ordinance up for a popular vote. On election day, June 7, 1977, Bryant and Save Our Children were ultimately successful. The gay rights ordinance was repealed by a vote of 69 to 31 percent.⁵⁰ This successful campaign in Florida inspired State Senator John Briggs from California, who visited Dade County to support Bryant's campaign.⁵¹

Anita Bryant's campaign focused heavily on the alleged threat that gay people, particularly teachers, posed to children, a message that Briggs took note of in his decision to draft his own anti-gay initiative. In a letter from Anita Bryant Ministries, Bryant pronounced, "I don't hate homosexuals! But as a mother, I must

⁴⁸ For background on conservative activism against gay rights, see Braukman, *Communists and Perverts under the Palms*; Graves, *And They Were Wonderful Teachers*.

⁴⁹ The Metro Commission represented residents at the county level. Harbeck, *Gay and Lesbian Educators*, 39-41.

⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, 51.

⁵¹ "Briggs Goes Bananas," *Gay Teachers and School Workers Coalition Newsletter*, August/September 1977 1, no. 1, Private Collection of Jane Zobel (hereafter Zobel Collection), Oakland, California.

protect my children from their evil influence.”⁵² During the campaign, Bryant claimed, first, that “public approval of admitted homosexual teachers could encourage more homosexuality by inducing pupils into looking upon it as an acceptable life-style. And, second, a particularly deviant-minded teacher could sexually molest children.”⁵³ Briggs took up Bryant’s two points—that gay and lesbian teachers served as role models for children and that gay teachers were perfectly situated to molest children—in his own campaign.

Bryant, Briggs and the Christian Right saw in gay and lesbian rights a coming apocalypse. If gay was good, that necessarily meant the downfall of the straight, nuclear family, which all that was respectable and virtuous in society depended on. Bryant argued, in her characteristically melodramatic fashion, “the homosexual act is just the beginning of the depravity. It then leads to...sado-masochism, alcohol, drugs...and ends up with suicide.”⁵⁴ In an interview with *Los Angeles Times* columnist Robert Scheer, Briggs claimed that the presence of a disproportionate number of gays and lesbians in San Francisco led to a greater number of murders, more cases of gonorrhea, and a higher dependence on welfare than in other cities. To argue his point about welfare, Briggs said, without any apparent basis in reality, “and since a lot of those people, not all of them, tend to have more interest in their sexual

⁵² Letter, “Dear Friend,” from the Anita Bryant Ministries, [n.d.], Harvey Milk Archives—Scott Smith Collection (hereafter Milk Collection), folder: Briggs, box 6, San Francisco Public Library (hereafter SFPL), San Francisco, California.

⁵³ Blount, *Fit to Teach*, 132.

⁵⁴ Harbeck, *Gay and Lesbian Educators*, 47.

activities than they do in working, there is a high concentration up there.”⁵⁵ Briggs also argued, “homosexual relationships, by definition, cannot fulfill necessary social functions. The individuals involved do not form stable social units and do not create or nurture children; in this sense they are anti-life as well as anti-family.”⁵⁶

Rather than recognizing the existence of discrimination against gays and lesbians, Anita Bryant further claimed that the Dade County gay rights ordinance conferred “special privileges to homosexuals in areas of housing, public accommodation, and employment.”⁵⁷ This reference to “special privileges” or “special rights” became a frequently repeated argument of the Christian Right. As Sara Diamond points out, “the ‘special rights’ theme relies on the argument that sexual orientation is not, in fact, the basis for widespread discrimination and that gays simply want to win ‘legitimacy’ for their deviant behavior.”⁵⁸

Historian Lisa McGirr writes of the shift in focus in the Right that began in the 1970s: “the package of conservative concerns shifted from a discursive preoccupation with public, political, and international enemies (namely, communism) to enemies within our own communities and families (namely, secular humanists,

⁵⁵ Robert Scheer, “A Times Interview with John Briggs on Homosexuality,” *Los Angeles Times*, October 6, 1978.

⁵⁶ John Briggs, “Deviants Threaten the American Family,” *Los Angeles Times*, October 23, 1977.

⁵⁷ Anita Bryant, *The Anita Bryant Story: The Survival of Our Nation’s Families and the Threat of Militant Homosexuality* (Old Tappan, NJ: Fleming H. Revell Company, 1977), 13.

⁵⁸ Sara Diamond, *Not by Politics Alone: The Enduring Influence of the Christian Right* (New York: Guilford, 1998), 160.

women's liberationists, and, eventually, homosexuals)."⁵⁹ The Right began to combine its traditional free market, anti-communist oriented conservatism with a social conservatism that sought to reverse advancements made by the social movements of the 1960s through the early 1970s, as well as stem any further progress. The socially conservative, largely Christian Right did this by emphasizing that the family was the building block of a stable society, and that efforts by the Left to weaken the traditional nuclear family resulted in moral decay that was responsible for many society's social ills. Thus the early 1970s witnessed Phyllis Schlafly's campaign against the feminist movement-inspired Equal Rights Amendment. Conservatives, moreover, in the 1960s and 1970s sought to prevent school desegregation by engaging in mass mobilizations against school busing.⁶⁰

Most important for the purpose of understanding the Briggs Initiative is that one of the primary arguments used by the Christian Right against gay rights involved the supposed dangers that gay people posed to children. This inclination led people like Bryant and Briggs to focus on the public schools. Briggs and his group California Defend Our Children promoted the idea that gay people were child molesters and sought to recruit children to homosexuality, and therefore should be kept out of the public school system. In his interview for the *Los Angeles Times* with Scheer in early October, 1978, Briggs maintained, "My bill is aimed at preventing a teacher from

⁵⁹ Lisa McGirr, *Suburban Warriors: The Origins of the American Right* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2001), 15.

⁶⁰ Rebecca E. Klatch, *Women of the New Right* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1987). 26; Ronald P. Formisano, *Boston Against Busing: Race, Class, and Ethnicity in The 1960s and 1970s* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1991).

being put in a favored position to molest a child before he gets the opportunity or she gets the opportunity.”⁶¹ A pamphlet from 1978 put out by California Defend Our Children claimed, “many homosexual spokesmen freely admit that homosexual activists want absolute freedom to provide examples of ‘role models.’ In effect, to be legitimized in their perverted lifestyle so they may influence our children to adopt homosexuality.”⁶²

In terms of political strategy, Briggs and others in the Christian Right found a receptive audience for their idea that gay people posed a unique threat to children. For example, a national Gallup poll survey in the summer of 1977 found that 65% of those polled were opposed to hiring gays and lesbians as elementary school teachers, although 56% believed gays and lesbians should, in general, have equal job opportunities. Furthermore, *McCall's Magazine* reported in March, 1978 that 42 percent of school principals favored firing gay teachers.⁶³ These statistics highlighted for people like Briggs and others on the Right that there was a good deal of potential political capital to be gained by narrowing in on gays and lesbians in the schools.

Taking advantage of Bryant's successful anti-gay campaign in Dade County, conservative activists waged campaigns against gay rights in states and cities across the U.S. in the late 1970s. In April, 1978, voters in St. Paul, Minnesota repealed their

⁶¹ Scheer, “A Times Interview with Senator John Briggs on Homosexuality”; Dudley Clendinen and Adam Nagourney, *Out for Good: The Struggle to Build a Gay Rights Movement in America* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1999), 389; Harbeck, *Gay and Lesbian Educators*, 65-66.

⁶² “California Defend Our Children” Pamphlet, Briggs Collection, folder: Briggs Unsorted, box 2.

⁶³ “65% in Poll Oppose Gays as Teachers,” *Los Angeles Times*, July 17, 1977; *Cheery Chalkboard*, April 1978, Briggs Collection, folder: Cheery Chalkboard.

gay rights ordinance. In early May, 1978 Wichita, Kansas voters repealed a gay rights ordinance, and in late May voters in Eugene, Oregon also defeated gay rights protections by 63 percent.⁶⁴ In Oklahoma in April of 1978, moreover, the governor signed a bill into law that reproduced the language of the Briggs Initiative in California.⁶⁵

Briggs promoted two propositions, Propositions 6 and 7, in an effort to gain publicity for gubernatorial aspirations. Proposition 7, also on the ballot in November, 1978, sought to expand the circumstances under which people could be sentenced to death by the state. Briggs also claimed that his inspiration for promoting Proposition 6, as a somebody from a “fundamental Christian family,” was the passage of a law decriminalizing homosexuality in California just a few years earlier, in 1975.⁶⁶ Briggs had been a California state senator for two years, and in the state assembly for ten years before that.⁶⁷ He hoped that making gay and lesbian rights a target would propel him to the governorship. Briggs was quoted as saying, “homosexuality is the hottest issue in this country since Reconstruction.”⁶⁸ In addition to the anti-gay Proposition 6, he hoped to capitalize on growing sentiment against crime by also sponsoring Proposition 7, an initiative on the November, 1978 ballot to expand the death

⁶⁴ Harbeck, *Gay and Lesbian Educators*, 58; Clendinen, *Out for Good*, 327.

⁶⁵ Harbeck, *Gay and Lesbian Educators*, 87; Blount, *Fit to Teach*, 160; Shilts, *The Mayor of Castro Street*, 213.

⁶⁶ Robert Levering, “John Briggs on Gays: Exclusive Interview! The Author of the Briggs Initiative Sounds off on Homosexuality, Prostitution, Perversion, Adultery and Bestiality,” [n.p.], October 5-13, 1978, Briggs Collection, folder: Found Loose, 2/4, box 2.

⁶⁷ Clendinen, *Out for Good*, 365.

⁶⁸ Shilts, *The Mayor of Castro Street*, 230.

penalty.⁶⁹ However, despite his efforts, Briggs was trailing in the polls enough in early 1978 that he withdrew his candidacy for governor of California, and focused exclusively on passing Propositions 6 and 7.⁷⁰

Only a week had passed after the Dade County vote overturning the city's gay rights ordinance when Briggs announced his intention to bring his own anti-gay legislation to California. Amidst what the *Los Angeles Times* described as a "raucous crowd" of 75 gay rights demonstrators at Briggs' press conference on June 14, 1977, Briggs stood on the steps of San Francisco's City Hall to announce his intention to bring legislation to the California State Senate allowing school boards to fire "homosexual teachers." During the press conference his reference to "normal people," as opposed to gay people, "set off angry shouts of 'Nazi' and 'Bigot' from the protesters, many of whom announced themselves as homosexuals," according to the *Los Angeles Times*.⁷¹ When the Senate refused to consider Briggs' legislation, Briggs announced on August 3 his plan to bring an initiative before California's voters in June of 1978.⁷² The plan was delayed, however, when the gay activist Pride Foundation challenged the constitutionality of the wording of the initiative; in

⁶⁹ Michael Ward and Mark Freeman, "Defending Gay Rights: The Campaign Against the Briggs Amendment in California," *Radical America* 13, no. 4 (August 1979): 14.

⁷⁰ Harbeck, *Gay and Lesbian Educators*, 70.

⁷¹ "Briggs in Clash With Homosexuals: Proposal on Firing Gay Teachers Draw Protest in S.F.," *Los Angeles Times*, June 15, 1977.

⁷² "Briggs Goes Bananas," *Gay Teachers and School Workers Coalition Newsletter*, August/September 1977 1, no. 1, Zobel Collection.

response, in December, 1977 Briggs decided to re-word the initiative and bring it before voters in November, 1978.⁷³

The Briggs Initiative was broad in its scope, targeting all known gay teachers and other school workers in California's public schools. But it also targeted advocates of gay rights, a provision that even conservative civil libertarians found objectionable.⁷⁴ The initiative prohibited "public homosexuality activity directed at, or likely to come to the convention of, school children or other school employees."⁷⁵ The bill would require local school boards to hold hearings to determine whether or not the accused should be dismissed, which was reminiscent of McCarthy-era anti-communist hearings targeting not only communists and socialists but anybody suspected of subversion.⁷⁶

With the support of the religious Right, between late 1977 and November, 1978 supporters of the Briggs Initiative waged a considerable campaign to pass the initiative. People working to qualify the Briggs Initiative on the November ballot gathered almost 200,000 more signatures than required, collecting about 500,000 signatures total, while 312,404 valid signatures were needed to qualify.⁷⁷ According to a Fair Political Practices Commission report issued on July 11, 1978, backers of the Briggs Initiative had spent \$859,487 to ensure the initiative qualified for the ballot.

⁷³ "Of all, the Most Vulnerable: Homophobia Hits the Classroom," *The Advocate*, December 14, 1977, Zobel Collection.

⁷⁴ "The Libertarian Party Says: NO on 6," Briggs Collection, folder: No on Briggs, box 1.

⁷⁵ "California Voters Pamphlet, General Election, November 7, 1978,"

http://librarysource.uchastings.edu/ballot_pdf/1978g.pdf, accessed April 9, 2014.

⁷⁶ Melinda Beck and Martin Kasindorf, "The New Issue: Gay Teachers," October 2, 1978, *Newsweek*.

⁷⁷ Clendinen, *Out for Good*, 378.

The *Los Angeles Times* reported the next day that Briggs' California Defend Our Children, the leading group organizing to pass the initiative, had raised a total of \$883,628 in contributions, including a \$361,631 loan from the Citizens for Senator John Briggs Committee. In contrast, of groups opposed to the Briggs Initiative had only raised \$122,944 and spent \$116,415 during the lead-up to ballot qualification in July, 1978.⁷⁸

The late 1970s, then, marked the rise of a new variant of the socially conservative Right. This time, the Right focused its aim on gay and lesbian rights, setting gay and lesbian teachers, in particular, in its crosshairs. Because teachers were in an influential position to influence children, the Right viewed gay and lesbian teachers as a vulnerable target. They argued that not only were gay teachers in a position to act as role models for children, thus potentially influencing children to become gay themselves, but, in worst case scenarios, gay and lesbian teachers could molest children. After Anita Bryant's successful campaign in 1977 to overturn the gay rights ordinance in Dade County gained national attention, California State Senator John Briggs, hoping to gain political capital in his bid for the governorship, took note of Bryant's success and brought his own anti-gay teacher initiative, Proposition 6, to the California ballot in November, 1978.

⁷⁸ Jerry Gillam, "\$859,487 Spent to Push Antigay Issue," *Los Angeles Times*, July 12, 1978.

The Campaign Against the Briggs Initiative

The anti-gay attacks by the Christian Right catalyzed a resurgent gay rights movement. In June, 1977, the month that the gay rights ordinance was overturned in Dade County, hundreds of thousands of people attended gay pride parades across the country. In San Francisco on June 26, 1977 the Pride Parade attracted a record 375,000 people and was more political than it had been the previous year. As parade participants moved up Market Street, they expressed their opposition to Anita Bryant and the anti-gay crusade of the Christian Right, chanting, “the people united cannot be defeated” and “civil rights is not the solution, what we need is revolution,” but also “gay teachers fight back!”⁷⁹

Through a grassroots mobilization, gay and lesbian community-based activism led the campaign against the Briggs Initiative, resulting in its defeat. The decentralized nature of the anti-Briggs campaign stimulated the involvement of organizations with a multiplicity of politics, ranging from the more professionally-oriented advocates of traditional electoral campaigning focused exclusively on Proposition 6, to the more radically left gay and lesbian organizations that emphasized a multi-issue approach condemning both Propositions 6 and 7 and were grounded in bottom-up protest politics. Gay men and lesbians who had been organizing in separate political spaces, moreover, came together in coalitions to oppose the Briggs Initiative for the first time in years.⁸⁰ Lesbians, many of whom had

⁷⁹ David Johnston, “S.F. Gay Pride Parade Draws 375,000,” *Los Angeles Times*, June 27, 1977.

