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Black Teachers And St. Louis Public School Teacher Strikes Of 1973 And 1979

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BLACK TEACHERS AND ST. LOUIS PUBLIC SCHOOL
TEACHER STRIKES OF 1973 AND 1979

Presented to

The Graduate School of the
University of Missouri – St. Louis

In partial fulfillment of the requirements
For the degree of Doctor of Philosophy in
Education Leadership and Policy Studies

BY

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Abstract

Within St. Louis Public Schools (SLPS), Black teachers taught on the north side of the city, while the White teachers taught on the south side. Because of the divide within teaching locations, there followed a larger rift between teacher organizations. The National Education Association (NEA) before the *Brown vs. Board of Education* ruling (1954) did not affiliate themselves with Black teachers whereas the American Federation of Teachers (AFT) was supportive of the integration of civil rights from the beginning. In the years from the *Brown* ruling until 1980, St. Louis Public Schools (SLPS) had two teacher organizations the St. Louis Teachers' Association, predominately White and the St. Louis Teachers Union-Local # 420, predominately Black union. During the St. Louis Public School teachers' strike of 1973, the teacher organizations were divided, but then decided that it was best to unite as one when entering the strike of 1979. This was partly because African American teachers transferred to schools in south St. Louis. This study examined historical race relations between the AFT, the NEA, and Black teachers and how their history influenced the 1973 and 1979 St. Louis Public Schools (SLPS) teacher strikes. The archival information, newspaper clippings and existing literature obtained did not paint a complete picture of the strikes. However, using Critical Race Theory (CRT) helped in depicting the racial dynamics that existed within teacher organizations and their relationship with Black teachers.

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Chapter One: Introduction

“...contemporary educators need to look to the past to better understand the current socio-political dynamics that impact their professional work and to prepare for the future.”¹

Background

For several years in public education in America, unions and collective bargaining were practically nonexistent. Teachers were protected through independent state civil service laws. The National Education Association (NEA) was the only professional teaching organization during the 1800s. However, teacher unions evolved and resorted to illegal strikes and firm tactics to get what they wanted. In 1886, the American Federation of Labor (AFL) was organized for the interests of craft workers. For years the AFL was meeting the needs of union workers until the National Industrial Recovery Act (NIRA) was ruled unconstitutional in 1935.² As unions grew larger, they became less militant which may explain why labor unions began to decline in numbers.³ In 1962, President John F. Kennedy signed Executive Order 10988 giving federal employees' collective bargaining rights. By the 1970s, workers fought hard for the Wagner Act, was fought because they wanted collective bargaining to extend to all state and local government workers.⁴ The Wagner Act was used to protect worker's right to unionization. McCartin (2008) quoted from the president of the American Federation of State, County and Municipal Employees (AFSCME), “public employees [will not] be first-class citizens until Congress passes a Wagner Act of public employees, guaranteeing every teacher,

¹ Susan M. Macke, “Teacher Unionism: Back to the Future,” *Contemporary Education*, 69, no. 4 (Summer 1998): 180-181.

² Gerald Friedman. “Labor Unions in the United States.” EH.Net Encyclopedia, edited by Robert Whaples, March 16, 2008. <http://eh.net/encyclopedia/article/friedman.unions.us>: 8.

³ Joseph A. McCartin, “Bringing the State’s Workers in: Time to Rectify an Imbalanced US Labor Histogramy;,” *Labor History* (February 2006): 79.

⁴ 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* (June 2008): 124.

every nurse, every clerk the right to join a union.”⁵ The Wagner Act gave every teacher the opportunity to bargain wages and better working conditions. Over the years, twenty-two states passed collective bargaining laws, which prompted more unions to form. Teachers turned to their unions when they believed class times were too long or found themselves inundated with other work related obligations during time they should be planning classes.⁶ Because unions did not have collective bargaining rights, for St. Louis, in 1973, Representative William Lacy Clay proposed a version of the National Public Employee Relations Act (NPERA) which would allow state and local workers collective bargaining rights, a mandated bargaining agent and/or negotiated union representative, and limited striking rights.⁷ While NPERA did not pass, the teacher organizations had their own plans for teachers; they were going to strike regardless.

From 1945 to 1968, the work of the National Education Association (NEA) and the American Federation of Teachers (AFT) were dominated by collective bargaining issues.⁸ Collective bargaining changed the relationship between teachers and administrators. Teachers began to have more of a voice about their work environment, wages, and job security. Seventy-two percent of teachers by the late 1970s belonged to some form of a union.⁹ Of the two organizations, the AFT was the first to embrace collective bargaining; whereas the NEA believed collective bargaining was unprofessional. Unlike the AFT, the NEA did not deal with civil rights concerns until the

⁵ 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* (June 2008): 128-129.

⁶ Nina Bascia, *Unions in Teachers’ Professional Lives: Social, Intellectual, and Practical Concerns* (New York: Teacher College Press, 1994), 69.

⁷ 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* (June 2008): 132.

⁸ Marjorie Murphy, *Blackboard Unions: The AFT and the NEA, 1900-1980* (New York: Cornell University Press): 196.

⁹ *Ibid.*, 209.

1960s. During the 1920s, Blacks joining the NEA were, unlike their White counterparts, considered individuals and not recognized by their state delegate.¹⁰ Today, the widely known teacher organizations, AFT and NEA claim more than four million educators and negotiate teacher contracts in approximately thirty-four states. Together the organizations have committed themselves to the education of children. According to *NEA.org*, The NEA-AFT Partnership shares a common interest in “critical educational issues and issues of vital significance to children.”¹¹ Although both organizations come together for the interest of education, they still conduct, individually, business as usual. Unlike the NEA, who did not embrace a relationship with Black teachers before the 1954 *Brown* ruling, the AFT accepted Black teachers from its origination.

Founded in 1857, the NEA was known as the National Teachers Association, later becoming the National Education Association in 1870. During the early years of the association, Blacks were not included or welcomed; Blacks had their own association known as the National Association for Teachers in Colored Schools. Black teachers formed their own organizations to help support each other. By the 1930s, Black organizations had doubled.¹² Each state had a NEA organization and a Black teacher organization. Blacks were eventually allowed to join the NEA, but were unable to attend the same conventions. As a result, Blacks were hesitant in joining the NEA.¹³ According

¹⁰ Marjorie Murphy, *Blackboard Unions: The AFT and the NEA, 1900-1980* (New York: Cornell University Press): 204

¹¹ The National Education Association “Our History – NEA-AFT Partnership.” <http://www.nea.org/home/11204.htm> (accessed May 8, 2012).

¹² Carol Karpinski, *Invisible Company of Professionals: African Americans and the NEA During the Civil Rights Movement* (New York: Peter Lang Publishing, Inc., 2008).