⁸⁰ Clendinen, *Out for Good*, 378.

been actively involved in the feminist movement, played leadership roles in the campaign. Many trade unions, particularly the teachers' unions, spoke out vocally against the initiative and, for the first time, advocated on behalf of gay rights. Though many who were involved in the anti-Briggs campaign, especially teachers who could lose their jobs if the Briggs Initiative passed, feared coming out as gay or lesbian, others courageously came out of the closet for the first time to help defeat the initiative.

The urgency of the need to defeat Briggs provoked the formation of a variety of gay and lesbian-led groups across the state. These groups varied in tactics and politics. The Concerned Voters of California (CVC) provides an example of the more professionally-oriented, relatively conservative opposition to the Briggs Initiative in the gay and lesbian community. Founded in September, 1977, according to gay activists Michael Ward and Mark Freeman, Concerned Voters of California consisted of men who were referred to in San Francisco by others in the gay and lesbian community as “power brokers” because of “their access to money and their reputed ability to deliver a gay vote in high-level California politics.”⁸¹ The group promoted a professionally-oriented, centralized campaign with moderate messaging. David Goodstein, one of the founders of the Concerned Voters who was also the owner of the gay monthly *The Advocate*, argued in late 1977, for example, “all gay people could help best by maintaining very low profiles. Constructively, we should assist in registering gay voters, stuffing envelopes in the headquarters and keeping out of sign

⁸¹ Ward and Freeman, “Defending Gay Rights: The Campaign Against the Briggs Amendment in California,” 15.

of non-gay voters.”⁸² Goodstein was convinced that passage of the Briggs Initiative was inevitable, believing that California voters would not deny the national trend against gay rights. Goodstein argued that gay and lesbian visibility would harm rather than help the campaign. He thought straight people should speak on gay people’s behalf, and that the “gay extremists” and “hedonists” should leave it to professionals to run the campaign. Goodstein, who was a millionaire and a steel mill owner, was very critical of the gay and lesbian Left, and represented a politics of respectability reminiscent of the earlier homophile group from the 1940s and 1950s, the Mattachine Society, which had undergone a transformation from being political left to being more conservative early in the organization’s life.⁸³ However, most activists in the anti-Briggs campaign rejected this point of view, forcing the CVC to accommodate itself to gay visibility in the campaign due to the lack of broader support for its campaign strategy.⁸⁴

In contrast to Concerned Voters of California, the Bay Area Committee Against the Briggs Initiative (BACABI) was a grassroots organization with leftist politics focused on defeating the Briggs Initiative, also known as Proposition 6, in 1978. BACABI described itself as a “broad-based coalition of groups and individuals united to defeat Proposition 6 in the November 1978 California election.” BACABI organized demonstrations, rallies, and political debates, as well as fundraisers, button distribution, tabling, and phonebanking. A range of subcommittees within BACABI,

⁸² Ibid., 16.

⁸³ Ibid., 13–14.

⁸⁴ Clendinen, *Out for Good*, 382.

including groups dedicated to outreach to Third World communities, to women, outreach to labor unions, and religious outreach, reflected BACABI's attempts to be cognizant of class, race, and gender issues. Though the group was to the political of CVC, its focus on defeating Proposition 6 and its coalitional nature resulted in endorsements by a cross section of people and groups, including the teachers' unions. For example, James Ballard, president of AFT Local 61; Raoul Teilhet, the president of the California Federation of Teachers; Berkeley Federation of Teachers Local 1078; Joan Marie-Shelley, the vice president of AFT Local 61 in San Francisco; and the Hayward Unified Teachers Association, among others, all endorsed BACABI.⁸⁵ Lois Helmbold, an activist in a group called the Lesbian Schoolworkers, recalls that BACABI became a "huge" organization, and she estimates that hundreds of people became involved in the group in the months leading up to the election.⁸⁶

Though BACABI chose to focus on defeating Proposition 6, rather than simultaneously building opposition to Proposition 7, the death penalty initiative, the group, like other leftists, did situate Proposition 6 within the rise of the New Right nationally. BACABI did this in an effort to build opposition not just to the anti-gay politics of the New Right, but also to develop a public understanding of the larger threat posed by the New Right. For example, a flyer distributed by BACABI's Labor Committee in 1978 quoted radical activist and scholar Angela Davis: "what began with the anti-busing hysteria in Boston moved rapidly in the direction of the [anti-

⁸⁵ Pamphlet, "Bay Area Committee Against the Briggs Initiative/No on 6," Briggs Collection, folder: BACABI, box 1.

⁸⁶ Lois Helmbold, Interview by Author, Oakland, California, September 11, 2009 (hereafter Helmbold Interview).

affirmative action] Bakke decision [by the Supreme Court], the anti-ERA drive, anti-abortion rights campaign and the vicious assaults led by Briggs in this state...on the rights of gay people.”⁸⁷ The Third World Caucus within BACABI distributed a flyer at some point in the months leading up to the November, 1978 election, stating that Proposition 6 “is part of a dangerous trend of putting the rights of oppressed people and workers on the ballot.” The flyer attributed these assaults to the New Right, which was “attempting to channel the anger and frustration millions of Americans are feeling about high taxes, unemployment, housing costs, the crisis within the family and the deterioration of the school system into attacks on the rights of minorities, women, public employees, the labor movement and gay people.”⁸⁸

Along with a number of other organizations, BACABI represented a leftist tendency within the movement that developed against the Briggs Initiative. Other groups to the political left of BACABI, such as the Lesbian Schoolworkers and the Gay Teachers and Schoolworkers Coalition, not only pointed to the threat posed by the New Right, but also attempted to build opposition to Proposition 7, the initiative to expand the death penalty.

It is important to underscore that Proposition 6 was defeated because dozens of groups, big and small and with different politics, formed across the state in cities, towns, and suburbs to build opposition to the Briggs Initiative. The extensive network of self-organized anti-Briggs groups points to the grassroots nature of the anti-Briggs

⁸⁷ BACABI Labor Committee flyer, “This is What Third World Leaders Are Saying About Prop 6,” Briggs Collection, folder: BACABI, box 1.

⁸⁸ “Third World Outreach Committee of BACABI” flyer, Briggs Collection, folder: Bay Area Committee Against Briggs, box 1.

campaign. The organizing of these groups, moreover, highlights the substantial nature of the mobilization that went into defeating the Briggs Initiative. In the Los Angeles area, the Action Coalition Against Briggs, the Committee Against the Briggs Initiative (CABI/L.A.), and the No On the Briggs Initiative Committee organized side by side. Sonoma County Residents Against Prop 6 (SCRAP 6) had a strong feminist bent, while in San Jose the main anti-Briggs coalition “was headed by Libertarians and gay church members,” according to Ward and Freedman.⁸⁹ Gay and lesbian-led anti-Briggs groups formed in San Diego, Orange County, the San Gabriel Valley. Anti-Briggs groups were formed in Mendocino County, Santa Cruz, Hayward, Marin, Sacramento, Oakland, Berkeley, Chico, San Mateo, and San Jose. The threat posed by the Briggs Initiative was so great that it helped to expanded organizing for gay and lesbian rights in cities and towns across California.⁹⁰

Activists formed the United Fund to Defeat the Briggs Initiative in June, 1978 to support organizing in non-metropolitan areas across California. Sally Gearhart, an

⁸⁹ Emily Hobson, “Imagining Alliance: Queer Anti-Imperialism and Race in California, 1966-1990” (PhD diss., University of Southern California, 2009), 206.

⁹⁰ Many of the groups across the state took up the name “Committee Against the Briggs Initiative, or CABI. The following is a partial list of groups across California: Chico CABI/No on 6, Davis/Sac Gay Task Force, East Bay CABI/No on 6, Eureka CABI/No on 6, LA CABI, Marin CABI, Mendocino CABI, SD Save Our Teachers, San Mateo/Santa Clara CABI, SB Coalition for Human Rights, Santa Cruz Community United to Defeat the Briggs Initiative, Sonoma County Residents Against Prop 6 (Pamphlet, “New American Movement in Santa Cruz,” Briggs Collection, folder: BACABI, box 1); Mendocino CABI, Northcoast CABI in Eureka, Marin No on Six, Sacramento Valley No on 6, Chico Area Residents Against Proposition 6, Davis No on Six, North Central CABI in Anderson CA, San Mateo/Santa Clara Counties CABI, California Outreach Group based in SF, New Age in Santa Monica, CABI L.A., Gay Teachers of L.A., Save Our Teachers in San Diego, Hayward Equal Rights Organization/ No on 6, Community United to Defeat the Briggs Initiative in Santa Cruz, East Bay Area CABI in Berkeley (“List of Organizations Working Against the Briggs Committee,” Milk Collection).

activist in the lesbian feminist movement, professor of Speech and Women's Studies at San Francisco State College and feminist science fiction writer co-chaired the United Fund with Harvey Milk, the first openly gay man elected to San Francisco's Board of Supervisors.⁹¹ In a past life, in the 1950s, Milk had worked briefly as a teacher of math and history at Hewlett High School in Woodmere, New York.⁹² The United Fund, with Cleve Jones and Kory White serving as coordinators, was dedicated to raising money for the anti-Briggs campaign for dispersal to anti-Briggs groups in towns and suburbs because, according to the group, "the help needed in these areas is often a special kind since workers there are frequently isolated and closeted." The United Fund recognized that the defeat of the Briggs Initiative required extensive organizing in all areas of the state, not just in the major metropolitan areas.⁹³ Sally Gearhart recalled that the United Fund raised "hundreds of thousands of dollars" for the anti-Briggs campaign, and distributed this money to groups like Sonoma County Residents Against Proposition 6 (SCRAP 6). Gearhart and Milk, together but also separately, spoke at events against the Briggs Initiative up and down the state. They also debated John Briggs on television, becoming two of the better known activists in the anti-Briggs campaign.⁹⁴

⁹¹ Guide, Sally Miller Gearhart Papers, 1956-1999, Special Collections and University Archives, University of Oregon Libraries, Eugene, Oregon, <http://nwda.orbiscascade.org/ark:/80444/xv81757>, accessed February 12, 2014; Press Release, Jun 9, 1978, Milk Collection, folder: Briggs Initiative/United Fund, box 6, SFPL.

⁹² Shilts, *The Mayor of Castro Street*, 20-21.

⁹³ United Fund's Purpose, Briggs Collection, folder: California Outreach Group, box 1.

⁹⁴ Sally Gearhart, Interview by Author, Willits, California, January 12, 2010 (hereafter Gearhart Interview).

At times activists in Los Angeles and the Bay Area also directly engaged in organizing in other areas of the state, where they encountered and attempted to convince conservatives to oppose the Briggs Initiative. For example, Amber Hollibaugh, a leading San Francisco-based activist in the campaign to defeat Briggs, remembers that she worked largely in rural areas, going door to door to convince people to vote against the Briggs Initiative. Hollibaugh came out as a lesbian wherever she traveled as part of her full-time work with the Outreach Committee, a group dedicated to building opposition to the Briggs Initiative in non-urban areas of California, whether it was in meetings of the International Brotherhood of Teamsters or churches in rural areas of California. It took a lot of courage on Hollibaugh's part. She recalled that one time she debated a fundamentalist preacher on the Briggs Initiative, who just the week before had helped to organize a fundamentalist rally with 2,500 people in attendance.⁹⁵ Hollibaugh discovered that she was able to move more conservative women to oppose the Briggs Initiative by, according to Emily Hobson, "linking her own experiences as a 'sexual outlaw' to the broader restriction of sexual potential for all women."⁹⁶ In her travels, moreover, Hollibaugh found that "there was at least a partial convergence of the conservative Right and the progressive Left in their concern about infringement of the state on people's lives. Some of our support was very conservative, like from libertarians who believed 'you have to keep the state out of the bedroom.'"⁹⁷

⁹⁵ Hollibaugh, *My Dangerous Desires*, 51.

⁹⁶ Hobson, "Imagining Alliance," 217.

⁹⁷ Hollibaugh, *My Dangerous Desires*, 53–54.

Lesbian and gay activists also organized to persuade labor unions to actively oppose the Briggs Initiative. Had it passed, the Briggs Initiative would have superseded union contracts, abrogating contract clauses protecting workers against discrimination based on sexual orientation.⁹⁸ Hollibaugh focused much of her energies on the labor movement. She recalls going to meetings of the Teamsters' Union to talk about the Briggs initiative, commenting "lesbians don't walk into Teamsters' Union and speak about lesbians too frequently. We selected places we thought were crucial because we never get into them." Hollibaugh remembered what she said in union meetings about the assault on gay rights represented by the Briggs Initiative:

There are gay people in this room, in your union, that you will never know are gay...I have to come and speak because the people who are actually gay in your union can't be here, can't be acknowledged as gay people. What does that mean, not to be able to acknowledge the primary things in your life? What would it mean to you not to be able to acknowledge your children, your primary relationships, your parents?⁹⁹

The Bay Area Committee Against the Briggs Committee included a labor committee, formed in late 1977 or 1978, specifically dedicated to gaining the support of labor unions for anti-Briggs Initiative organizing. The labor committee not only persuaded unions to oppose the Briggs Initiative, but encouraged them to become active in the anti-Briggs movement. BACABI's labor committee sent a letter on October 28, 1978 to its "sisters and brothers" in the labor movement encouraging the unions to officially endorse BACABI, invite speakers to their union meetings, and to

⁹⁸ Ibid., 45.

⁹⁹ Ibid., 49-50.

select representatives from their locals to work on the anti-Briggs campaign. This particular letter was signed by James Ballard, president of American Federation of Teachers, Local 6 in San Francisco; Timothy Twomey, the vice president of the San Francisco Labor Council; and Stanley M. Smith of the San Francisco Construction and Building Trades Council.¹⁰⁰

Organizing on the part of gay and lesbian activists in the labor movement resulted in numerous unions officially going on record against Proposition 6. A partial list of unions opposed to the Briggs Initiative includes: the California Labor Federation; the California Federation of Teachers; California Teachers Association; Hotel and Restaurant Employees Union, Local 2 (San Francisco); the International Longshore and Warehouse Union; the United Farm Workers; the United Auto Workers; the International Brotherhood of Teamsters; Laborers Local 261; the San Francisco Labor Council; Department Store Employees, Local 1100; Office and Professional Employees, Local 3; the Service Employees International Union; the Fremont Federation of Teachers; of Labor Union Women; of Black Trade Unionists; and the Hayward Unified Teachers Association.¹⁰¹

This activism to persuade unions to support the anti-Briggs campaign culminated in a “Workers Conference to Defeat the Briggs Initiative” on September 9-10, 1978 in the Bay Area. Hollibaugh, one of the main organizers behind the conference, kicked off the conference at 10 a.m., and Larry Berner, a gay teacher

¹⁰⁰ BACABI Labor Committee to “Sisters and Brothers,” July 28, 1978, Milk Collection, folder: Briggs Initiative, #2, box 6.