¹³ *Ibid.*

to Urban (2000), the NEA ignored Black teachers until the 1960s.¹⁴ On July 2nd, at the NEA Convention, President Johnson signed the Civil Rights Act of 1964.¹⁵

The American Federation of Teachers (AFT) was supportive of the integration of civil rights from its inception. The AFT was first organized in 1916 with local meetings in Chicago, Illinois and Gary, Indiana. Unlike the NEA, the AFT became involved in Civil Rights in 1920 when they supported a bill to give money to Howard University.¹⁶ The AFT executive council would not charter new local chapters that were segregated. The two teacher organizations differed on whether or not teachers should have the right to strike regarding professional injustices. The NEA believed that teachers would lose respect in the community if they behaved like a unionist.¹⁷ The NEA did not want teachers to be looked at as laborers (unionist), but professionals; therefore, they disapproved of striking. In 1962, the New York City AFT union threatened to strike and the NEA disapproved, considering the strike unprofessional. The Civil Rights Movement during the 1960s gave Black and White teachers the incentive to go after what they wanted. Through demonstration and struggle, human rights were won. Teachers became part of the Civil Rights Movement when they realized that through militant actions they could get what they deserved. The importance of these moments in an educator's life, particularly in teacher strikes, has impacted subsequent strikes. Which raises a question, how the history of teacher organizations affected strikes in other cities, specifically in St. Louis during the St. Louis Public School (SLPS) Strikes of 1973 and 1979?

¹⁴ Wayne J Urban, *Gender, Race, and the National Education Association: Professionalism and Its Limitations* (New York: RoutledgeFalmer, 2000), 213.

¹⁵ Carol Karpinski, *Invisible Company of Professionals: African Americans and the NEA During the Civil Rights Movement* (New York: Peter Lang Publishing, Inc., 2008).

¹⁶ Marjorie Murphy, *Blackboard Unions: The AFT and the NEA, 1900-1980* (New York, NY: Cornell University Press, 1990).

¹⁷ Ibid.

Subsequent to the *Brown* (1954) ruling until 1980, St. Louis Public Schools (SLPS) had two teacher organizations. The St. Louis Public School District had the St. Louis Teachers' Association (White union) and the American Federation of Teachers-Local #420 (Black union). St. Louis, like many cities across the United States, after the *Brown* ruling, had a tumultuous relationship with Black people. During the teachers' strikes of 1973 and again in 1979, which included both Unions, the attitudes toward Blacks were no different. Because the city was racially divided, the organizations were also divided. Most of the St. Louis Public School district's Black teachers taught on the North side of St. Louis City, while the Whites taught on the South side.¹⁸ The divide among the teachers led to a divide among organizations; Union (AFT) predominately Black teachers and Association (NEA) predominately White teachers. Although the teachers' strike of 1973 appeared to be collaboration between the St. Louis Teachers' Association (White union) and the AFT-Local #420 (Black union), an internal battle ensued. The same struggle played out again six years later, during the teachers' strike of 1979, when Local #420 voted to strike despite the will of the St. Louis Teachers' Association. The move to strike not only exposed the rocky relationship between the two organizations; it also provided insight to the race relations in and around the City of St. Louis.¹⁹

¹⁸ SDS Analysis of the St. Louis Strike of 1973: Racism Weakens Teachers' Struggle. SL 86, F4, Western Historical Manuscript Collection University of Missouri-St. Louis: St. Louis, Missouri, Archives Department.

¹⁹ Ibid.

St. Louis Teacher Strikes

The St. Louis teachers' strike of 1973 will be forever remembered as the first teacher strike in the history of the City of St. Louis. Several months prior to the inception of the strike, discussion of whether to strike between the racially divided teacher organizations were underway. The St. Louis Teachers Association chartered in 1964, due to the merge between the St. Louis Grade Teacher Association and the St. Louis Teachers Association.²⁰ The St. Louis Teachers Union gained its charter in 1935 as Local #420 of the AFT. The Union represented majority of Black teachers from North St. Louis City while the Association represented majority of White teachers from South St. Louis City. Association members wanted to be considered professional and found it unprofessional to strike. During the 1973 strike, the Association, as well as the Union Local #420, agreed that one leadership team would represent both organizations as the sole bargaining agent. A vote was taken, and the results determined that the Union, Local #420, would represent both organizations during strike negotiations.

To show their commitment to the cause, the St. Louis Teachers Association suggested both organizations pledge \$3000 of their prospective organization's money as a gesture of solidarity. The \$6000 would then be deposited into an account separate from each organization's bank of normal business. The money in the account would be used solely for the strike and could only be withdrawn when the presidents of both organizations signed.²¹ Although the two organizations appeared to have worked

²⁰ Betty Finneran. 1973. Interview by Irene Cortinovic. March 1. Interview, T0236, SL829 transcript, Western Historical Manuscript Collection University of Missouri-St. Louis, Missouri, Archives Department.

²¹ SLTA Merger News, November 30, 1972, SL 86, F1, SLTA, Western Historical Manuscript Collection University of Missouri-St. Louis: St. Louis, Missouri, Archives Department.

collectively during the strike, the collaboration was short lived. Teachers reported back to work under the assumption that their negotiations be upheld. By the fall of 1974 the Union negotiated a two-year contract to replace the contract that ended in 1973. Due to the St. Louis School Board's failed promises, Union Board members recommended the Union strike once again. The Board's recommendation was voted down by both union and association members, prompting the Association executive director to state:

The leadership of Local 420 misled teachers...The defeat means that teachers felt they had not been told the truth by the Union and the Union did not have the expertise, the integrity, or the toughness to do the job.²²

These comments, made by Theodore Bynum, Jr., further divided the two teacher organizations.

Collective bargaining was against Missouri law and the School Board sought injunctions against the leaders of the teacher organizations and their affiliates, as well as the organizations themselves, as a last-ditch effort to prevent teachers from striking. The St. Louis Circuit Court granted the injunction to prohibit the strike on January 18, 1973. The concerns and issues of the first strike in 1973 led to the strike of 1979.

During the strike of 1979, the St. Louis Local #420 and the St. Louis Teacher Association were divided. But the organizations then decided that it was best to unite as one when entering the Strike of 1979. This was partly because more Black teachers went south to teach. Due to pressure by the Office of Civil Rights, teachers were forced to relocate to either the North or South side of the district to help equalize the racial demographics of the teaching staff.

²² SLTA Merger News, November 30, 1972, SL 86, F1, SLTA, Western Historical Manuscript Collection University of Missouri-St. Louis: St. Louis, Missouri, Archives Department.

The teachers on strike provided “free schools” for students to attend so that their education could continue. The free schools were held in homes of Black and White teachers and the children were educated by those teachers. However the free schools were not well attended because the community supported the strike. The community felt that teachers should get what they asked for; therefore they supported them by not allowing their children to attend school, not even the free schools. Many community restaurants had free lunches for strikers during certain hours to show their support for the strike. Police officers brought the teachers donuts and sometimes stayed for a while to ensure the teachers’ safety. In a letter, the president of the Association stated that the St. Louis Teacher Association (SLTA) supported Local #420 in the strike, but SLTA members did not believe the AFT Local #420 was prepared for the long ordeal. Even though some SLTA teachers did not support the effort, the strike did unite the North side teachers and some South side teachers. The 1979 strike ended fifty-six days later with the teachers receiving extra aides for elementary teachers and extra pay. Teachers also received prep periods and board paid health benefits. In the end all teachers benefited from the efforts of the Local 420.²³

The 1973 and 1979 strikes were organized because teachers were not happy with their salaries, lack of bargaining, and working conditions. The Union wanted to strike and the Association did not. Later, the Association realized that the only way to get what they all wanted was to come together and strike. It is interesting how two organizations in one school district can be so divided, yet want the same things in the end. Much of the

²³Kelly, Robert and Geof Dubson. “Teachers Back in School After Ratifying,” *St. Louis Post-Dispatch*, March 13, 1979.

literature on teacher organizations is about the unions themselves and not about their relationship with Black teachers and the historical influence of local teacher organizations. The history will provide insight as to why St. Louis Public Schools had two separate organizations and what influence/impact history had on the strikes.

Critical Race Theory (CRT)

CRT is an offshoot of Critical Legal Studies founded in the late 1970s by Richard Delgado, Derrick Bell, and Alan Freeman. It encompasses five tenets. It is grounded in the belief that racism is endemic and cannot be divorced from understanding United States jurisprudence. It also disavows gradualism as an approach to mitigating disparity in the legal system. It understands Whiteness as a property right that is upheld and protected by the legal system. Interest convergence, another tenet of CRT, recognizes that Blacks only benefit when Whites are the primary beneficiaries in legal precedent and affecting policy change. Lastly, CRT understands counter-narratives and counter-stories as contradictions to the dominant, White supremacist narrative that often overlooks, disparages, and ignores people of color. The tenets being explored for this study focused on the history of teacher organizations and their relationship with Black teachers and the impact it had on St. Louis Public Schools (SLPS) teacher strikes of 1973 and 1979. Counter-storytelling is a tenet explored because story-telling is part of historical evidence and findings. The other tenet explored is interest convergence, which it “provides the interest of Blacks in achieving racial equality will be accommodated only when it

converges with the interests of Whites.”²⁴ Racism as endemic was explored because racism is alive and well especially when legal issues, such as strikes are on the table.

Critical Race Theory (CRT) is used as an analytical framework in this study. CRT provides a lens to examine school policy and practice and the policy to study the practice of race and racism.²⁵ Taylor (2009) notes “CRT scholars believe that racial analysis can be used to deepen the understanding of the educational barriers for people of color as well as exploring how their barriers are resisted and overcome.”²⁶ Because there is no single definition for CRT, several tenets were agreed upon by scholars.

One of the basic tenets of CRT is that racism is a normal and permanent part of life. Racism is “a political and social force that has benefited a certain group through no single action on the part of individuals.”²⁷ According to Rury (1989), when Blacks started obtaining teaching positions it “undermined the social status of teachers as professionals in the United States, because of racist and ethnocentric attitudes to American culture.”²⁸ In Oakland, California strike of 1970, the teachers were describing their skin color when asked about race. As Young (2001) states, “your segregation by the American system of labor relations and race relations is inevitable.”²⁹ Race was important when the teachers in Ocean-Hill Brownsville were striking for smaller classroom for their students. The

²⁴ Derrick A. Bell. “Brown v. Board of Education and the Interest Convergence Dilemma.” In *Foundations of Critical Race Theory in Education*, edited Edward Taylor, David Gillborn, & Gloria Ladson-Billings, (New York, NY: Routledge, 2009), 76.

²⁵ Sabina E. Vaught. “The Color of Money: School Funding and the Commodification of Black Children.” *Urban Education* 44, no. 5 (September 2009): 546.

²⁶ Edward Taylor. (2009). “The Foundations of Critical Race Theory in Education: An Introduction.” In *Foundations of Critical Race Theory in Education* edited by Edward Taylor, David Gillborn, & Gloria Ladson Billings (New York, NY: Routledge, 2009), 7.

²⁷ *Ibid.*, 117

²⁸ John L Rury. “Who Became Teachers? The Social Characteristics of Teachers in American History.” In *American Teachers: Histories of a Profession at Work*, edited by Donald Warren (New York: N.Y.: American Educational Research Association, 1989), 10.

²⁹ Patricia A Young. “What’s Race Got to Do with It? The Dynamics of Race Relations in the Oakland Teachers’ Strike.” *Race, Ethnicity, and Education* 5, no. 2 (2001): 129.

parents on the board wanted more qualified teachers for their children, Black teachers.³⁰ Due to the parents' request, the board terminated (transferred) White teachers and administrators.

The thought of living in a colorblind world would be ideal, but color is the first thing people notice. White teachers continue to be colorblind because policy-makers assure them that the education policies are "always with best of intentions for all."³¹ Luis Urrieta (2006), focuses on a predominately White charter school and the benefit of having a colorblind educational policy. Within this study, parents had the "choice" of sending their children to the charter school or the neighborhood school that was now majority Black. White parents believed Black students did not want to attend the school because it lacked sports program. Blacks were hired as teaching assistants, not teachers. Because of the school choice, the school population could remain White as it was constructed from the beginning.³²

The Interest convergence tenet of CRT suggests that White people are the beneficiaries of civil rights lawmaking. Like in many strikes where the majority of the school population is Black; White teachers were content with the strike as long as they benefited. White teachers claim they were fighting for students when in reality most White teachers were fighting for money and better working conditions for themselves. Booker T. Washington asked for cooperation with Black and White teachers within the

³⁰ Patricia A Young. "What's Race Got to Do with It? The Dynamics of Race Relations in the Oakland Teachers' Strike." *Race, Ethnicity, and Education* 5, no. 2 (2001): 129.

³¹ David Gilborn. "Education policy as an act of White supremacy: Whiteness, Critical Race Theory and education reform." In *Foundations of Critical Race Theory in Education* edited by Edward Taylor, David Gillborn, & Gloria Ladson Billings (New York, NY: Routledge, 2009): 51.

³² Luis Urrieta Jr. "Community identity discourse and the heritage academy: colorblind educational policy and White supremacy." *International Journal of Qualitative Studies in Education* 19, no. 4 (July-August 2006).