¹⁰¹ Flyer, “No on 6,” Briggs Collection, folder: Gay Teachers and School Workers Coalition, box 1; Informational Flyer about Proposition 6, Briggs Collection, folder: No on Six, box 1.

targeted by supporters of the Briggs below, was the keynote speaker. A number of workshops focused on the campaign to defeat the Briggs Initiative, but also on organizing for gay and lesbian rights on the job more generally. For example, one workshop focused on “legal rights of gays on the job” and another on forming caucuses within unions. The latter featured a panel of union activists who shared their experiences forming various caucuses in their own unions, including those dealing with the rights of women, gay rights, and Third World people, as well as a breakout group on forming rank-and-file caucuses. The conference included another workshop on Proposition 7, and the Lesbian School Workers showed their slideshow on Propositions 6 and 7. The conference was endorsed by a variety of different groups and unions, including the Lesbian School Workers; the Gay Teachers and School Workers; Bay Area Gay Liberation; the Black Teachers Caucus in San Francisco’s AFT Local 61; the northern California chapter of Black Trade Unionists; and Larry Gurley, the chairperson of the AFT’s National Black Caucus.¹⁰²

The organizing by gay and lesbian activists to persuade labor unions across California to oppose the Briggs initiative is significant for queer history. Alongside the boycott of the Coors Beer Company, started in 1976 for the company’s anti-gay and anti-union actions, the campaign against the Briggs initiative marks a turning point in the willingness of labor unions to publicly advocate for gay workers rights. Ward and Freeman point out that, for many labor unions, the stance they took against

¹⁰² “Schedule,” Workers Conference to Defeat the Briggs Initiative, September 9-10, 1978, Mahaney Collection.

the Briggs Initiative was the first time they had had to deal with the issue of gay rights.

In 1977 up until the election in November of 1978, then, an enormous grassroots campaign developed to defeat the Briggs Initiative. This campaign was led by gays and lesbians who formed groups not only in major cities but also in suburbs and rural areas across California. Through their tireless organizing, they were able to convince many straight people, non-gay organizations and unions, religious people, and conservatives to oppose the Briggs Initiative. The grassroots nature of the campaign facilitated the formation of groups with a multiplicity of politics, from groups like the professionally oriented Concerned Voters of California to the more left-leaning Bay Area Committee Against the Briggs Initiative. I now turn to a discussion of the role played by teachers and the teachers' unions specifically in the campaign to defeat the Briggs Initiative.

Gay and Lesbian Teachers, the Teachers' Unions, and the Briggs Initiative

Gay and lesbian teachers and school workers played a particularly important role in the movement to defeat the Briggs Initiative. As the primary targets of Briggs and his supporters, they understood that their jobs and their lives were on the line.

Their experiences working and living as gay teachers and school workers prompted many of them to not only mobilize in their own groups on their own behalf, but also to organize in order to persuade teachers' unions to publicly oppose Briggs.

Organizing by gay and lesbian teachers to persuade the teachers' unions to oppose the

Briggs Initiative was largely successful, though the unions did not playing a leading role the anti-Briggs campaign. Gay and lesbian community-based groups continued to take the lead. Without the work of these gay and lesbian-led groups the Briggs Initiative likely would have passed. The organizing by gay and lesbian teachers in the teachers' unions was of great significance for U.S. labor history; it was one of the earliest moments of queer labor organizing, and marked, alongside the Coors Boycott by labor unions and gay rights activists, the modern start of efforts by queer workers to influence the labor movement.¹⁰³ This organizing by gay and lesbian teachers was sparked by the self-organization of teachers in independent organizations: the Lesbian Schoolworkers and the Gay Teachers and Schoolworkers in the Bay Area, and Gay Teachers of Los Angeles, in particular.

Due to a repressive atmosphere around homosexuality in the public school system, many gay teachers and school workers were afraid to come out. Ward and Freeman, who were quite active in the anti-Briggs campaign, comment,

Proposition 6 posed a very personal dilemma, a dilemma based on the way gays can be invisible in our society. A gay person could decide to work publicly against it or risk suffering the effects of its passage. In many localities, displaying a 'No on 6' button or bumper sticker was tantamount to a public confession. At the workplace or among neighbors it made your sexuality a public issue.¹⁰⁴

Organizer Peter Scott remarked to a reporter for the *Los Angeles Times* in 1978, "we have the largest first name volunteer list in the history of politics," in a reference to

¹⁰³ Allan Bérubé examines an earlier convergence of labor and queer rights in his work on the Marine Cooks and Stewards Union from the 1930s through the 1940s.

¹⁰⁴ Ward and Freeman, "Defending Gay Rights: The Campaign Against the Briggs Amendment in California," 17.

fear felt by gays and lesbians in publicly opposing Proposition 6.¹⁰⁵ If the Briggs Initiative passed, being outspoken about gay rights even prior to its passage might have resulted in many being called before school boards on charges of “public homosexuality,” with the very real possibility of being fired. Gay and lesbian teachers were thus in a double bind. Coming out and actively opposing the Briggs Initiative would increase the likelihood of its defeat, but should the initiative pass queer teachers who had come out during the campaign could be fired for advocating “public homosexuality.”

The trepidation of LGBT teachers in coming out during the campaign was justified. In the 1960s and 1970s, LGBT teachers experienced widespread discrimination. Setting an important precedent to the assault on gay teachers in the late 1970s, in the 1960s the Johns Committee of the Florida State Legislature transitioned from its attempts to link the NAACP with communism to rooting out gay teachers from Florida’s public schools.¹⁰⁶ As noted above, the March, 1978 issue of *McCall’s Magazine* reported that a full 42 percent of all school principals favored firing gay teachers, while 51 percent said they would not, revealing the very real possibility of being fired should they come out.¹⁰⁷ One high school principal reportedly declared, “I have already operated under the assumption that homosexuality is an abnormality and would be classified as immoral, and as such

¹⁰⁵ Tony E. Adams, “Frames of Homosexuality: Comparing Los Angeles Times’ Coverage of California’s Proposition 6 (1978) and Proposition 8 (2008),” *Sexuality & Culture* (June 30, 2012), doi: 10.1007/s12119-012-9145-2.

¹⁰⁶ Graves, *And They Were Wonderful Teachers*; Braukman, *Communists and Perverts under the Palms*.

¹⁰⁷ *Cheery Chalkboard*, April, 1978, Briggs Collection, folder: *Cheery Chalkboard*.

don't believe that a homosexual meets the standards, the professional standards, that we would expect of a classroom teacher.”¹⁰⁸ In early 1977, in a case that received a great deal of attention in LGBT communities, the Washington State Supreme Court ruled in *Gaylord v. Tacoma School District* that the Tacoma School District was justified in firing James Gaylord, a gay high school teacher, upon learning that he was gay. The court affirmed that homosexuality was evidence of immoral conduct, noting, “Gaylord’s precaution for 20 years to keep his status of being a homosexual secret from his parents is eloquent evidence of his knowledge of the serious consequences attendant upon an undefined admission of homosexuality.”¹⁰⁹ To top it off, John Briggs’ organization Save Our Children, according to Karen Harbeck, “were quick to expose GLBT teachers who were working in opposition” to the Briggs Initiative.¹¹⁰

The experience of being a gay man teaching in elementary schools in the 1970s often brought out feelings of isolation and fear. In his memoir, published in 1985, *Socrates, Plato & Guys Like Me: Confessions of a Gay School Teacher*, Eric Rofes describes his conflicting experiences of being an activist in the gay liberation movement in Boston and simultaneously being closeted at work as a teacher. Rofes, a volunteer at Boston’s *Gay Community News* and the Gay Men’s Center in the 1970s, recalled, “my new life only increased my sense of isolation at the school.” Though he felt “hypocritical” for maintaining his “cover” at school, he related, “yet I still felt the

¹⁰⁸ Harbeck, *Gay and Lesbian Educators*, 260.

¹⁰⁹ *Ibid.*, 261.

¹¹⁰ *Ibid.*, 77.

daily fear of being ‘caught’ and yanked from my closet.”¹¹¹ Another gay man writing in April 1978 in the magazine *Psychology Today* of his experiences as a fifth grade school teacher in the 1970s, using the pseudonym Michael Trent, described how he was out in other aspects of his life, but not at school: “going to work is like walking backward, into the closet.”¹¹² Rofes decided he could no longer remain in the closet. As a result, the local school board told Rofes that he could only maintain his teaching job if he separated his openly gay life in the community from his life as a teacher. Rofes refused, which lost him his job.¹¹³ Rofes went on to help found the Boston Area Gay and Lesbian Schoolworkers. In the summer and fall of 1978 Rofes spent time in California to help in the organizing campaign to defeat the Briggs Initiative.¹¹⁴

Gay Teachers of Los Angeles (GTLA), a group of school teachers formed in 1976 to address the political and social needs of gay and lesbian teachers in Los Angeles, reported in its newsletter, *The Cheery Chalkboard*, on the setbacks and advancements in the rights of gay and lesbian teachers. The reports in GTLA’s monthly newsletter about progress and reaction around the rights of LGBT teachers highlight that queer teachers were at the center of the New Right’s assault on gay rights, making it clear that LGBT teachers had much to lose should they come out of the closet. However, these reports also make clear that teachers were fighting back,

¹¹¹ Eric E. Rofes, *Socrates, Plato, & Guys Like Me: Confessions of a Gay Schoolteacher*, 1st ed (Boston: Alyson Publications, 1985), 45.

¹¹² “Michael Trent, “On Being a Gay Teacher: My Problems—And Yours,” *Psychology Today*, April, 1978, Paula Lichtenberg Papers (hereafter Lichtenberg Papers), folder 1: BACABI, box 1, Gay, Lesbian, Bisexual, and Transgender Historical Society (hereafter GLBT Historical Society), San Francisco, California.

¹¹³ Rofes, *Socrates, Plato, & Guys like Me*, 150.

¹¹⁴ *Ibid.*, 159.

including by forming their own groups. The newsletter, for instance, reported on Steve Dain's case, a transgender teacher fired from his job in 1976.¹¹⁵ Dain worked in Emeryville, California (adjacent to Oakland) as a physical education teacher. Upon his transition, the school district claimed that his presence "would cause psychological harm to students."¹¹⁶ In its May 1978 newsletter, GTLA reported, "the Berkeley school district has included in its non-discrimination list 'alternative lifestyles'....That's us!" But in the same issue GTLA noted that in Minnesota a school district had just included an anti-gay resolution in its legislative package. The issue also reported on a case in New York in which the Gay Teachers Association, with the assistance of the ACLU, had succeeded in getting the job back of lesbian teacher who had been fired two years previously.¹¹⁷

Larry Berner, an out gay teacher, became John Brigg's favorite target in the last few months leading up to the election in November. Berner was a shy, white, 38-year old gay second-grade teacher at Fitch Mountain Elementary School in Healdsburg, California, a quiet town with a population of 6,200 on the Russian River 65 miles north of San Francisco.¹¹⁸ Prior to speaking out against the Briggs Initiative, Berner mainly stayed out of politics and kept his gayness private. Berner told a

¹¹⁵ *Cheery Chalkboard*, April 1978, Briggs Collection, folder: Cheery Chalkboard.

¹¹⁶ Blount, *Fit to Teach*, 119.

¹¹⁷ *Cheery Chalkboard*, May 1978, Briggs Collection, folder: Cheery Chalkboard. In the February, 1979 issue of *Cheery Chalkboard*, GTLA reported that an eight gay teachers group was recently formed in Denver, Colorado, joining seven other groups in San Francisco, New York, Boston, Texas, Oregon, Maryland, and "of course our own lovable GTLA in L.A." (Briggs Collection, folder: Cheery Chalkboard).

¹¹⁸ Doyle McManus, "Healdsburg's 'Weirdest Event': Briggs Debates Gay Teacher," *Los Angeles Times*, October 26, 1978.

reporter for *The Los Angeles Times*, “My gayness was not known to the community or a subject of discussion until I started working against Proposition 6. My gayness was disclosed during political activity. I feel they’re attacking my right of free speech.”¹¹⁹ “Mrs. Lee,” as the *Los Angeles Times* referred to her, was the president of the local school board. When she found out that Berner was gay, she wanted him fired. At a press conference in later September, 1978 in Los Angeles with Briggs, Mrs. Lee asserted, “the fact is [Berner] is a role model and influences children to say ‘he is a nice guy, he’s my teacher, so there’s nothing wrong with homosexuality.’” She further claimed, stunningly, “we want to protect our children from the rape of their minds before they’re raped physically.”¹²⁰ At the press conference Briggs pointed to Berner as an example of a gay teacher who would be fired if his initiative passed: “if you’d put a second-grade child with a homosexual you’re off your gourd” and “we don’t let necrophiliacs to be morticians. We’ve got to be crazy to allow homosexuals who have an affinity for young boys to teach our children.”¹²¹

By choosing a gay male elementary school teacher as a target, Briggs was currying public support for his initiative by drawing on widely held ideas about what kind of work was appropriate for men and women. When men worked as elementary school teachers they were performing what Bérubé and Tiemeyer have called queer work: they were crossing a gender boundary by working in a feminized occupation, thereby casting doubt on their masculinity and sexuality. Additionally, Briggs further

¹¹⁹ Penelope McMillan, “Briggs Points to Gay Teacher in North as Example,” *Los Angeles Times*, September 29, 1978.

¹²⁰ McManus, “Healdsburg’s ‘Weirdest Event.’”

¹²¹ McMillan, “Briggs Points to Gay Teacher in North as Example.”

propagated the idea that gay men were more prone to be child molesters, and thus should be kept away from children. Hoping to take advantage of the public's bias against men working as elementary school teachers, John Briggs preferred to debate gay men, including Larry Berner and San Francisco Supervisor Harvey Milk, rather than lesbians.¹²²

But Briggs' strategy of pointing to Larry Berner as an example of somebody who would be fired should Proposition 6 pass backfired. The support Berner received from parents, teachers, the community, and queer activists in Healdsburg indicated that the supposed dangers posed by gay and lesbian teachers (particularly gay male teachers) was not actually as obvious as Briggs would have liked. Though some members of the Healdsburg community, including parents and teachers, opposed retaining Berner as a teacher at the elementary school, many more supported him. In the two months leading up to the November election, fifteen parents removed their students from the school to send a message to the school board that Berner should be dismissed. One mother, speaking in support of his dismissal before the school board in the same period, asserted, "children who had been in his classes 'wiggled and minced' their way to the school bus."¹²³ However, many more people supported Berner in the community, including 19 of the 22 teachers at the school.¹²⁴ At a school board hearing held sometime in the few months leading up to the November election to decide whether or not to fire Berner, over 300 of his supporters showed up to speak

¹²² Blount, *Fit to Teach*, 150–151.

¹²³ Harbeck, *Gay and Lesbian Educators*, 77.

¹²⁴ *Cheery Chalkboard*, November 1978, Briggs Collection, folder: Cheery Chalkboard.

on his behalf, with parents referring to him as an excellent teacher. Two women who identified themselves as mothers defended Berner by saying they did not want their children to “grow up to be bigots.”¹²⁵ One parent of a child in Berner’s class related, “My son, Michael, is very happy in his class and also likes him. Personally, I would rather entrust my child to Mr. Berner’s care than to many heterosexual teachers I’ve encountered.”¹²⁶

Berner spoke out in his own defense at numerous events and organized in a community group, Sonoma County Residents Against Proposition 6 (SCRAP 6). On October 25, 1978, Berner participated in a much-publicized debate in Healdsburg with John Briggs, which brought out nearly half of the town’s adult residents. So many people showed up that space ran out in the Villa Chanticleer Restaurant, where it was held. Briggs roared, “we don’t allow prostitutes to teach” and “you can’t get married in the state of California if you’re a homosexual couple. You can’t join the Army...If you’re not good enough for the church, for the Army, if they’re not good enough to get married, how are we to support the notion that they’re to serve as role models when they can’t bear children themselves?” Berner responded: “the children at my school are not obsessed with my sexuality, as you seem to be senator.... If you and Mrs. Lee and Reverend Batema [both Briggs supporters] want to fantasize about my sex life that’s up to you.”¹²⁷ Outside of the debate, according to the *Los Angeles Times*, town residents who could not fit into the restaurant where the debate was held

¹²⁵ Harbeck, *Gay and Lesbian Educators*, 77

¹²⁶ Flyer, “Lesbian and Gay Alliance News,” June, 1978, Private Collection of Ruth Mahaney (hereafter Mahaney Collection), San Francisco, California.