NEA, stating, "...if the Negro were to be successful, he would have to cooperate with the White man because White people controlled the property and the government."³³

Critical Race Theory (CRT) is appropriate for this study because each tenet of CRT is applicable to different aspects of the decision teacher organizations and teachers make during important situations, such as strikes. Aldridge (2003) states, Franklin (1963) and Du Bois (1944) "embrace my research in a way that improves the social and educational conditions of Black people."³⁴

Statement of the Problem

In a doctoral seminar class in the recent past, the course required students to conduct oral histories. As I began researching and interviewing teachers, I discovered I knew little with regard to teacher organizations. As teachers enter the profession, they rarely know about the teacher organization many choose to join. When I began teaching in St. Louis Public Schools in 2005, I was asked to join the AFT; the NEA was not presented as an option. The next school year, I began working for a St. Louis County school and was asked to join the NEA because the AFT was not presented as an option. Teachers are often asked to join organizations without knowledge of the organization. Therefore, much research is needed to examine the history of the organizations. Teachers in general do not understand the history of the unions they support; the teachers can investigate the unions, but alternatively they trust the long history told by previous and/or current members.³⁵

³³ Michael J Schultz. *The National Education Association and the Black Teacher: The Integration of a Professional Organization*. (Florida: University of Miami Press, 1970), 49

³⁴ Derrick P. Aldridge "The Dilemmas, Challenges, and Duality of an African-American Educational Historian." *Educational Researcher* 32, no. 9 (Dec. 2003).

³⁵ Susan M. Macke, "Teacher Unionism: Back to the Future," *Contemporary Education*, 69, no. 4 (Summer 1998).

In the 1970's St. Louis Public School teachers were given the option of joining the American Federation of Teachers and/or the National Education Association. North St. Louis teachers belonged to the Union (AFT) and the South teachers belonged to the Association (NEA). During the SLPS strike era, the AFT consisted of majority Black teachers, while the NEA members consisted of majority White teachers. Given the racial antipathies in St. Louis, it comes as no surprise that separate organizations would exist--especially in the 1950s leading up to the *Brown* decision.

Currently, there is no research investigating the relationship that Black teachers had with the Union and the Association over time and why Black teachers were oriented toward one Union while that of the White teachers to another. Most teacher strike research explores the social context of teaching and the process of collective bargaining.³⁶ This research is about teacher representation in St. Louis—specifically during the teachers' strikes in 1973 and 1979.

Purpose Statement

The study sought to analyze the historical relationship of two teacher organizations and shaping the outcome of the 1973 and 1979 St. Louis Public School teacher strikes. It endeavored to examine how teacher organizations affected Black teachers from 1950 to 1979. In St. Louis Public School District, the 1973 and 1979 strikes were organized because teachers were not happy with their working conditions. Teachers wanted a pay raise, small teacher/student ratio, and more education resources. The purpose of the research is to better understand how the historical relationship of Black teachers and the American Federation of Teachers (AFT) and the National

³⁶ David L. Colton & Graber, Edith E. *Teacher Strikes and the Courts*. (Lexington MA: Lexington Books, 1982): 11

Education Association (NEA) shaped the outcome of the 1973 and 1979 teacher strikes in St. Louis Public Schools (SLPS). St. Louis teachers' organizations were split racially and geographically. Though the racial divide was evident, both organizations realized that the only way they would achieve agreeable outcomes for all St. Louis teachers, regardless of race and location was through strike efforts. Critical Race Theory (CRT) helps explain as well as examine the relationship among Black teachers, White teachers and the teacher organizations in St. Louis.

Definitions

Within the study, mentions of organizations and terminology require clarity for readers and the focus of this study. Those terms are defined as follows:

American Federation of Teachers – AFT will be referred to as the “union”

American Teacher Association – ATA, Black teacher association

Collective Bargaining – is “the process of negotiating an agreement between an employer and employee organization usually for a specific term, defining the conditions of employment, the rights of the employees and their organization and the procedures to be followed settling disputes.”³⁷ Before collective bargaining, teachers and school board members were able to ‘meet and confer,’ meaning employees discussed salaries and conditions of employment.

Critical Race Theory - is “grounded in sense of reality that reflects the distinctive experiences of people of color.”³⁸ According to Parker and Lynn, CRT is a theory used to

³⁷ William G. Cunningham & Paula A. Cordeiro, *Educational Leadership: A Problem Based Approach* (Virginia: Pearson/Allyn and Bacon, 2006).

³⁸ Edward Taylor. (2009). “The Foundations of Critical Race Theory in Education: An Introduction.” In *Foundations of Critical Race Theory in Education* edited by Edward Taylor, David Gillborn, & Gloria Ladson Billings (New York, NY: Routledge, 2009).

“uncover how race and racism operate in the law and in society.”³⁹ CRT will be used as an analytical frame work in this study. The five tenets of CRT are: interest convergence, counter-storytelling, Whiteness as property, racism as normal and the critique of liberalism.

National Education Association – NEA will refer to as the “association”

National Association of Colored Teachers – NATCS

Right to Live Comfortable – meaning that teachers were able to take care of the bare essentials of life: home, car, food, water, family and possible a little recreation.

St. Louis Public Schools American Federation of Teachers – AFT Local #420

St. Louis Teacher Association –SLTA

St. Louis Teacher Union – SLTU

Delimitations

Delimitation of the study is the time period between 1973 and 1979. The St. Louis Public School (SLPS) district in St. Louis, Missouri is the focus of this study. The SLPS teacher strikes of 1973 and 1979 are samples of the study. Even though St. Louis Public Schools had three strikes, 1973, 1979, and 1983, the focus was on the first strike, 1973 and the longest strike, 1979.

Conclusion

St. Louis, like many cities across the United States had a tumultuous relationship with people of color, especially those of African descent. During the teachers’ strikes of 1973 and again in 1979, the attitudes toward Blacks were no different. The question at

³⁹ Edward Taylor. (2009). “The Foundations of Critical Race Theory in Education: An Introduction.” In *Foundations of Critical Race Theory in Education* edited by Edward Taylor, David Gillborn, & Gloria Ladson Billings (New York, NY: Routledge, 2009), 148.

hand is: How did the unions change over time from the 1954 *Brown vs. The Topeka Board of Education* to 1980 and what role did their history with workers of color influence the strikes of 1973 and 1979. There is an abundance of literature and research about the background of each organization, but virtually no research about the change of the unions before the *Brown* ruling through 1980 or the organizations' effects on local teacher organization relations.

Chapter Two will present the history of teacher organizations, specifically NEA, AFT and ATA. Chapter Two later discusses three different teacher strikes that dealt with race issues; Newark, NJ, Oakland, CA, and Ocean-Hill Brownsville. The three strikes provide insight into how race relations affected their strikes and the potential to affect the strikes of St. Louis Public Schools of 1973 and 1979. Chapter Three discusses the methodology used to analyze the strikes, consisting of data collection and analysis. Chapter Four examines the political and school context set prior to the SLPS teacher strikes. The political context consists of the St. Louis Rent Strike of 1969 in which Black women stepped into a leadership role. Jean King was instrumental in leading the strike for renters that lasted nine months. She was able to get a law changed that allowed rent to be based off income. Chapter Four also discusses the Minnie Liddell's case which started in 1972; Mrs. Liddell and other Black parents wanting a quality education for their children. They were dissatisfied with the lack of resources and building conditions that their children had to endure each day. The chapter also gives insight into the other strikes and issues that St. Louis was dealing with prior to the strikes of 1973 and 1979. Chapter Five analyzes the strikes of St. Louis Public Schools of 1973 and 1979. The history of the National Education Association and American Federation of Teachers in

relation to black teachers is used to analyze the impact the relationship had on the strikes. Chapter Six summarizes the major findings, the relationship between black teachers and teacher organizations impacted school closings, what local organization controlled the strike and the stakeholders' involvement within the strikes. It wraps up with suggestions for future research.