¹²⁷ McManus, “Healdsburg’s ‘weirdest event’”

mixed with “about 150 homosexual militants.” The *Los Angeles Times* reported that inside most of the attendees supported Larry Berner, “judging from the applause.”¹²⁸ Putting Larry Berner in the political spotlight actually helped to humanize LGBT people in the minds of many.

Sonoma County Residents Against Proposition 6 organized on Berner’s behalf, in addition to their general organizing against the initiative. Ruth Mahaney, a leader in SCRAP 6, remembers that the group helped Berner write his speeches and practice before debates. Members of SCRAP 6 would “sit in the front row everywhere and just smile at him and all we had to do was look at him.”¹²⁹

In the Bay Area two teachers’ organizations, the Gay Teachers and School Workers (GTSW) and the Lesbian School Workers (LSW), actively worked to the defeat Briggs Initiative. Members of Bay Area Gay Liberation (BAGL), an organization formed in January, 1975 to advocate for gay liberation, first established the Gay Teachers and School Workers at some point in the mid-1970s.¹³⁰ On of GTSW’s first projects involved pressuring the San Francisco Board of Education in 1975 to include sexual orientation in its non-discrimination clause. The group also sought to address the physical attacks against gay and lesbian teachers, school

¹²⁸ Ibid.

¹²⁹ Ruth Mahaney, Interview by Author, San Francisco, California, October 12, 2009 (hereafter Mahaney Interview).

¹³⁰ Hobson, “Imagining Alliance,” 208; Tom Ammiano, Interview by Author, San Francisco, California, May 10, 2013 (hereafter Ammiano Interview). It is unclear when exactly the Gay Teachers and School Workers first formed, but their first major, visible action was in 1975.

workers, and students in the public schools.¹³¹ The same year the group also demanded that the school board include its meetings in the district newsletter. According to the group's newsletter, *Unlearning the Lie*, after much struggle and following two public meetings in the summer of 1975 of over 300 people each, the Board of Education capitulated and both demands were met. Spinoffs from the San Francisco action resulted in the Palo Alto Unified School District, the West Valley Joint Community College District, and the City of San Jose including sexual orientation in their non-discrimination clauses in the late 1970s.¹³²

A fight by the Gay Teachers' Coalition's to pressure the San Francisco School Board to include sexual orientation in its non-discrimination policy was an early moment, in 1977, in which gay and lesbian teachers very vocally advocated for their rights as teachers. Tom Ammiano, a key activist in the Gay Teachers' Coalition, was one of the most active organizers in the school board fight.¹³³ Ammiano arrived in San Francisco in San Francisco from New Jersey in 1962, and received his teaching credential from San Francisco State College.¹³⁴ In the midst of the school board fight, the *San Francisco Examiner* published an article in 1975 about Ammiano, who was described as an "outstanding" teacher. His principal at the time, Robert Jimenez, told

¹³¹ "Interview with California Gay Teacher, 1977," Briggs Collection, ONE Archives; "Who We Are," *Unlearning the Lie* 1, no. 2, [n.d.], Briggs Collection, folder: Gay Teachers and School Workers, box 1.

¹³² "Who We Are," *Unlearning the Lie* 1, no. 2, [n.d.], Briggs Collection, folder: Gay Teachers and School Workers, box 1.

¹³³ Hank Wilson, Interview by Burt Gabler, Transcript, April 29, 1996, 48, GLBT Historical Society.

¹³⁴ Tom Ammiano, "Who I Am: Being a Gay Man in the City: Ammiano Reflects on the Changes Over 35 years," *San Francisco Examiner*, February 9, 1997, Tom Ammiano Papers (hereafter Ammiano Papers), GLBT Historical Society; Ammiano Interview.

the *Examiner* that Ammiano was “imaginative, creative, dedicated, [and] able to work well with people.”¹³⁵ Activists Del Martin and Phyllis Lyon, who had helped to found an early lesbian rights group, the Daughters of Bilitis, in 1955, petitioned the school board at its meeting on June 3, 1975, to add sexual orientation to its non-discrimination clause.¹³⁶ The school board responded that they would address the issue at a later meeting. However, according to historian Jackie Blount, as soon as Martin and Lyon left the meeting, the board voted down the proposal, in what the Gay Teachers’ Coalition described as an “underhanded” maneuver.¹³⁷ Hank Wilson, an organizer with , remembered that the group “was furious at the duplicity” of the school board. Wilson recalled that the group held a press conference the next day, which received a good deal of publicity, and they “came out fighting” in response.¹³⁸ At the press conference, in addition to the primary demand that the school board include sexual orientation in its non-discrimination clause, the group also demanded the inclusion of the coalition’s meetings in the district’s newsletter.¹³⁹

In response to the school board vote against including sexual orientation in the district’s non-discrimination policy, the Gay Teachers Coalition did indeed come out fighting. It organized a demonstration at the school board’s next meeting on June 3,

¹³⁵ Jim Wood, “Gay, Gifted Yet Closeted in City’s Classrooms, *San Francisco Examiner*, June 12, 1975, Hank Wilson Papers (hereafter Wilson Papers), folder: Gay Teachers Coalition 1975, Box 1, GLBT Historical Society.

¹³⁶ Blount, *Fit to Teach*, 127.

¹³⁷ Flyer, Gay Teachers Coalition About Demonstration, June 17, 1975 “to support gay teachers and other school workers,” Wilson Papers, folder: Gay Teachers Coalition 1975, box 1.

¹³⁸ Wilson, Interview by Burt Gabler, 49.

¹³⁹ *Gay Teachers and School Workers Coalition Newsletter*, August/September 1977 1, no. 1, Zobel Collection.

1975, attracting some 300 people.¹⁴⁰ Hank Wilson recalled, “we disrupted it. We stood on tables, we screamed, we whistled, we would not let them have their meeting.”¹⁴¹ The board, according to a flyer distributed by the Gay Teachers’ Coalition, was “intimidated” by the protest and agreed to put the issue on the agenda for its meeting on June 17, 1975.¹⁴² The Gay Teachers’ Coalition sprang into action. It had two challenges: first and foremost, it had to mobilize queer people in San Francisco to attend a mass demonstration at the school board meeting on June 17. Secondarily, but still a difficult task, the group had to find somebody willing to sponsor and second a motion to include sexual orientation in the district’s non-discrimination clause. Hank Wilson remembers that the group had two weeks to mobilize people. They went to every gay bar and, he said, “I swear we had a sign on every telephone pole that said ‘Support Gay Teachers.’” Simultaneously, it worked to persuade members of the school board to support their proposal.¹⁴³

The Gay Teachers’ Coalition found two school board members to support the motion to include sexual orientation in the district’s non-discrimination clause. School board member Dr. Eugene S. Hopp agreed to make the motion; he did so because recently learned that the American Psychiatric Association “no longer

¹⁴⁰ “Who We Are,” *Unlearning the Lie* 1, no. 2, [n.d.], Briggs Collection, folder: Gay Teachers and School Workers Coalition, box 1; *Gay Teachers and School Workers Coalition Newsletter*, August/September 1977 1, no. 1, Zobel Collection.

¹⁴¹ Wilson, Interview by Burt Gabler, 50. It is somewhat unclear how many people attended this second meeting. A couple of sources say that 300 people attended the second meeting, but Hank Wilson remembered that “about forty, fifty people” attended the meeting.

¹⁴² Flyer, Gay Teachers Coalition about a demonstration on June 17, 1975 “to support gay teachers and other school workers,” Wilson Papers, folder: Gay Teachers Coalition 1975, box 1.

¹⁴³ Wilson, Interview by Burt Gabler, 52.

considered homosexuality a pathological state and that harmful acts to children were no greater among homosexuals than among heterosexuals.”¹⁴⁴ On the day of the school board meeting, June 17, the Gay Teachers’ Coalition found an unlikely candidate to second the motion in support of a gay-inclusive non-discrimination policy: Reverend Thomas Reed, who had a personal connection to the issue of discrimination against queer people in the schools. During the meeting, Father Reed related a striking experience he had while principal of St. Ignatius High School in 1961. Reed discovered a group at the school called the “Queer Hunters Club.” “The purpose of this club was to prey upon gays, attack them and beat them up,” said Reed. One evening, after a dance at the school, he related, some students found a teacher “who they considered was a gay person” waiting for a streetcar. The students attacked and robbed him and threw him on the streetcar tracks. The gay teacher was run over by a streetcar and killed. Reed’s memories of this tragic incident apparently compelled him to change course, and side with the Gay Teachers’ Coalition; he agreed to support the motion.¹⁴⁵

On the day the San Francisco School Board was set to consider the motion to include sexual orientation in the school district’s non-discrimination clause, June 17, the Gay Teachers Coalition held a sizable protest to help persuade school board members to vote in favor of gay rights. Between 300 and 400 people participated in

¹⁴⁴ Minutes, Regular Meeting of Board of Education of SFUSD, Tuesday, June 17, 1975, Gay Teachers Coalition (SFUSD), Ephemera Collection, Organizations and Groups, GLBT Historical Society.

¹⁴⁵ “School Board Approves A Gay Anti-Bias Policy,” *San Francisco Chronicle*, June 18, 1975, Wilson Papers, folder: Gay Teachers Coalition 1975, box 1.

the protest. After demonstrating outside, the protesters marched into the building where the meeting was being held, and spontaneously started to sing, “As the gays come marching in,” as they walked up the stairs. The demonstrators packed the meeting. The school board voted seven to zero in favor of the motion, completely reversing their decision of just two weeks before.¹⁴⁶ The audience, hearing the result of the vote, applauded for a full two minutes. Ammiano remarked that he was “gratified and stunned—in that order.” “I didn’t expect it to be as smooth or unanimous,” declared Ammiano to a reporter for the *San Francisco Chronicle*.¹⁴⁷

The successful fight waged by the Gay Teachers Coalition received considerable media publicity and helped to mobilize queer activists in the city to fight for the rights of gay teachers. This struggle also cemented the existence of the Gay Teachers Coalition, which would, just three years later, be faced with the need to organize against Proposition 6, which placed gay and lesbian teachers and other school workers at the center of efforts to attack queer rights.

The Gay Teachers Coalition, which had changed its name to the Gay Teachers and School Workers Coalition by August or September, 1977, continued to organize for gay and lesbian rights in the years leading up to the Briggs Initiative fight, 1975-1978, often with great success.¹⁴⁸ In a flyer from March, 1978, the group noted that,

¹⁴⁶ Wilson, Interview by Burt Gabler, 55–56.

¹⁴⁷ “School Board Approves A Gay Anti-Bias Policy,” *San Francisco Chronicle*, June 18, 1975.

¹⁴⁸ It is unclear from archival materials and interviews when the group changed its name, but the first issue of its newsletter, issued in August/September, 1977, indicated that the group was called Gay Teachers and School Workers (*Gay Teachers and School Workers Coalition Newsletter*, August/September 1977 1, no. 1, Zobel Collection).

among other things, it had successfully fought for the “incorporation of sexual orientation into SFUSD and Union contract non-discrimination clauses,” organized for “passage of a ‘Gay Resolution’ resulting in changing negative references to homosexuality in San Francisco’s Family Life Curriculum,” held “a candidate’s night for Board of Education seats,” and it provided “extensive work and living testimony against proposed anti-Gay teacher legislation.”¹⁴⁹ In 1978, the coalition also organized a Gay Speakers Bureau, which “has been speaking in classrooms of the San Francisco Unified School District” since 1978, recalled Hank Wilson. According to its literature, the coalition tried to always send one man and one woman together to speak in classrooms, as well as ensure that there was one person of color present as a speaker.¹⁵⁰ The coalition described the purpose of the Speakers’ Bureau:

By providing students with the opportunity (often their first) to meet openly gay people, we allow them to question values, destroy myths, and explore feelings. Heterosexual students often have fears and hostility based on ignorance. Gay people suffer when this fear and hostility turns to violence.¹⁵¹

The politics of the Gay Teachers and School Workers were decidedly on the left of the political spectrum. Though the group apparently was comprised of mostly white men, it announced in its newsletter, “we believe that discrimination against Gay teachers arises as part of a system of sexism, racism, and class oppression that

¹⁴⁹ “Who We Are” Flyer, Gay Teachers and School Workers Coalition, March 1978, Briggs Collection, folder: Gay Teachers and School Workers Coalition, box 1.

¹⁵⁰ Wilson, Interview by Burt Gabler, 85.

¹⁵¹ Pamphlet, Gay Speakers Bureau SFUSD, Wilson Papers, folder: Gay Teachers Coalition 1975, box 1.

pervades our country.”¹⁵² The group, moreover, in the second issue of its newsletter distributed in late 1977 or early 1978, directly countered the Christian Right’s claims that gays and lesbians—but particularly gay men—were dangerous to children. The group wrote,

We have been accused of ‘child molesting,’ ‘recruitment,’ and ‘trying to influence children’s sexuality.’ In fact, statistics, observation, and common sense prove that sexuality is not determined by the sexual orientation of the teacher or school worker. In addition, studies show that most sex crimes are committed by so-called ‘normal’ straight men.

Furthermore, the Gay Teachers and Schoolworkers argued that attacks on gay people in the schools were used as a diversion from some of the real problems that needed to be fixed: “young people being made to feel inadequate and inferior, school administrations that don’t relate to the needs of the children, racial violence, the high drop out rate of Third World students, [and] students who can’t read.” The group hoped that, by advocating for gay and lesbian rights in the schools, it would help to bring “an end to rigid sex role stereotyping” and the “creation of a safe and supportive environment for all children.”¹⁵³

Originally, the Gay Teachers and Schoolworkers included both of gay men and lesbians, but by late 1977 the lesbians had spun off and formed their own group, the Lesbian School Workers.¹⁵⁴ So by the time their efforts were monopolized by the fight against the Briggs Initiative in 1978, the Gay Teachers and School Workers

¹⁵² “Who We Are,” *Unlearning the Lie* 1, no. 2, [n.d.], Briggs Collection, folder: Gay Teachers and School Workers, box 1.

¹⁵³ Ibid.

¹⁵⁴ Lynn Levey, “AFT Supports Bakke,” *Unlearning the Lie* 1, no. 2, [n.d.], Briggs Collection, folder: Gay Teachers and School Workers, box 1.

were primarily a group consisting of white gay men, people like Tom Ammiano and Hank Wilson, long-time activists for LGBT rights.¹⁵⁵ Before the lesbians formed an independent group, they created a sub-group within the larger Gay Teachers and School Workers Coalition, while the men formed a “Gay Men’s Group,” the first meeting of which was attended by about 15 gay men. The rationale for the two groupings, according to group’s newsletter, was that “separate women’s and men’s groups are a recent adjustment based on the assumption that for the most part women are invisible in this culture and in order for Lesbians to have an impact, an autonomous group was necessary.” During 1977, both groups met weekly and came together once a month to coordinate activities.¹⁵⁶

Organizing against the Briggs Initiative became the primary focus of the Gay Teachers and School Workers in 1977 and 1978. Members of the group described their work against the Briggs Initiative as providing “living testimony” against such anti-gay legislation.¹⁵⁷ The group emphasized the importance of speaking up as gay and lesbian teachers: “in the past others, both straight and gay gave presumed to speak for us; we will speak for ourselves.”¹⁵⁸ It viewed the initiative not only as being an attack on gay people, but also as anti-labor. The initiative would have, after all,

¹⁵⁵ Tom Ammiano is currently a Democratic assemblyperson in California, while Hank Wilson, who went on in the 1980s to organize around AIDS and who also lived with AIDS, died in November, 2008 at the age of 61 (Rachel Gordon, “Hank Wilson Dies – Gay Liberation Activist,” *San Francisco Chronicle*, November 13, 2008).

¹⁵⁶ “Who We Are,” *Unlearning the Lie* 1, no. 2, [n.d.], Briggs Collection, folder: Gay Teachers and School Workers, box 1.

¹⁵⁷ “Who We Are” Flyer, Gay Teachers and School Workers Coalition, March 1978, Briggs Collection, folder: Gay Teachers and School Workers, box 1.

¹⁵⁸ Fetner, *How the Religious Right Shaped Lesbian and Gay Activism*, 138.

negated non-discrimination clauses and job security protections in union contracts, as well as provided local school boards with more power over teachers and other school workers. The Gay Teachers and Schoolworkers also put the Briggs Initiative in the context of the clear turn to the right politically in the US in the late 1970s. According to an interview with an anonymous gay teacher in 1977 involved with the group, the Briggs Initiative was,

supported by church groups, political groups, the rightwing which is now opposing abortion funding, which is now asking for an end of hiring for Third World people, which is now asking for the deportation of so-called aliens, which is now building the Klan, which is now marching with the Nazis. Briggs doesn't seem to want to refuse any of that. He's right in line with the rightwing of this state.¹⁵⁹

This same gay teacher further noted the negative repercussions of the potential passage of the Briggs Initiative. On a personal note, he emphasized that if the Briggs Initiative passed, gay teachers who worked in conservative areas of the state would be particularly hard hit. Conservative parents and co-workers could potentially pressure conservative school boards to pursue the firing of gay and lesbian teachers and school workers in larger numbers than would be the case in liberal school districts. He further feared that the Briggs Initiative would set up a "McCarthyesque" environment "in which anyone can say this teacher has said something favorable or has an opinion favorable toward homosexuality [and] that person can be brought up on charges." The Briggs Initiative, moreover, would have pressured gay teachers and school workers to stay in the closet, denying a fundamental element of their identities.¹⁶⁰

¹⁵⁹ "Interview with California Gay Teacher, 1977."

¹⁶⁰ Ibid.

In its efforts to defeat the Briggs Initiative, the Gay Teachers and Schoolworkers Coalition educated people about the implications of the Briggs Initiative, should it pass. In order to visibly demonstrate that gay teachers did not pose a threat to children, the coalition organized an International Children's Day Festival on Saturday, June 17, 1978 at Douglas Playground in San Francisco as part of the celebrations during Gay Pride Week.¹⁶¹ The group also held fundraisers to help raise money for their organizing, including a "Queens benefit poetry reading" to "help defeat Briggs" on September 10, 1978.¹⁶² According to an anonymous gay teacher and member of the Gay Teachers and School Workers Coalition, it used its unique role representing gay and lesbian teachers to educate the public "that gay people are not child molesters. We also have to show that gay people are in the schools and that they are good teachers."¹⁶³

In addition to its other anti-Briggs organizing, the Gay Teachers and School Workers also worked to influence the teachers' unions—both the AFT-affiliated California Federation of Teachers and the NEA-affiliated California Teachers Association—to oppose the Briggs Initiative by reaching out to progressive activists within the unions. Specifically, according to one member of the coalition, speaking about the group's organizing in late 1977,

¹⁶¹ "Gay Teachers Treat Kids," *Gazette*, June 21, 1978, Briggs Collection, folder: Gay Teachers and School Workers Coalition, box 1.

¹⁶² Flyer, Gay Teachers and School Workers Coalition: "Help Defeat Briggs, a Queens benefit poetry reading for the Gay Teachers and School Workers Coalition," Briggs Collection, folder: Gay Teachers and School Workers Coalition, box 1.

¹⁶³ "Interview with California Gay Teacher, 1977."

In working with the unions here in the city, which is where we have the most leverage right now, we've made a major effort to unify, form a united front, with the caucuses both in the CTA and the AFT, which included Asian teachers' caucuses, a black teacher's caucus, which has been a very forceful element here in the city for years...and the Latino caucus.¹⁶⁴

Members of the coalition decided to reach out to these caucuses within the teachers' union because "they are more progressive than the general elements of the union," but also because they thought it was important to do outreach to traditionally marginalized communities in the Bay Area in their effort to increase opposition to the Briggs Initiative.¹⁶⁵ Ammiano, a founder of the Gay Teachers and School Workers Coalition, remembers that Jim Ballard, the president of AFT Local 61 in San Francisco, was a politically moderate union leader allied with AFT president Albert Shanker's Progressive Caucus. Under Shanker's presidency from 1975 until 1977, the AFT took rather conservative positions on a variety of topics. For example, the AFT supported a 1978 Supreme Court decision, *The Regents of the University of California v. Bakke*, which called affirmative action programs unconstitutional. In the coalition's newsletter, *Unlearning the Lie*, issued in either late 1977 or early 1978, Lynn Levey wrote, "the Lesbian Schoolworkers and the Gay Teachers and Schoolworkers Coalition oppose the AFT's position [in support of the *Bakke* decision]. As a group of predominantly white teachers and schoolworkers, we believe it is crucial to fight for the rights of Third World workers and students."¹⁶⁶ In this

¹⁶⁴ Ibid.

¹⁶⁵ Ibid.

¹⁶⁶ Lynn Levey, "AFT Supports Bakke," *Unlearning the Lie* 1, no. 2, [n.d.], Briggs Collection, folder: Gay Teachers and School Workers, box 1.

context, it makes sense that the coalition, with its radically leftist politics and gay rights agenda, would have prioritized outreach to the more progressive elements within the AFT.

The Lesbian School Workers was born out of the Gay Teachers and School Workers, but became an independent organization sometime in late 1977. According to Helmbold, a member of the former group, this happened very “organically,” and it was not a “split.”¹⁶⁷ Ellen Broidy, an activist within the group, remembered that the Lesbian School Workers formed as a separate organization for lesbians in part because “men took up a lot of space” within mixed-gender groups.¹⁶⁸ The group ranged in size, increasing from about a dozen in its early days to between 35 and 50 members in the months leading up to the November election as the group concentrated on defeating Briggs. Most of those involved were college-educated, young and white, many were Jewish, and despite the name of the group, it included some lesbians who were neither teachers nor school workers.¹⁶⁹ Helmbold, who taught the first Women’s Studies course at San Jose State University in the early 1970s, described herself as a part-time graduate student, part-time teacher, and full-

¹⁶⁷ Helmbold Interview.

¹⁶⁸ Ellen Broidy, Interview by Author, Santa Barbara, California, August 2, 2009 (hereafter Broidy Interview).

¹⁶⁹ Helmbold Interview; Letter to “Friend of Lesbian School Workers,” October 4, 1978, Lichtenberg Papers, folder: Lesbian School Workers/BACABI 1/6, box 1. Helmbold remembered that there were between 40 to 50 people involved in the group “in the months leading up” to the election. The letter dated October 4, 1978, cited above, says that Lesbian School Workers had “over 35” active members.

time activist. Broidy was out as a lesbian in her job as a librarian in Alameda in the 1970s because, she emphasized, “I couldn’t be much other than who I was.”¹⁷⁰

The Lesbian School Workers were part of a larger gay and lesbian Left. According to historian Emily Hobson, many leftist lesbian activists in the mid- to late 1970s came out of socialist-feminist groups, which were largely white, and which had largely dissolved by the mid-1970s. After their dissolution, many lesbians who had been involved continued to organize independently with other lesbians, “as well as in greater alliance with gay leftist men who had begun to identify as feminists themselves.”¹⁷¹

The politics of the Lesbian School Workers were similar politically to the Gay Teachers and School Workers in many ways, though one important distinction was its opposition to the pro-death penalty Proposition 7, also on the California ballot in November of 1978. Proposition 7, sponsored by Senator Briggs (which ultimately passed by an overwhelming margin) greatly extended the prison terms for people convicted of murder, as well as expanded the number of circumstances for imposing the death penalty.¹⁷² The members of the Lesbian School Workers distinguished themselves from most other gay and lesbian groups, including the Gay Teachers and School Workers, working against Briggs’ Proposition 6 by also being outspoken against Proposition 7 as well (though the group focused more on organizing against Proposition 6). Members of the Lesbian School Workers felt it was important to

¹⁷⁰ Broidy Interview.

¹⁷¹ Hobson, “Imagining Alliance,” 173.

¹⁷² Rob Javers, “Prop 5 Foes Set State Spending Record,” *San Francisco Chronicle*, November 1, 1978.

speaking out in part because the poor and people of color were already disproportionately sentenced to long prison terms and sentenced to death in larger numbers than other segments of the population. Proposition 7 would only have exacerbated these disparities.¹⁷³

Other gay and lesbian groups faced criticism for placing Proposition 6 at the center of their organizing while not simultaneously speaking out against Proposition 7. In the fall of 1978 the Third World Fund, a group associated with Glide Memorial Church in the Tenderloin area of San Francisco, criticized white gay and lesbian anti-Proposition 6 groups for not also speaking out against Proposition 7, asserting that “every major Black institution recognized and spoke out against the dangers of the two Briggs Initiatives—6 and 7. Yet, no support at all was given to the defeat of the death penalty initiative by the gay community.” The fund further argued that the “bond of solidarity is seriously hampered when gays...fail to be sensitive to the human and civil rights threats of the minority community.”¹⁷⁴ The Third World Fund was not taking into account the stance that the Lesbian School Workers took on Proposition 7; but importantly it underscored the problems that arose when primarily white gay and lesbian rights activists do not also prioritize anti-racism in their organizing. Proposition 7 ended up passing by an overwhelming margin.¹⁷⁵

¹⁷³ Pamphlet, Lesbian School Workers, “Vote No on 6 & 7,” Briggs Collection, folder: No on Briggs, box 1; Helmbold Interview.

¹⁷⁴ Christina B. Hanhardt, *Safe Space: Gay Neighborhood History and the Politics of Violence* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2013), 131; Flyer, “Speculation on Gay,” *News Notes*, Third World Fund, Fall 1978, Briggs Collection, folder: Briggs, box 2.

¹⁷⁵ William Endicott, “Gay Teacher and Antismoking Initiatives Lose,” *Los Angeles Times*, November 8, 1978.

The messaging that the Lesbian School Workers chose to use was distinct from the single-issue messaging of many other groups organizing against the Briggs Initiative. The group, for instance, condemned Briggs' claim that he was genuinely interested in "protecting children" as a rationale for promoting Proposition 6. After asking in one of its pamphlets, "what does save our children really mean?," the group wrote,

Is Senator Briggs talking about saving young girls and women from a society in which a woman is raped every 60 seconds and 25% of all women are sexually abused by all family members before the age of 18? Is Senator Briggs talking about saving the Black children in Chicago who are stoned and beaten trying to attend integrated schools?¹⁷⁶

In the same pamphlet, the Lesbian School Workers went on to criticize the school system for training children to be insecure and competitive rather than cooperative. Members asserted that they have a special role to play as lesbian school workers in teaching children to reject rigid gender roles that teach boys that they are superior to girls, because "gay school workers do not conform to fixed roles for men and women."¹⁷⁷ The fact that the Lesbian School Workers were talking about gays and lesbians playing a positive role in the classroom is particularly important, as some of the less radical anti-Briggs groups did not similarly highlight this point.

In contrast to the Gay Teachers and School Workers and the Gay Teachers of Los Angeles, as we shall soon see, the Lesbian School Workers did not focus on the teachers unions, though it did highlight the opposition of the teachers' unions to the

¹⁷⁶ "Lesbian School Workers," Pamphlet Against the Briggs Initiative, Briggs Collection, folder: Lesbian School Workers, box 1.

¹⁷⁷ Ibid.

Briggs Initiative. For example, a pamphlet distributed by the group opposing both Propositions 6 and 7, emphasizes that both the California Federation of Teachers and the California Teachers Association had come out against Proposition 6.¹⁷⁸ Instead of focusing on influencing the teachers' unions, the Lesbian School Workers focused their energies on community organizing, as a collectively run, independent group of rank-and-file lesbian teachers, school workers and others working at the grassroots level to defeat both Propositions 6 and 7.¹⁷⁹

In their efforts to defeat Proposition 6, members of the Lesbian School Workers primarily focused on education and fundraising, which went hand-in-hand.¹⁸⁰ For example, they sponsored a "Women's Potluck" on April 23, 1978 in Oakland, California to raise awareness about the Briggs Initiative. A 15-mile "walk-a-thon" on October 14th, 1978 at Golden Gate Park benefited both the Lesbian School Workers and a group called Bay Area Women.¹⁸¹ Whole Works Theatre Co. and Mother Tongue premiered a play, "Loving Women," on May 26, 1978 in part as a benefit for the Lesbian School Workers. The Lesbian School Workers also organized a bingo fundraiser against the Briggs Initiative and participated in the Gay Freedom Day march in June of 1978 in San Francisco.¹⁸² Members of the Lesbian School Workers spoke at anti-Briggs forums as well, including one on June 21, 1978,

¹⁷⁸ Pamphlet, Lesbian School Workers, "Vote No on 6 & 7," Mahaney Collection.

¹⁷⁹ Helmbold Interview.

¹⁸⁰ Broidy Interview; Helmbold Interview.

¹⁸¹ Lesbian School Workers, "Women's Potluck" yellow flyer and "Walk-a-thon," October 14, flyer, folder: Lesbian School Workers, Briggs Collection, box 1.

¹⁸² Flyer, Lesbian School Workers, "Upcoming Events," Briggs Collection, folder: Lesbian School Workers, box 1.

alongside a speaker from the gay caucus of Local 2 of the Culinary Workers Union and Yvonne Golden, a member of the Black Teachers' Caucus and high school principal.¹⁸³ Members of the group distributed educational flyers and pamphlets urging people to take action to defeat the Briggs Initiative. One pamphlet listed some ways people could help the campaign, including donating money and skills, organizing community and union meetings to discuss and organize against the Briggs Initiative, and distributing literature.¹⁸⁴

A central aspect of Lesbian School Workers' organizing was the development of a slideshow that placed Proposition 6 in the context of the rise of the New Right, underscoring the Right's targeting of not just gays and lesbians, but also people of color and women. The script that accompanied the slideshow asserted that senator John Briggs was pushing Proposition 6 in order to shore up "rigidly defined" "sex roles." The script also placed the anti-gay Briggs initiative in the context of the rightwing backlash "against the many progressive social changes which came in the late 60s and early 70s." It further urged people to organize and vote against not only Proposition 6, but also Proposition 7, the initiative to expand the death penalty.¹⁸⁵ The Lesbian School Workers showed the slideshow a wide range of audiences, including schools, unions, and community groups.¹⁸⁶

¹⁸³ "An Anti-Briggs Forum" flyer, June 21, Briggs Collection, folder: Briggs Unsorted, box 2.