Chapter Two: Related Literature

Teacher Organizations

After the Civil War the number of schools grew, especially in urban areas in the North. Teachers became isolated from others; they were not to socialize with others; that was socially unacceptable. According to Eaton (1975), women teachers were not allowed to fall in love.⁴⁰ Teachers became frustrated with the operations of the school; there were few textbooks, poor lighting, and unsanitary restrooms at times.

Salaries for teachers were low and benefits did not exist. Public education gained the interest of the first union in 1878, the Knights of Labor. The union was interested in free textbooks, school attendance laws, and evening schools. In 1893, women were included in the union; therefore equal pay was supported.⁴¹ In 1886, the American Federation of Labor was founded to help the skilled laborers, to support education and classroom teachers. For decades, teachers have belonged to a teacher organization, whether that was at the national or local level because it was “the “professional” thing to do.”⁴²

The first union experience for teachers started at the local level. In 1897, the first teacher union, the Chicago Teachers Federation was formed; they fought for salary increases and pension.⁴³ The largest national teacher organizations are the National Education Association (NEA) and the American Federation of Teachers (AFT); they have over four million members. During the late 1950’s, collective bargaining and civil

⁴⁰ William E. Eaton, *The American Federation of Teachers, 1916 -1961: A History of the Movement*, (IL: Southern Illinois University Press, 1975), 3.

⁴¹ *Ibid.*, 4.

⁴² Don Cameron, *The Inside Story Of the Teacher Revolution in America*. Lanham, (MD: Scarecrow Education, 2005), 35.

⁴³ William E. Eaton, *The American Federation of Teachers, 1916-1961: A History of the Movement*, (IL: Southern Illinois University Press, 1975), 5.

rights were at the forefront of the NEA and the AFT. Their approaches to civil rights were different which explained why the structures of the organizations are structured differently. The AFTs' involvement in civil rights started in 1920 when they asked Congress to give money to Howard University,⁴⁴ while the NEA ignored Black teachers until the 1960s.⁴⁵ Teacher organizations work to initiate and support education and maintain their advocacy for teachers.⁴⁶

National Education Association

The National Education Association (NEA) was founded in 1857 as the National Teachers Association (NTA) when forty-three educators from several states met in Philadelphia to form a National Brotherhood of Teachers. In 1870 the NTA later became the National Education Association when it merged with the National Association of School Superintendents and the American Normal School Association.⁴⁷ The members were comprised of mainly men; women were not actively participating until the twentieth century. The NEA was anti-union when it was first formed and many years later until the teachers outnumbered the administrators. The NEA had a Representative Assembly which encompassed two areas: reform elements – democracy within the association, giving power to teachers and creation of the assembly – linking the national organization

⁴⁴ Marjorie Murphy, *Blackboard Unions: The AFT and the NEA, 1900-1980* (New York: Cornell University Press, 1990): 196.

⁴⁵ Wayne J. Urban, *Gender, Race, and the National Education Association: Professionalism and Its Limitations*. (New York, NY: RoutledgeFalmer, 2000), xix.

⁴⁶ Nina Bascia. "The Next Steps in Teacher Union and Reform." *Contemporary Education* 69, no. 4 (Summer 1998).

⁴⁷ Carol Karpinski, *Invisible Company of Professionals: African Americans and the NEA During the Civil Rights Movement* (New York: Peter Lang Publishing, Inc., 2008), x.

Michael J. Schultz. *The National Education Association and the Black Teacher: The Integration of a Professional Organization*, (Florida: University of Miami Press, 1970), 17.

with the state and local associations.⁴⁸ The Representative Assembly conducted business meetings for the NEA; there were representatives from the state and local levels. At one time, the NEA was a group of college presidents and school administrators who spoke on behalf of teachers. Teachers eventually became uncomfortable with this and began to voice their concerns. In 1857 the NEA presented a new constitution signed by two women stating that teachers wanted “to make their work a profession—not just an ordinary vocation.”⁴⁹

During the 1880’s and 1890’s NEA members decided to become more of a professional organization because the traditions were male dominated. The organization was dominated by male superintendents as well as college professors. Professionalism began reshaping school administration and segregating the “less desirable ethnic and social origins through requirements of higher education.”⁵⁰ The association transitioned from professional to a union in the 1960s.

After the Civil War, the interest in Black education was on the rise; during the NEA conventions only “prominent NEA leaders and invited Black speakers” were brought in to speak on Black education.⁵¹ Booker T. Washington was one of those “invited Black speakers.”

He spoke at four conventions, 1884, 1896, 1904, and 1908 addressing Negro education concerns during that time according to NEA.

The concerns were: (1) Negro education as a sociological value

⁴⁸ Michael J. Schultz. *The National Education Association and the Black Teacher: The Integration of a Professional Organization*, (Florida: University of Miami Press, 1970), 19.

⁴⁹ Marjorie Murphy, *Blackboard Unions: The AFT and the NEA, 1900-1980* (New York: Cornell University Press): 47.

⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, 23

⁵¹ Carol Karpinski, *Invisible Company of Professionals: African Americans and the NEA During the Civil Rights Movement* (New York: Peter Lang Publishing, Inc., 2008), 2.

(2) Negro education as related to the missionary zeal of Christianity
(3) the emphasis of the “separate but equal” aspects of Negro education
and (4) the acceptance of vocational education as the chief mode of
Negro education.⁵²

Even though issues of Black education were addressed at conventions “the organization actually did nothing.”⁵³ In 1904, a former slave, John Robert Edward Lee founded the American Teacher Association (ATA). The ATA represented African American teachers, formerly known as National Association of Colored Teachers and then National Association of Teachers in Colored Schools.

During this period, Black educators were guests at the NEA conventions, but not necessarily members. The NEA and African Americans had professional contact until 1926. By the 1930’s Black organizations had doubled.⁵⁴ Each state had a NEA organization and a Black teacher organization. Blacks were eventually allowed to join the NEA, but were unable to attend the same conventions.⁵⁵ The contact between Black teachers and the NEA was during a NEA Committee meeting on Problems in Negro Education and Life.

During the committee meeting the NEA focused on Black schools educational needs and interests of Black teachers and students. Even though Black educators and the NEA wanted to deal with the same issues, the Black teachers did not feel comfortable with the NEA. Black educators doubled Black state organizations in the mid-1930s.

⁵² Michael J. Schultz. *The National Education Association and the Black Teacher: The Integration of a Professional Organization*, (Florida: University of Miami Press, 1970), 47.

⁵³ *Ibid.*, 52.