¹⁸⁴ "Lesbian School Workers," Pamphlet Against the Briggs Initiative, Briggs Collection, folder: Lesbian School Workers, box 1.

¹⁸⁵ Lesbian School Workers Slideshow and Script, GLBT Historical Society.

¹⁸⁶ Lesbian School Workers Slide Show and Script; Helmbold Interview; Flyer, Lesbian School Workers, "Upcoming Events," Briggs Collection, folder: Lesbian School Workers, box 1.

As did gay and lesbian teachers in the Bay Area, gay teachers in Los Angeles also formed a group to advocate on behalf of gay and lesbian teachers. Formed in 1976, Gay Teachers of Los Angeles (GTLA) was disproportionately comprised of gay men. In June, 1976 eight gay teachers came together to form the Gay Teachers of Los Angeles. According a flyer about its founding, “after great mental effort, and using all of the creativity eight teachers could muster, we came up with the original name of ‘Gay Teachers of Los Angeles.’”¹⁸⁷ The makeup of the group, at least in its early years, seemed to consist primarily of white men, as seen in repeated references to the involvement of male teachers in the group’s newsletter. In October of 1977, however, its newsletter did note that about one quarter of the subscribers to its newsletter were women. A few early indications in the newsletter suggest that the group recognized the lack of lesbian involvement—for instance, the newsletter noted that the “women’s caucus within the SF gay teachers group is very successful. They would like to hear from the Lesbian teachers in southern California.”¹⁸⁸ In February, 1977, moreover, the group discussed the possibility of having one male and one female vice president, though it is unclear what conclusion they came to.¹⁸⁹ In 1983 lesbian teachers formed their own caucus within GTLA.¹⁹⁰

The goals of Gay Teachers Los Angeles were largely political, focusing on challenging discrimination against gay and lesbian teachers and incorporating gay and

¹⁸⁷ Flyer about GTLA’s founding, June 26, 1976, Briggs Collection, folder: Cheery Chalkboard.

¹⁸⁸ *Cheery Chalkboard*, October, 1977, Briggs Collection, folder: Cheery Chalkboard.

¹⁸⁹ *Cheery Chalkboard*, February 11, 1977, Briggs Collection, folder: Cheery Chalkboard.

¹⁹⁰ “Announcement of Lesbian Caucus forming in Gay Teachers of Los Angeles,” Briggs Collection, folder: Cheery Chalkboard.

lesbian subjects into the school curricula, though the group also had a social component. A flyer GTLA distributed sometime in the late 1970s described its goals: the group sought to be a source of information for the teachers' unions and local school boards about issues facing gay teachers; to "help eliminate the myths many associate with homosexuality and the oppressive attitudes and actions these myths have lead to"; "to point out how anti-gay attitudes are very much a part of the sexism and racism in our society"; to support "sexual minority studies" in colleges and high schools; and to coordinate efforts with the Gay Teachers and School Workers in San Francisco and other communities.¹⁹¹ In an interview in May, 1977 on a gay and lesbian radio program in Los Angeles, GTLA President Norman McClelland explained that the first action the group took was to send a letter to the Los Angeles Board of Education to find out what their policy was on gay teachers, noting, "we were very nervous about the whole thing, to say the least." The second action the group took was to contact the United Teachers of Los Angeles (UTLA) to point out that their AFT and the California Federation of Teachers had made commitments to the rights of gay teachers, and yet UTLA had not yet done the same. After ten months of going back and forth about doing so, in March of 1977, UTLA came out with a similar statement.¹⁹² In September, 1979, Norman McClelland, GTLA's president,

¹⁹¹ "Goals of GTLA" flyer, Briggs Collection, folder: Cheery Chalkboard.

¹⁹² Norman McClelland and Members of GTLA, Interview with Jim Kepner for IMRU, May 17, 1977, ONE Archives.

further described some of the group's objectives as providing a social space for gay teachers and participating politically within the teachers' unions.¹⁹³

Gay Teachers of Los Angeles prioritized engaging with the teachers' union in Los Angeles, UTLA. For example, GTLA reported in its April, 1978 newsletter that it put an advertisement in UTLA's newspaper, *United Teacher*. The ad read, in big capital letters, 'GAY TEACHERS,' and directed people to contact GTLA.¹⁹⁴ In February of 1977, the group facetiously announced in its newsletter, the *Cheery Chalkboard*:

Infiltration of GTLA into United Teachers of Los Angeles (UTLA) has begun. Our GTLA acting President has been elected into the UTLA House of Representatives. Out of 250 UTLA House members, four whole people are in GTLA. Yes, four today. Tomorrow the whole House.¹⁹⁵

Though conveyed in a comical manner, the election of GTLA members onto the UTLA's governing board reflects the group's commitment to organizing within UTLA. In February of 1977 the UTLA Board of Directors unanimously passed a gay rights policy, and in March, by a 95% vote, the UTLA House of Representatives voted to pass the same statement, which read, "UTLA supports the rights of teachers to fair treatment regardless of sexual orientation or lifestyle. UTLA believes in a policy of "live and let live," a policy which is the essence of a free people."¹⁹⁶ As part of its organizing within the teachers' unions, ten GTLA members attended the CFT convention on May 27-29, 1977 in Los Angeles, where they set up a table with the

¹⁹³ Questionnaire, September, 1979, Briggs Collection, folder: Cheery Chalkboard.

¹⁹⁴ *Cheery Chalkboard*, April, 1978, Briggs Collection, folder: Cheery Chalkboard.

¹⁹⁵ *Cheery Chalkboard*, February 11, 1977, Briggs Collection, folder: Cheery Chalkboard.

¹⁹⁶ *Cheery Chalkboard*, March 15, 1977, Briggs Collection, folder: Cheery Chalkboard.

San Francisco Gay Teachers and School Workers and the Gay Academic Union, the first “openly gay” presence at a CFT convention.¹⁹⁷

As did the Gay Teachers and School Workers and the Lesbian School Workers in the Bay Area, Gay Teachers of Los Angeles prioritized organizing against the Briggs Initiative in 1977 and 1978. GTLA organized independently of the teachers’ unions to defeat the Briggs Initiative, but it also focused heavily on pressuring the teachers’ unions, particularly UTLA and the AFT-affiliated California Federation of Teachers, but also the NEA-affiliated California Teachers Association, to publicly oppose the Briggs Initiative. Members of GTLA debated Briggs and gave interviews to the media as part of their efforts to defeat Proposition 6. For instance, in July or August of 1977 Gary Steel, a gay professor at UCLA and member of GTLA, debated Briggs on Channel 28.¹⁹⁸ Additionally, two GTLA members were interviewed as part of a five-part series on the Briggs Initiative that aired on Los Angeles’ Channel 4 in August or September, 1978. And on October 3, 1978, a GTLA member named “Chuck” appeared on Channel 28 to speak out against the initiative.¹⁹⁹ In its newsletter, *Cheery Chalkboard*, GTLA informed readers of Briggs Initiative-related developments. For example, in August, 1978 GTLA reported that the Los Angeles City Council had voted 9 to 3 to oppose Proposition 6. Of the three in the minority, the newsletter reported, “GTLA hopes the 3 will go in for counseling and

¹⁹⁷ *Cheery Chalkboard*, March 15, 1977, May 13, 1977, and December, 1978, Briggs Collection, folder: Cheery Chalkboard.

¹⁹⁸ *Cheery Chalkboard*, August 1977, Briggs Collection, folder: Cheery Chalkboard.

¹⁹⁹ *Cheery Chalkboard*, October 1978, Briggs Collection, folder: Cheery Chalkboard.

maybe change their minds.”²⁰⁰ *Cheery Chalkboard* also reported that the Los Angeles United School District adopted a resolution opposed to Proposition 6 on October 16, 1978.²⁰¹ As part of the group’s campaign against Proposition 6, GTLA sent about 50 letters to local teacher and administrator groups to persuade them to oppose the Briggs Initiative.²⁰² Additionally, McClelland, GTLA’s president, was a plaintiff alongside gay people from Northern California in a lawsuit to prevent the initiative from making onto the ballot.²⁰³

The precedent for GTLA’s organizing within the California Federation of Teachers (CFT) for gay and lesbian rights was set at earlier CFT conventions in 1969 and 1970. Morgan Pinney, member of AFT Local 1352 and professor of accounting at San Francisco State College until he was fired for his participation in the faculty strike in solidarity with black and Third World students in 1969, was the union activist primarily responsible for promoting gay rights at the CFT conventions in 1969 and 1970. Pinney, a gay liberation activist, also became involved with the Committee for Homosexual Freedom, a militant gay rights group founded in San Francisco in 1969. At its convention in Los Angeles, December 27-29, 1969, due to Pinney’s efforts, the CFT adopted a gay rights resolution for the first time. The resolution called for the establishment of a “vigorous life and sex education program at all school levels which explains the various American life-styles” and “the

²⁰⁰ *Cheery Chalkboard*, August 1978, Briggs Collection, folder: Cheery Chalkboard.

²⁰¹ *Cheery Chalkboard*, November 1978, Briggs Collection, folder: Cheery Chalkboard.

²⁰² *Cheery Chalkboard*, September 1977, Briggs Collection, folder: Cheery Chalkboard.

²⁰³ The lawsuit to prevent the initiative from going on the ballot ultimately failed. “Bid to Bar Ballot Measure Fails,” *Los Angeles Times*, August 3, 1978.

abolition of all laws or other governmental policy which involves non-victim sexual practices.” Additionally, it recognized oppression against gay people in general and the persistent police harassment of gay people, concluding that “the self-hate caused by the system’s oppression is the most hideous result” of anti-gay discrimination. When some of the 250 delegates initially expressed amusement during the discussion about gay rights, Pinney declared that he was talking about “nothing less than murder,” “murder of his homosexual brothers by police and others warped by police and others warped by the system into sadistic revenge for their own self-doubts.” After his speech, AFT Local 1928, representing student workers at San Francisco State College, which had also been instrumental in encouraging the resolution, led the delegates in a standing ovation.²⁰⁴

Delegates passed a second gay rights resolution, though not without some controversy at the CFT convention in 1970. The resolution that passed after much debate, “Counseling the Homosexual Student,” required the drafting of a pamphlet to be distributed to 15,000 CFT members.²⁰⁵ In an article, “Fireworks at CFT Convention,” published in AFT Local 1352’s newsletter, Pinney related CFT President Raoul Teilhet’s criticism of the proposed resolution about gay rights. According to Pinney, Teilhet claimed he could not organize teachers “with a thing like that in the platform” (Pinney’s words). But the stance against gay rights taken by

²⁰⁴ AFT Local 1352 Press Release, [n.d.], Tim Sampson Collection, folder 2, box 1, Labor Archives and Research Center (hereafter San Francisco Labor Archives), J. Paul Leonard Library, San Francisco State University, San Francisco, CA (hereafter Leonard Library).

²⁰⁵ Morgan Pinney, “Fireworkds at CFT Convention,” AFT Local 1352 Newsletter, January 25, 1971, Sampson Collection, folder 19, box 1, San Francisco Labor Archives.

some at the CFT convention was ultimately defeated after a three-hour floor fight. This passage of gay rights resolutions at CFT conventions in 1969 and 1970 represented early moments in the convergence of the gay liberation movement and the labor movement. Several years would pass, however, before the CFT and other unions became more proactive in the defense of gay rights, as witnessed in union's involvement in the anti-Briggs campaign.

Gay Teachers of Los Angeles organized for gay rights and against Proposition 6 at the California Federation of Teacher's annual convention in May, 1978. As part of GTLA's organizing in opposition to the Briggs Initiative, the April, 1978 issue of the *Cheery Chalkboard* announced that McClelland and "possibly 2 or 3 other people" were planning on running at the UTLA meeting to be delegates to the CFT convention in San Diego in May, 1978.²⁰⁶ At the convention McClelland led the first-ever gay workshop entitled "Is Homosexuality Catching: The Gay Teacher, Reality vs. Myth," with about 40 people in attendance. A San Diego-based group involved in the anti-Briggs campaign, Save Our Teachers (from Briggs), hosted a party afterward in the hotel room of Judy Solkovits, vice president of both the CFT and UTLA at the time. GTLA also helped to organize a campaign with the help of both gay and straight people from UTLA and "our San Diego friends," to have delegates wear black armbands with a pink "stop Briggs" triangle during the

²⁰⁶ *Cheery Chalkboard*, April 1978, Briggs Collection, folder: Cheery Chalkboard.

convention, ultimately succeeding in persuading about 250 delegates to wear the armband.²⁰⁷

The GTLA proposed a resolution at the May, 1978 CFT convention which won majority support, underscoring that gay and lesbian teachers' organizing against the Briggs Initiative within the CFT had a broader impact on the CFT's political orientation toward gay rights beyond the just the union's opposition to the Briggs Initiative. GTLA's organizing for gay rights and against Proposition 6 served to strengthen the CFT's political stance for gay rights. GTLA announced in its newsletter that GTLA members were bringing a gay rights resolution to the March 30, 1978 meeting of UTLA, and then, if passed at the UTLA meeting, the resolution would be brought to the May, 1978 CFT convention.²⁰⁸ GTLA members coordinated with the Gay Teachers and School Workers of San Francisco to obtain the support of San Francisco AFT Local 61 to support the resolution, which ultimately did pass. The resolution read:

Whereas gay men and women have for many years been victims of both overt and covert discrimination; Whereas recently gay educators have been directly maligned and threatened with a witch hunt and purge commonly called the Briggs Initiative; Whereas, much of the discrimination against gay men and women teachers comes from non-gay co-workers because of their lack of knowledge about sexual minorities; Be it resolved that the CFT support and encourage all of its locals to include sexual orientation as a non-discrimination category in all future contracts and that the CFT support and encourage the inclusion of curricula on sexual minorities in all counselor and teacher training and credentialing programs.²⁰⁹

²⁰⁷ *Cheery Chalkboard*, June 1978, and December 1978, Briggs Collection, folder: Cheery Chalkboard.

²⁰⁸ *Cheery Chalkboard*, April 1978, Briggs Collection, folder: Cheery Chalkboard.

²⁰⁹ *Cheery Chalkboard*, June 1978, Briggs Collection, folder: Cheery Chalkboard.

While the CFT had previously gone on record at its conventions in 1969 and 1970 in support of gay rights in general, as noted, this time the CFT actively encouraged locals to negotiate for gay rights and to include curricula on “sexual minorities” in teacher and counselor training programs.

These efforts of gay and lesbian teachers, in time, led the California Federation of Teachers to actively take part in the broader campaign to defeat Proposition 6. The CFT’s activism against the Briggs Initiative included signing onto a lawsuit to prevent the initiative from going on the ballot, publicly endorsing and sponsoring educational events and protests against the Briggs Initiative, and donating money to the campaign to defeat Briggs.²¹⁰ Judy Solkovits, Vice President of the California Federation of Teachers as well as VP of UTLA in 1978, represented the CFT on numerous occasions as she spoke out against the Briggs Initiative. She remembers, for instance, going on a radio program at 5:30 a.m. as well as attending a big protest against the initiative on October, 1978 at DeLongpre Park in Hollywood at which Harvey Milk spoke. Solkovits campaigned against the Briggs Initiative in part because she says it was part of her responsibility as Vice President of the CFT, but she also had a personal commitment to the issue.²¹¹ Raoul Teilhet, president of the CFT, appeared repeatedly at events against the Briggs Initiative. Teilhet spoke to a crowd of 250,000 gay rights demonstrators in San Francisco in June of 1978, announcing, “we are here today to demonstrate to the John Briggs and Anita Bryants

²¹⁰ Judy Solkovits, Interview with Author, Northridge, California, August 9, 2009 (hereafter Solkovits Interview).