⁵⁴ Carol Karpinski, *Invisible Company of Professionals: African Americans and the NEA During the Civil Rights Movement* (New York: Peter Lang Publishing, Inc., 2008), 24.

⁵⁵ Carol Karpinski, *Invisible Company of Professionals: African Americans and the NEA During the Civil Rights Movement* (New York: Peter Lang Publishing, Inc., 2008), 69.

Before the Brown ruling, the National Education Association (NEA) did not affiliate itself with African American teachers. During the early years of the association, African Americans were not included. African Americans had their own association known as the National Association for Teachers in Colored Schools. Locally, Black teachers were forming their own organizations to help support each other. By the 1930's, Black organizations had doubled in size.⁵⁶ In 1967, the NEA elected its first Black woman president, Elizabeth Koontz.

St. Louis Public Schools (SLPS) teacher organizations were similar to other NEA and AFT local organizations. During the early 1970s, majority of the Black teachers belonged to the teacher Union and majority of the White teachers belonged to the Association. Later, Blacks began to join the NEA and the two groups came together to fight for their rights as teachers during a strike. The collaboration may not have happened if the NEA had not realized that they had to fight for all teachers.

The NEA began to acknowledge that there were inequities within the education system and decided to address it. They established a center for human relations and Black educators were being recognized by the NEA and supported by them. It did not seem to be the case in the 1973 St. Louis Public School (SLPS) strike, because the NEA was disgusted with the Black teachers in north city for wanting to strike even though it would benefit all teachers in the district. According to Karpinski (2008), "racist attitudes and past actions raised doubts about the viability of a relationship in a single national association that could serve all."⁵⁷ Which may be the reason why SLPS had a union and an association? The Union members were mainly the Black educators in the district and

⁵⁶ ⁵⁶ Carol Karpinski, *Invisible Company of Professionals: African Americans and the NEA During the Civil Rights Movement* (New York: Peter Lang Publishing, Inc., 2008), 24.

⁵⁷ *Ibid.*, 187.

the Association members were majority White. Even though the organizations wanted what was best for their members, the Union was in full support of the strike and the NEA was not. In 1970 the NEA transitioned to a union and began campaigning for educational equity.

American Teacher Association

Before the American Teacher Association was named in 1937 it was known as the National Association for Teachers in Colored Schools (NATCS). It was founded by Dr. J. R. Lee, a math instructor at Tuskegee Institute.⁵⁸ During the 1920s Black educators were guests at the NEA conventions, but not necessarily members. It was not until 1926 that the NEA and Blacks had professional contact. Black teachers association was known as the National Association for Teachers in Colored Schools.

In 1904 the American Teacher Association (ATA) began as the National Association of Colored Teachers then changed to the National Association for Teachers in Colored Schools.⁵⁹ It was not until 1937 that the former associations were officially named the American Teacher Association. Black teachers began to cooperate with the NEA when the education association formed a committee, NEA Committee on Problems in Negro Education and Life which began in 1926.⁶⁰ Before officially merging with the National Education Association, ATA members were concerned about being represented by an affiliation other than ATA.⁶¹ Black teachers felt that the American Teacher Association had their best interest at heart. Not all Black teachers felt this way; some felt

⁵⁸ Don Cameron. *The Inside Story Of the Teacher Revolution in America*, (Lanham, MD: Scarecrow Education, 2005), 69-70.

⁵⁹ Carol Karpinski, *Invisible Company of Professionals: African Americans and the NEA During the Civil Rights Movement* (New York: Peter Lang Publishing, Inc., 2008).

⁶⁰ Ibid

⁶¹ Ibid

that the NEA was more superior when it came to litigation and lobbying efforts for educators.⁶² In 1966, the ATA and the NEA merged together. Discussions about *de facto* segregation were taking place. The new merged association wanted racial balance in urban schools. The NEA was finally becoming racially inclusive. Because of this action, more Blacks were joining the NEA and becoming president of their local associations. The ATA president, Hudson Barksdale, noted that the merger was great; however, there was not one Black person that held the office of executive secretary or executive director as a result of the new merger.⁶³

Before professionalism, teachers were more interested in raising their salaries than being seen as a professional in their field. Teachers wanted more money, and as a result formed a union for economic reasons.⁶⁴

American Federation of Teachers

Because education was a local matter, the first union experience for teachers was at the local level. Teachers in Chicago felt they were working under poor conditions and decided to fight for pensions. Because of this action the first union was formed. In 1897, Chicago Teachers Federation was formed by Catherine Goggin and Margaret Haley.⁶⁵ The first action of the union was to fight for pay increases. This action caught the eye of more teachers, increasing the number of union members. In 1902, the union became part of the American Federation of Labor. Founded in 1916 as a labor union, the AFT represents teachers, paraprofessionals, and school-related personnel. The AFT is the

⁶² Carol Karpinski, *Invisible Company of Professionals: African Americans and the NEA During the Civil Rights Movement* (New York: Peter Lang Publishing, Inc., 2008).

⁶³ Ibid.

⁶⁴ Marjorie Murphy, *Blackboard Unions: The AFT and the NEA, 1900-1980* (New York: Cornell University, 1990), 68.

⁶⁵ William E. Eaton, *The American Federation of Teachers, 1916-1961: A History of the Movement*, (IL: Southern Illinois University Press, 1975), 5.

second largest education labor union in the United States. The union represents approximately 2 million members; the members are not only teachers, but nurses, state public employees and librarians to name a few. The federation was founded by thirteen teachers from Chicago and Gary Indiana.

The AFT became affiliated with the American Federation of Labor from 1916 until 1955; later affiliated with the AFL-CIO. A union in San Antonio, Texas was the first union to affiliate with the AFL in 1902.⁶⁶ Teachers were discouraged to join AFT because of their involvement with collective bargaining. Many school districts, principals, etc. intimidated teachers from joining the union. In 1920 the Board of Education in San Francisco forewarned teachers that if they joined the union it would cost them their jobs; the same was told to teachers in St. Louis, Missouri.⁶⁷ The philosophy of the union was to take a stand against poor and inadequate working conditions. The slogan was “Education for Democracy, Democracy in Education.”⁶⁸ The philosophy became a twenty-seven point platform for national and local school policies, teacher security, and curriculum. With the concern of security, the union endorsed tenure and smaller classroom sizes. Years later, the federation became concerned about the Black teacher, therefore became involved with social justice.

The AFT was the first American union to accept full minority membership. In 1918, the AFT supported and called for districts to pay Black teachers equal to White teachers. In 1919, they demanded equal education for Black children. From 1929 to

⁶⁶ Lieberman, Myron. *The Teacher Unions: How the NEA and AFT Sabotage Reform and Hold Students, Parents, Teachers, and Taxpayers Host to Bureaucracy*, (New York, NY: The Free Press, 1997), 10.

⁶⁷ William E. Eaton, *The American Federation of Teachers, 1916-1961: A History of the Movement*, (IL: Southern Illinois University Press, 1975), 20.