²¹¹ Solkovits Interview.

in our society that we do not intend to permit the stench of fear to return to California public-school classrooms.”²¹²

In a televised debate, in response to the fact that a number of organizations publicly opposed Proposition 6, including the California Federation of Teachers, the Young Republicans, and the California Democratic Party, among others, Briggs responded, “the ones you named, for the most part, are all homosexually oriented or are advocates of homosexuality.”²¹³ It is unclear which of these two descriptions Briggs felt best applied to the teachers’ federation.

The American Federation of Teachers, the CFT’s parent union at the national level, also publicly opposed the Briggs Initiative, though in a much weaker fashion than the CFT. Gay Teachers of Los Angeles provided a report in its newsletter of the August 1978 AFT convention in Washington, D.C., in which controversy emerged over passage of resolutions on gay rights. GTLA supported two gay rights resolutions at the convention: Resolution Number 45 opposed the Briggs Initiative, and Resolution Number 46 was the GLTA-supported resolution adopted at the CFT convention in May, 1978. According to GTLA’s newsletter, the AFT leadership had “pre-arranged to sabotage both resolutions,” seeking instead to pass a resolution which restated the AFT’s 1973 policy statement “supporting the rights of teachers to conduct their private lives without harassment,” which made no explicit reference to gay rights or discrimination. A number of gay teachers, including GTLA’s

²¹² “Stop Briggs, AFT Leaders Urge,” *California Teacher*, October, 1978 21, no. 1.

²¹³ Ivy Bottini, Document with Argument Against the Briggs Initiative, October 10, 1978, Ivy Bottini Collection, folder: Briggs Initiative (California Prop 6) General 1978, ONE Archives.

McClelland, and straight supporters lobbied James Ballard, president of San Francisco Local 61 and the only union leader from California serving as one of a several AFT vice presidents at the national level, to introduce the more strongly-worded substitute resolution against the Briggs Initiative. While they were able to convince Ballard to introduce a resolution against the Briggs Initiative, it did not explicitly mention the words “gay,” “homosexual,” or “sexual orientation. Additionally, according to GTLA’s report, “when Ballard refused to give us any support for our own resolution (#46), we attempted to compromise twice on the wording, but he rejected them both.” In doing so, complained GTLA, Ballard “refused to support what his own state affiliate now holds as official policy and what his own local has in their agreement with the San Francisco Board of Education, namely a policy of non-discrimination on the basis of sexual orientation.”²¹⁴

From the convention floor, gay rights activists at the 1978 AFT convention proposed amendments to Ballard’s resolution that would put the AFT more clearly and proactively on record in support of gay rights. Delegate Donald Repps from Louisiana stood up to propose two amendments to Ballard’s original motion. The first amendment read, “whereas, gay teachers for many years have been the victims of both overt and covert discrimination.” The second amendment read: “be it further resolved that the AFT supports and encourages all of its locals to include sexual orientation as a non-discriminatory category in all future contracts.” Repps and a delegate from New York, Ernest TeBordo, spoke in favor of the amendments,

²¹⁴ *Cheery Chalkboard*, September 1978, Briggs Collection, folder: Cheery Chalkboard.

pointing out that many gay teachers feared the loss of their jobs. TeBordo declared, “it is time for the AFT to recognize the problem that exists,” and asked, “how much longer can this union in the face of the much greater awareness of gay persons ignore the plight of the gay teacher?” A delegate from New York’s Local 2, Martin Gross, argued against the amendments, arguing that the amendments would be misinterpreted by “political and social Neanderthals,” which would actually make it more difficult to provide protection on the basis of sexual orientation. Both amendments failed, and Ballard’s original substitute motion passed.²¹⁵ The only resolution successfully passed at the AFT convention cited the 1973 policy statement, which supported “the rights of teachers to conduct their private lives without harassment,” but added wording specifically objecting to the Briggs Initiative.

Gay Teachers of Los Angeles critically reported in its May 1978 newsletter about the developments at the AFT convention, remarking, “the leadership of the AFT appeared to be afraid of gay teachers’ rights. They were especially opposed to any use of the words ‘gay,’ ‘homosexual,’ or ‘sexual orientation’ in any resolutions.” As a result, GTLA criticized the anti-Briggs resolution passed at the AFT convention: “the AFT has given us closet support only, instead of open support.”²¹⁶

This anti-Briggs resolution passed at the AFT Convention in Washington, DC in August of 1978 was less politically progressive on gay rights than the resolution passed at the CFT a few months earlier. In contrast to the rather tepid language passed

²¹⁵ May 1978 AFT Convention Proceedings, American Federation of Teachers Collection, series XIII, folder 4: Proceedings, folder 4, box 50, Walter P. Reuther Library (hereafter Reuther Library), Wayne State University, Detroit, Michigan.

²¹⁶ *Cheery Chalkboard*, September 1978, Briggs Collection, folder: Cheery Chalkboard.

at the AFT convention, the California resolution passed at the CFT convention in May, 1978 not only mentioned the word “gay” several times and called for locals to bargain over the inclusion of language barring discrimination based on sexual orientation, but went so far as to call for schools to include curricula about “sexual minorities” in all teacher and counselor training programs.²¹⁷

The different language of the resolution passed in California points to the more progressive CFT leadership on the issue of gay rights, but also underscores the success of the hard work that rank-and-file gay and lesbian teachers throughout California put into lobbying the California union to speak out for gay rights. It is important to note that James Ballard, whose substitute motion passed in place of the more progressive motion, came from a local that actually successfully bargained over the inclusion of protections against intrusions in the “private lives” of teachers in the contract’s non-discrimination clause, and was generally well ahead of other AFT locals on the subject of gay rights. Ballard’s local in San Francisco took a strong stance against the initiative.²¹⁸

The fact that Ballard was a member of the Progressive Caucus running for the position of vice president at the AFT convention in DC in 1978, may point to a

²¹⁷ *Cheery Chalkboard*, April 1978, Briggs Collection, folder: Cheery Chalkboard.

²¹⁸ See, for example, James E. Ballard, President, San Francisco Federation of Teachers, Local 61 and Timothy Twomey, vice president of San Francisco Labor Council, and Stanley M. Smith, Secretary of San Francisco and Construction Trades Council, to California Federation of Labor, July 28, 1978, Briggs Collection, folder: No Name, box 2. Joan Marie-Shelley, AFT Local 61 vice president, spoke at events against the Briggs Initiative, an event on October 11, 1978 at Mission High School in San Francisco (“Large Screen Broadcast of BACABI-Briggs Debate” flyer, October 11, 1978, Briggs Collection, folder: Briggs, No on 6, box 1. Local 61 also signed onto BACABI’s Labor Committee (BACABI Labor Committee flyer, “The initiative is a clear menace to the rights of teachers and other public employees...”, Briggs Collection, folder: Bay Area Comm. Against Briggs, box 1).

political bind he was in.²¹⁹ The Progressive Caucus was, after all, the caucus of the same AFT leadership that the Gay Teachers of Los Angeles claimed sought to sabotage both the successful resolution that Ballard did end up proposing, in addition to the more progressive motion that actually mentions the word ‘gay.’ Jackie Blount explains that in the summer of 1974, Albert Shanker, a major leader of the Progressive Caucus, told members of New York’s Gay Teachers Association that he would not support the passage of a gay rights resolution within United Federation of Teachers, the AFT local representing teachers in New York, because the issue was too divisive.²²⁰ In 1974, Shanker was the president of the UFT; that year he would be elected president of the AFT, a position to which he was re-elected repeatedly until his death in 1997. In her examination of gay and lesbian educators, Harbeck reveals that Shanker, president of the AFT in 1978 at the time of the debate over the Briggs Initiative, asserted in 1985 that the issue of gay teachers was too marginal and controversial to merit the AFT’s support. Shanker even criticized the National Education Association for their support of gay teachers, arguing that they should spend their time advancing causes of greater interest to their membership and “not in conflict with the values of many Americans.”²²¹ As a leader of both the Progressive Caucus and the president of the American Federation of Teachers, Shanker exerted significant influence within the union, including on elected leaders from California like Jim Ballard.

²¹⁹ May 1978 AFT Convention Proceedings, American Federation of Teachers Collection, series XIII, folder 4: Proceedings, folder 4, box 50.

²²⁰ Blount, *Fit to Teach*, 123–124.

²²¹ Harbeck, *Gay and Lesbian Educators*, 243.

Ultimately, organizing by gay and lesbian teachers and their unions, in the context of the broader anti-Briggs campaign, led to the defeat of the Briggs Initiative. California voters opposed the initiative by a relatively large margin: 59% voted against, while 41% voted for it. In contrast, Briggs' other initiative to expand the death penalty, Proposition 7, passed overwhelmingly, with 71% of voters favoring the initiative and only 29% of voters in opposition.²²²

Though the extensive movement against the Briggs Initiative should be credited with the initiative's defeat, other factors also contributed. John Briggs himself, it turned out, was one such factor. In contrast to Anita Bryant, who appeared sincere in her anti-gay activism, John Briggs never attempted to hide that he sought higher office, making it appear that his choice to target gay and lesbian teachers and other school workers was a calculated move meant to facilitate his rise to power. In an interview with the *San Francisco Bay Guardian* in October, 1978, when asked if he was interested in running for governor again, Briggs responded, "Are you kidding? I haven't even thought about it. But would I like to be governor? Sure, I'd like to be governor. I'd like to be U.S. senator. I'd even like to be president—wouldn't you?" The interviewer replied, "No, I'd rather write about it."²²³ Briggs' aspirations for higher office were widely known at the time, but an interview with Karen Harbeck in 1989 reveals Briggs' motivations. Harbeck relates, "his two motivating forces were a

²²² "Edition-Time Ballot Returns in Statewide Voting: Prop. 6: 2,222,784 41% Yes; 3,203,076 59% No," *Los Angeles Times*, November 8, 1978.

²²³ Robert Levering, "John Briggs on Gays: Exclusive Interview! The Author of the Briggs Initiative Sounds Off on Homosexuality, Prostitution, Perversion, Adultery and Bestiality," October 5-13, 1978, [n.d.], Briggs Collection, folder: Found Loose, box 2

wish to be Governor and a repulsion at the idea of two men engaging in sex together. In his sexist logic, he cared nothing about ‘what you girls do in bed. Women just don’t get this issue.’”²²⁴ It should be noted that during the campaign Briggs claimed, in an interview with Robert Scheer, “I don’t want lesbians teaching.”²²⁵

As the main driving force behind the initiative, moreover, Briggs also made exaggerated claims about gays and lesbians, often coming off as illogical and malicious. Briggs made wild statements in speeches, such as: “if you let one homosexual teacher stay, soon there’ll be two, then four, then 8, then 25—and before long, the entire school will be taught by homosexuals.”²²⁶ As election day drew closer and prospects for winning dimmed, Briggs desperately declared that homosexuality “is a more insidious threat” than Communism, and “it is like a creeping disease, where it just continues to spread like cancer throughout the body.”²²⁷ Briggs was not the most effective proponent for his own initiative.

Finally, the broad scope of the initiative undermined support for the Briggs Initiative from people and organizations who might otherwise have been supportive. The Briggs Initiative not only targeted gay and lesbian teachers and schoolworkers, but also threatened straight supporters of gay rights. Ronald Reagan, previously the Republican governor of California (1967-1975) and soon-to-be president of the U.S issued a statement against the Briggs Initiative on August 20, 1978, asserting that it had the potential to infringe on “basic rights of privacy and perhaps even

²²⁴ Harbeck, *Gay and Lesbian Educators*, 62.

²²⁵ Scheer, “A Times Interview with John Briggs on Homosexuality,” *Los Angeles Times*.

²²⁶ Shilts, *The Mayor of Castro Street*, 239.

²²⁷ Clendinen, *Out for Good*, 388.

constitutional rights.”²²⁸ Though Briggs had some strong religious support, particularly among Baptists, prominent members of the religious community also came out in opposition. Reverend William A. McQuoid, a Presbyterian minister from Newport Beach, was quoted in *The Los Angeles Times* on November 3: “I do not believe that the religious community can condone or even passively allow this proposition with its mean-spirited contempt for homosexual persons to become law.”²²⁹ Another *Los Angeles Times* piece related, “church statements opposing Proposition 6 on the November ballot have been found to outnumber those favoring it”; these church groups opposed the Briggs Initiative out of concern that, if it passed, the Briggs Initiative would violate the civil rights of gay people.²³⁰

Conclusion

On election night on November 8, 1978, many who had worked tirelessly for the defeat of the Briggs Initiative came together to watch the election results as they came in. In San Francisco, activists gathered at the Market Street headquarters of the anti-6 campaign to watch the election results on TV. Upon hearing that the Briggs Initiative was defeated, people cheered and stomped their feet and poured into streets to celebrate. San Francisco Supervisor Harvey Milk used the occasion to urge people to come out to their friends and families. Sally Gearhart, a professor at San Francisco

²²⁸ Ibid., 387.

²²⁹ Bud Lembke, “4 Religious Leaders Urge Rejection of Proposition 6,” *The Los Angeles Times*, November 1, 1978.

²³⁰ Russell Chandler and John Dart, “Many Church Leaders Oppose Prop. 6,” *Los Angeles Times*, November 3, 1978.

State, exclaimed, “Not only are we good and true and beautiful, but we have lots of friends.” Larry Berner, a gay teacher, ecstatic to hear the news, nevertheless warned, “just because we won doesn’t mean we’ve eliminated prejudice against homosexuals,” while Ed Foglia, president of the California Teachers Association, claimed the defeat of Proposition 6 as both a victory for teachers and for the public.²³¹

Tragedy struck less than a month later, however, when, on November 27th, Dan White, formerly a conservative member of the San Francisco Board of Supervisors, assassinated George Moscone, mayor of San Francisco, and Harvey Milk. LGBT people mourned the death of both men. But when, on May 21, 1979, a jury found Dan White guilty of voluntary manslaughter, meaning that, with good behavior, White could be out of prison in less than five years, many exploded in rage.²³² Chanting “Dan White, Dan White, Hit Man for the New Right,” and “All-straight jury, No Surprise, Dan White Lives, and Harvey Milk Dies,” protesters rioted in protest against what they viewed as an unjustly light conviction. Gathered at City Hall, protesters threw rocks and shattered glass, and a line of police cars near City Hall burst into flames.²³³

And though the Briggs Initiative was defeated, the Christian Right ultimately thrived at the national level, ultimately helping to elect Ronald Reagan as president in 1980. John Briggs helped to form Citizens for Decency and Morality, a network of fundamentalist pastors and their congregations. The pro-Briggs campaign, despite the

²³¹ Jerry Caroll, “Gay Happy Days Are Here Again,” *San Francisco Chronicle*, November 8, 1978.

²³² Shilts, *The Mayor of Castro Street*, 325.