⁶⁸ William E. Eaton, *The American Federation of Teachers, 1916-1961: A History of the Movement*, (IL: Southern Illinois University Press, 1975), 27.

1941, the AFT increased their efforts in assuring Black teachers that they supported them by having forums about civil rights issues. At the local level, the AFT elected Miss Layle Lane as their vice president; she worked with Black teachers in the north and south regions. Later that year, at the national level, Doxey Wilkerson, a Howard professor became the first Black vice-president for the AFT. In 1948, the union stopped chartering local chapters that were segregated. Later in 1957, the union expelled locals that refuse to desegregate. The union's goal was to improve teacher welfare and security.⁶⁹

In the late 1940s, the AFT moved toward collective bargaining as an official policy. It was in 1936, Butte, Montana where the AFT first negotiated a collective bargaining agreement. In 1946, the St. Paul Federation of Teachers struck, this was a first for the AFT. After thirty-eight days on strike the union settled. In 1956, the union held and won its first collective bargaining election in East St. Louis, Illinois. Because of the success, in 1963, at the AFT convention members voted to end the no-strike policy.⁷⁰

Albert Shanker, longtime president of the American Federation of Teachers, was an essential person in the New York strike. Shanker started teaching in New York in 1952, after completing three years of graduate school at Columbia University. During his years of teaching, he formed The Teachers Guild, an affiliate of the AFT. The Guild provided information on pension rights and later a committee to discuss school related conditions with administrators. The Guild and Shanker supported their first teacher strike in 1959, resulting in teacher salaries tripling.⁷¹ In 1960, the United Federation of Teachers (UFT) was formed; the merger of the Guild and another rival organization.

⁶⁹ William E. Eaton, *The American Federation of Teachers, 1916-1961: A History of the Movement*, (IL: Southern Illinois University Press, 1975).

⁷⁰ Ibid.

⁷¹ Mark F. Goldberg, "A Portrait of Albert Shanker." *Educational Leadership* 50, no. 6 (March 1993).

Also during this time, Albert became the first full-time representative for the AFT. Because of his support for teachers, in 1974, Shanker became president of the AFT and remained the representative for AFT in New York until 1986. Shanker remained president of AFT until his death in 1997. Shanker was active in civil rights issues. He walked with Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. in Alabama and Mississippi. He was also in full support of education reform. He supported the *A Nation at Risk* presented by President Reagan. Shanker advocated for three major reforms:

- 1) That teaching was not just an occupation, but a profession. This called for teachers taking and passing a rigorous entry-level exam. Also merit pay and/or merit schools for teachers that increase student test scores.
- 2) Teacher-led charter schools, giving teachers more creativity.
- 3) Creating systems of standards, testing and accountability in education.⁷²

The American Federation of Teachers eventually expanded to other areas of education.

In 1969, AFT started representing 10,000 paraprofessionals in New York City. Also in 1974, the AFT allowed for health care and public employees to join the union, after the U.S. Congress amended the National Labor Relations Act. AFT, unlike the NEA from the beginning, was there to support teachers anyway they could, even by striking. Colton (1982), articulated the need for teacher strike research by stating “teacher strikes constitute not only an emerging social phenomenon but also a new focus for social research.”⁷³

⁷² Richard D. Kahlenberg “Albert Shanker and the Future of Teacher Unions.” *Phi Delta Kappan* 89, no. 10 (June 2008).

⁷³ David L. Colton & Edith E. Graber *Teacher Strikes and the Courts*, (Lexington MA: Lexington Books, 1982), 6.

Teacher Strikes

Until the twentieth century, teacher strikes were rare because teachers saw themselves as professionals. In the 1950s, teacher strikes average three per year, whereas, in the 1970s strikes were occurring 130 per year.⁷⁴ This is a huge fluctuation; the reasoning being the stance that teacher organizations took. The National Education Association (NEA) discouraged collective bargaining and striking until the 1960s. In 1935, Congress passed the National Labor Relations Act giving employees the right to join labor organizations to bargain collectively with representation from the union.⁷⁵ President John F. Kennedy signed Executive Order 10988 giving federal employees' collective bargaining rights in 1962. The order gave unionized teachers more power to bring to the negotiating tables with school board members. A series of strikes took place between 1945 and 1948 within education.⁷⁶

One of the first strikes took place in Norwalk, Connecticut; teachers walked out in 1946 wanting a pay raise and recognition. This strike was led by an NEA affiliate, even though NEA felt that strikes were unprofessional. Another strike took place in St. Paul; teachers fought for teacher shortage and overcrowded classrooms. Later, teachers in San Francisco, Jersey City and Chicago started striking. By the end of 1947, twelve states had undergone teacher strikes.⁷⁷ By 1968 there were about 112 teacher and librarian

⁷⁴ David L. Colton & Edith E. Graber *Teacher Strikes and the Courts*, (Lexington MA: Lexington Books, 1982), 1

⁷⁵ *Ibid.*, 143.

⁷⁶ Marjorie Murphy, *Blackboard Unions: The AFT and the NEA, 1900-1980* (New York: Cornell University, 1990), 182.

⁷⁷ *Ibid.*

strikes and the AFT membership grew 230 percent.⁷⁸ Studies performed by Podair and Golin look at how “racial politics affect the history of teachers in America.”⁷⁹

Ocean Hill-Brownsville Crisis

New York went through a migration change during World War II. More Blacks were migrating from the South to New York in 1940; six percent of New York’s population was Black, whereas during 1968 the percentage jumped to twenty.⁸⁰ Residential segregation led to educational segregation. Schools within the Ocean Hill-Brownsville area started to change because of White flight. Teachers were also transferring after their five years were up. The school district negotiated a “five year rule” where teachers had to teach in one location for five years before they could transfer. In Brownsville the teachers who were teaching in the now predominately Black schools left after five years. This left the school with less experienced teachers and larger class sizes.⁸¹

On May 8, 1968, Ocean Hill-Brownsville school district went on strike; the strike lasted until November 19th, the longest strike in United States history during this time. Before the strike, New York established the Brownsville area as a decentralized school to give the minority community more say in school affairs; the neighborhood was predominately Black. The Black parents wanted to hold the school and teachers accountable for the quality education their children were not getting.⁸² According to

⁷⁸ Paul Ritterband, “Ethnic Power and the Public Schools: The New York City School Strike of 1968.” *Sociology of Education* 47, no. 2 (Spring 1974).

⁷⁹ Daniel Opler. “Race, Class, and Teachers’ Unions.” *Radical Teacher*, no. 71 (2004).

⁸⁰ Jerald E. Podair *The Strike That Changed New York: Blacks, Whites, and the Ocean Hill-Brownsville Crisis*, (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2002), 15.

⁸¹ Ibid.

⁸² Melvin I. Urofsky, ed. *Why Teachers Strike: Teachers’ Rights and Community Control*. (Garden City, NY: Anchor Books Doublebay & Company, Inc., 1970), 6.