²³³ *Ibid.*, 328–329.

immediate defeat, helped to consolidate anti-gay conservative activists; for example, Reverend Louis Sheldon from Anaheim, a supporter of the Briggs Initiative, helped to establish the Traditional Values Coalition, and Jerry Falwell, who had come to California to support Briggs, founded the Moral Majority in 1979. Both organizations became prominent advocates of what they termed ‘traditional values,’ campaigning against gay rights for years to come.²³⁴

Lesbians and gays led the way in the ultimately successful fight to defeat the Briggs Initiative, and the organizing of rank-and-file gay and lesbian teachers and school workers clearly played a critical role in this movement. It was because of their organizing that the AFT in California and nationally spoke out against the Briggs Initiative. But this was a fraught victory. As noted earlier, Proposition 7, the death penalty initiative, passed overwhelmingly. It would have had a better chance of being defeated had the gay and lesbian movement, as well as the teachers’ unions, also prioritize speaking out against the measure while campaigning against Proposition 6. Furthermore, the teachers’ unions did not do all they could to defeat Proposition 6, considering the sweeping impact the initiative would have had on a large minority of gay and lesbian teachers and school workers throughout the state of California had it passed. The fact that the teachers’ unions were much more active in the campaign to defeat Proposition 13, the anti-tax initiative passed in California June of 1978, underscores that the teachers’ unions still had a long way to go on the issue of gay rights.

²³⁴ McGirr, *Suburban Warriors*, 259; Diamond, *Not By Politics Alone*, 66.

This history also has a broader relevance for both labor and queer history. It demonstrates that it was necessary for gay and lesbian teachers and school workers to organize around their own identities and personal experiences to pressure the leadership of the teachers' unions to oppose this blatantly discriminatory ballot initiative. It, moreover, adds to the small but growing field of queer labor history. Very few labor historians have thus far examined the intersections between Gay, Lesbian, Bisexual, and Transgender history and the history of working people in the United States. The history of anti-Briggs campaign, then, puts workers into queer history and queers into labor history. As I show in this chapter, even if the teachers' unions in California could have done more to oppose the Briggs Initiative, they were some of the earliest unions to advocate for gay and lesbian rights in the 1960s and 1970s. The involvement in the campaign to defeat the Briggs Initiative, alongside the gay-labor boycott of Coors Beers in the mid- to late-1970s, marked a turning in queer labor history.

The campaign to defeat the Briggs Initiative also shows the power that comes from social movement unionism. Labor sociologists and historians, as well as organizers and activists within the labor movement, have pointed to the potential power that comes from harnessing the inherent power of the labor movement to make broader social change, change not only confined to the bread and butter issues of the workplace. In other words, the rank-and-file gay and lesbian teachers and school workers in this story were trying to put the movement back in the labor movement by demanding that the teachers' unions make common cause with community

organizations fighting for social justice. Organizing by gay and lesbian teachers to defeat the Briggs Initiative were part of broader efforts during the 1960s and 1970s to revive and redefine social unionism; the anti-Briggs campaign in California resulted in many unions, many for the first time, advocating for gay and lesbian rights.

Conclusion

At the center of this study lies a model of unionism that foregrounds union democracy and social justice. Through an examination of rank-and-file teachers' organizing in California from the late 1940s to the late 1970s, we unearth a model of workers' organizing closely linked with social movements in broader struggles to challenge various forms of discrimination. Specifically, this study considers the overlapping histories of efforts to promote left-led social unionism in the American Federation of Teachers and the independent self-organization of rank-and-file teachers involved in organizing against racism, sexism, and homophobia. A focus on rank-and-file teachers highlights how change happened at the grassroots, and that democratic unionism was the necessary precondition to effectively challenge discrimination.

The four case studies discussed here provide concrete examples of the ways that rank-and-file workers—in this case teachers—have sought to merge social movement and labor organizing by centering anti-discrimination struggles. Through a discussion of the expulsion the Los Angeles-based AFT Local 430 and the subsequent blacklisting of communist and other leftist teachers in Los Angeles in the late 1940s and 1950s, we see how the national leadership of the American Federation of Teachers sought to suppress left-led social unionism. AFT Local 430, under the leadership of members of the Communist Party and other leftists, sought to improve

the rights and benefits of teachers while simultaneously placing anti-racism at the core of its organizing—seen most clearly through the local’s promotion of hiring more African American teachers and organizing for the incorporation of African American history into the public school curricula in Los Angeles. The AFT’s expulsion of AFT Local 430, in conjunction with the blacklisting of leftist teachers in Los Angeles, served to destroy left-led teacher unionism in Los Angeles by the mid-1950s. The expulsion of Local 430 in 1948, which marked culmination of anti-communist purges within the AFT, also signified a political transition in the AFT nationally toward a politically moderate, and in many ways conservative, version of unionism less committed to the struggle for racial equality.

The following three chapters showed that social movements of the late 1960s through the late 1970s influenced rank-and-file teachers’ organizing and the political orientation of the AFT in California, ultimately pushing teacher unionism in California to the left by reviving a new version of social unionism. Faculty members who went on strike at San Francisco State in 1968-1969, through both the independent Ad Hoc Faculty Committee and AFT Local 1352, in solidarity with black and Third World students were helping to revive and reshape social unionism, in many ways reminiscent of the left-led unionism of AFT Local 430 in Los Angeles. Like the leftist leadership of Local 430, striking faculty at San Francisco State made anti-racism a priority. But this time around, the striking faculty allied with students of color, who adopted a militant racial politics shaped by the rise of Black Power and Third World Leftism.

Similarly, in large part due to the influence of the emergence of the feminist movement in the late 1960s and 1970s, women in the California Federation of Teachers pushed the union to proactively challenge gender-based discrimination at work, in the school curriculum, and in society more broadly. Women within the national AFT formed the Women's Rights Committee in 1970, and feminists in the California Federation of Teachers followed suit in 1972. Through their organizing, feminists in the AFT helped to merge teacher unionism and the feminist movement, and by doing so were part of a larger, diverse political project aimed at reviving a new variation of social unionism. Feminist organizing within the AFT was not new—women who helped to found the AFT had been involved in the women's suffrage movement in the early twentieth century and fought to establish pay equity between the largely female elementary teachers and disproportionately male high school teachers in the 1930s and 1940s, for example. But in the 1970s, feminists helped to redefine social unionism in the AFT by, for the first time, prioritizing organizing against sexist school curricula, in which girls and women were underrepresented and, when they were depicted, appeared in stereotypically gendered roles. By doing so, like the teacher union leaders in AFT Local 430 in the 1940s and 1950s and the striking faculty at San Francisco State in 1968-1969, feminists in the AFT made the concerns of their students a central component of the new social unionism.

The fourth and final case study explores gay and lesbian rank-and-file teachers' organizing against the Briggs Initiative in 1977-1978. The Briggs Initiative, also known as Proposition 6, was on the ballot in California during the November,

1978 election, and, had it passed, would have made it illegal for gay and lesbian teachers, as well as their straight supporters, to teach in the public school system. The Briggs Initiative was part of the rise of the homophobic wing of the Christian Right in the late 1970s, and represented the end of what scholars have called the “long seventies,” in which social movements of the Left, including the rank-and-file rebellion in labor, were dynamic and significant in scale.¹ Gay and lesbian teachers’ organizing against the Briggs Initiative involved independent organizing outside of unions, as well as efforts to persuade the teachers’ unions in California, particularly the AFT, to take an active stance against the homophobic measure. By doing so, gay and lesbian teachers helped to fuse the gay and lesbian rights movement with the labor movement, beginning the process of making the labor movement address the issues of queer workers. The California AFT’s opposition to and organizing against the Briggs Initiative made the union distinctive, representing as it did an early moment in queer labor organizing. The new social unionism, then, was also shaped by a sexual politics born out of the gay and lesbian movement of the late 1970s.

This study contributes to the literature on the history of the American Federation of Teachers by focusing on its history in California, which has not previously been examined. A focus on organizing by rank-and-file teachers’ organizing in California shows that the AFT was not politically monolithic. The AFT in California was relatively more progressive than the AFT at the national level.

¹ For more on the “long seventies” within the labor movement, see Aaron Brenner, Aaron Brenner, and Cal Winslow, eds., *Rebel Rank and File: Labor Militancy and Revolt from Below in the Long 1970s* (London; New York: Verso, 2010).

While the New York City-based United Federation of Teachers, under the leadership of Albert Shanker, organized in opposition to Black Power activists advocating for community control of the schools in 1968, AFT Local 1352 in California went on strike in alliance with student activists aligned with the Black Power movement and Third World Leftism. In the 1970s, feminists in the California Federation of Teachers not only fought sexism at work and in the curriculum in California, but also played a central role in feminist organizing within the AFT at the national level. Additionally, in the late 1970s, the California Federation of Teachers opposed the homophobic Briggs Initiative, taking a more forceful stance against homophobia than the national AFT. This study's focus on rank-and-file teachers and the history of the AFT in California provides a fuller picture of the AFT's history.

Though I end in the late 1970s, there are certainly widespread and more recent examples of organizing by rank-and-file teachers to challenge discrimination that merit attention. For example, in the mid-1990s the Right placed immigrant rights in its crosshairs when it put the anti-immigration Proposition 187 on the ballot in California in November, 1994. Proposition 187 sought to deny social services, health care, and public education to undocumented immigrants. It required school districts to report on undocumented students, essentially turning school personnel—including teachers—into immigration agents. In response, teachers, students, and community members mobilized to oppose the measure, culminating in a mass march on October

15, 1994 with approximately 100,000 participants and a student walk out of over 10,000 on November 2, the day of the election.²

While the leadership of United Teachers Los Angeles went on record opposing Proposition 187, rank-and-file teachers headed efforts among the teaching workforce in opposition to the initiative. Teacher activists within the Bilingual Education Committee of UTLA, and an independent group of mostly younger teachers called On Campus, were the two main forums through which this organizing occurred. The School Community Action Network, a reform caucus of activist teachers within UTLA, also played an important role in mobilizing teacher sentiment against Proposition 187. These rank-and-file teachers initiated two major projects to assist in the anti-Prop 187 campaign: they developed a high school curriculum about immigrant rights and Proposition 187, and they circulated a petition among teachers saying that, if the initiative passed, they would refuse to report their students to the Immigration and Nationalization Service (INS). Teachers across Los Angeles also joined the mass demonstration on October 15, 1994. Though Proposition 187 ultimately passed, the courts subsequently ruled many of its major provisions invalid.³

² Patrick J. McDonnell and Robert J. Lopez, "L.A. March Against Prop. 187 Draws 70,000," *Los Angeles Times*, October 17, 1994; Amy Pyle and Greg Hernandez, "10,000 students protest Prop. 187," *Los Angeles Times*, November 3, 1994.

³ Linda Baughn and Nelson Daza, "Defeat 'Save Our State' to Save Student and Teacher Rights," *United Teacher* XXV, no. 13, July 29, 1994; Linda Baughn, Interview by Author, Los Angeles, California, March 25, 2010; John Perez, Interview by Author, Los Angeles, California, March 23, 2010; Steve Zimmer, Interview by Author, Los Angeles, California, March 27, 2010; Marina Salas, Interview by Author, Los Angeles, California, March 26, 2010; Jose Govea, Interview by Author, Los Angeles, California, March 27, 2010.

As the political Right increasingly targeted undocumented immigrants in the 1990s, rank-and-file teacher involvement in the movement to defeat Proposition 187 points to the changing nature of a left-led social unionism. Like the rank-and-file involvement in anti-discrimination struggles in the 1940s to the 1970s, in 1994 many teachers actively challenged the anti-immigrant hysteria reflected in majority voter support for Proposition 187. Geographer Joseph Nevins argues that in the 1990s, “the rise of ‘illegal immigration’ and the criminalization of the immigrant have intersected with efforts by conservative and neoliberal politicians and activists to redirect state resources away from redistributive endeavors and toward those of social control.”⁴ Rank-and-file teachers organizing against Proposition 187 challenged the criminalization of immigrants, many of whom were their students.

Recent struggles waged by the AFT-affiliated Chicago Teachers Union are also quite significant, as they highlight a current example of left-led social unionism within the American Federation of Teachers. In 2010, a sea change occurred in the union when the Caucus of Rank-and-File Educators (CORE) unseated the former union leadership who, according to Micah Uetricht, came to represent a “stale top-down business unionism.” Prior to caucus’ victory, the leadership of the CTU, asserts Uetricht, “had little to say about school closures in poor neighborhoods of color, attacks on teachers, and the advance of free market education reform.”⁵ Since its election in 2010, the caucus has put forward a “fighting left-led unionism” closely

⁴ Joseph Nevins, *Operation Gatekeeper: The Rise of the “Illegal Alien” and the Making of the U.S.-Mexico Boundary* (New York: Routledge, 2002), 144.

⁵ Micah Uetricht, *Strike for America: Chicago Teachers Against Austerity* (London; New York: Verso, 2014), 17-18.

ties with communities of color organizing in opposition to the closure of public schools in mostly black and brown neighborhoods of Chicago. The Caucus of Rank-and-File Educators also opposes neoliberal efforts to restructure and dismantle public education by further imposing standardized testing and opening up privately run non-union charter schools in which teachers are generally paid much less, have fewer benefits, and weaker workplace protections.⁶

Under the Caucus of Rank-and-File Educator's leadership, the Chicago Teachers Union has called attention to the racist nature of public school closures in the city and organized alongside community-based groups and parents to fight school closures. Before 2013, the city had closed seventy-five public schools, and in 2013 the city moved to shut down an additional forty-nine elementary schools and one high school program. Nearly all of the school closures have impacted communities of color. The Chicago Teachers Union issued a report in November, 2012, "The Black and White of Education in Chicago," in which it criticized the Chicago Public School system for exacerbating racial inequality—the report points out that since 2001, 88 percent of the students affected by school closures have been African American. The union also reported that teachers of color were more likely to teach in schools attended by students of color; as result of the school closures, the percentage of black teachers in the Chicago Public Schools declined from 45 percent in 1995 to only 29 percent in 2011.⁷

⁶ Ibid., 7.

⁷ Ibid., 109.

The Chicago Teachers Union, since CORE's electoral victory, has become increasingly democratic and has used social movement tactics to organize against school closures and neoliberal education reforms. The union leadership has implemented a bottom-up, democratic method of running the union that engages the membership in its entirety; increased member engagement in the union has translated into greater participation in union-organized actions.⁸ In November, 2012 community activists and teachers staged a sit-in at City Hall to protest school closures, resulting in the arrest of eleven people. And in May 2013, the union organized a three-day march to the schools slated for closure.⁹ Karen Lewis, the union president, called attention to the racist nature of school closures in a speech she gave in June, 2013 at the City Club of Chicago:

Rich white people think they know what's in the best interest of children of African-Americans and Latinos...There's something about these folks who use little black and brown children as stage props at one press conference while announcing they want to fire, lay off, or lock up their parents at another.¹⁰

The Chicago Teachers Union's organizing activities against neoliberal anti-union efforts to close public schools in favor of opening privately-run charter schools, underscore that social justice unionism is a model currently being used by teacher union activists to challenge the privatization of public education—a very current and widespread problem being experienced by teachers, parents, and students in the U.S. The case studies examined here—from the faculty strike at San Francisco State

⁸ Ibid., 14.

⁹ Ibid., 129-130.

¹⁰ Ibid., 108.

against racism in higher education to gay and lesbian rank-and-file teachers' fighting struggling against homophobia in the schools—also highlight the potential of social justice unionism to help revitalize a labor movement that has become drastically weakened since the late 1970s. Bottom-up democratic unions like the CTU that forcefully challenge neoliberalism and racial inequality by allying with community activists and utilizing social movement tactics provide hope for not only fending off anti-union and anti-worker attacks, but also advancing the cause of social justice.

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