Berube (1969), teachers and principals decided that ghetto students were “ineducable.”⁸³ The district hired Rhody McCoy as the Unit Administrator responsible for day-to-day operations of the eight schools. McCoy took the position he wanted to help with the catastrophe he saw within the Black community.⁸⁴ The elected school board consisted mostly of women who were on welfare. The UFT chapter chairman, Fred Nauman believed the board was not professional enough. The board transferred thirteen teachers and six administrators who they believed were trying to sabotage the decentralization agreement; Nauman was one of them. According to Ritterband (1974), school administrators had an issue with community control whereas, the United Federation of Teachers (UFT) had an issue with the civil service procedures.⁸⁵ The UFT believed the transferring of teachers was a violation of due process.

Before actually striking the transferred teachers and administrators tried to return to their schools, but were stopped by local community members. When the teachers actually pushed through the local school board closed the schools. This is the point where Shanker and 350 union teachers walked out of schools in support of the “terminated” educators on May 22nd. This part of the strike lasted until the end of spring semester. Before the next school year started, on September 9th, teachers decided to strike because it was decided that the community will have a say as to who can teach at their schools. John Lindsay, the Mayor of Brownsville believed the current strike situation was racially motivated. Shanker responded by stating, “This is a strike to

⁸³ Maurice R. Berube and Marilyn Gittel, eds. *Confrontation at Ocean Hill Brownsville: The New York Strikes of 1968*. (New York, NY: Frederick A. Praeger, 1969), 5.

⁸⁴ Jerald E. Podair *The Strike That Changed New York: Blacks, Whites, and the Ocean Hill-Brownsville Crisis*, (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2002), 4.

⁸⁵ Paul Ritterband. “Ethnic Power and the Public Schools: The New York City School Strike of 1968.” *Sociology of Education* 47, no. 2 (Spring 1974): 252.

protect Black teachers against White racist in White communities and White teachers against Black racist in Black communities;”⁸⁶ This strike lasted two days. As the teachers returned to school, they were asked to attend a meeting, they walked in the door and was harassed by community members. They were also being harassed by students and were later escorted out by police for their safety.

After suffering grief from the community, the UFT decided to strike again, only lasting two weeks. Then there was a third strike, this strike caused division between the Blacks, Jews, and Catholics. There was an anonymous letter put into teacher mailboxes stating that if African American History is taught to Black children only Black teachers should be teaching it. Many teachers within the Ocean Hill-Brownsville schools were furious about this letter. The strike lasted for five-weeks. The result of the strike was that teachers received their current assignments, but most chose to leave the district.

Brownsville seemed to deal with several racial issues during their 1968 strikes. The issues of Blacks controlling their own destiny did not sit well with the White colleagues who worked for the district. Ritterband (1974) believed the issue was ethnicity. He wanted to examine the effects of union strength and the role the teacher had on communal reaction. Later, he examined the effects pupil achievement and teacher ethnicity had on the strike. In his study, a couple of his variables were the rates of ethnic enrollment and ethnicity of student body. The results showed that union membership, teacher seniority, and school system reaction was dependent on school ethnic composition. Even though little discussion was made between Shanker and Lauren about if the shoes were on the other foot, I wonder if the results would have been the same.

⁸⁶ Jerald E. Podair *The Strike That Changed New York: Blacks, Whites, and the Ocean Hill-Brownsville Crisis*, (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2002), 116.

Would Black teachers get their jobs back, would the UFT actually fight hard for Black teachers in the same situation? Not too far from New York, another school district had a strike two years later. Like Brownsville, Newark had their own issues around race and strikes.

Newark Teacher Strikes

Steve Golin, a teacher at a nearby Newark college, studied and researched the Newark Strikes because of his interest in teacher self-transformation. He became interested in the strikes after reading local newspapers regarding the 1970 and 1971 Newark teacher strikes. His study was based on the stories of the teachers involved in the strikes.

The Black population in Newark grew from 11 percent to 54 percent by the 1970s. Before Blacks started migrating to Newark, the city created zone ordinances which caused a housing shortage.⁸⁷ The housing authority built segregated housing projects. Because of the influx of Blacks, education also became segregated. White parents did not want their children going to predominately Black schools; therefore they asked the school board to transfer their children. Black parents wanted neighborhood schools. Because of the change, the school board hired Black teachers to teach at the Black elementary schools, but prohibited them from teaching at the secondary schools. It was not until 1953; that a Black teacher taught at the high school.⁸⁸ It was difficult for Black teachers to progress because of oral and written exams administered by the board of education. According to Golin (2002), the exams taken by teachers were subjective

⁸⁷ Steve Golin. *The Newark Teacher Strikes: Hopes on the Line*. (New Brunswick, N.J.: Rutgers University Press, 2002).

⁸⁸ Steve Golin. *The Newark Teacher Strikes: Hopes on the Line*. (New Brunswick, N.J.: Rutgers University Press, 2002).

and used to keep Blacks where they were as substitutes and teachers.⁸⁹ Unfortunately, things became increasingly inferior for Black people so much that in 1967 a riot ensued in Newark. The violence continued into the next year, when Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. was assassinated. Students were killing each other as well as teachers. People were vandalizing homes and schools. However, this did not stop some teachers from doing what they felt was necessary. One particular school took it upon themselves to save what they had. The teachers took the school over; they began to positively interact with students by isolating the neediest students. This was a strategy for the school to take back its control. Because of this action, graduates from the local high schools were returning back to Newark to teach after graduating college. Many of the young Black teachers returning joined the union because of the support that was offered during the riot.⁹⁰ Newark Teachers Union (NTU) was chartered in 1936 by the AFT. The district already had an association, Newark Teachers Association (NTA), but decided they needed something different.

In 1948, the union decided to fight for equality for all teachers. There was not much fighting going on considering Newark had no teacher strikes from 1946 to 1960. This was probably from the lack of power teachers had before collective bargaining. However in 1962, NTU became a collective bargaining agent. In 1968, the union elected its first Black president, Carole Graves. During her election, a riot broke out in Newark and the union was supportive of teachers that wanted to take back control of their

⁸⁹ Steve Golin. *The Newark Teacher Strikes: Hopes on the Line*. (New Brunswick, N.J.: Rutgers University Press, 2002), 43.

⁹⁰ Steve Golin. *The Newark Teacher Strikes: Hopes on the Line*. (New Brunswick, N.J.: Rutgers University Press, 2002).

schools. Because of this support, the union membership increased. However, NTA was still the bargaining agent. During this time, teacher salaries were not comparable to the United States inflation rate and other local school districts. On November 12, 1969, the NTU became the bargaining agent for the Newark teachers. Preparations started for the upcoming strike. Teachers were striking for smaller size classes, freedom of nonprofessional tasks, and the ability to transfer to other schools when seniority levels were reached. On February 2, 1970, 75 percent of Newark's teachers refused to show up for class.⁹¹

On the first day of the strike, 78 percent of teachers participated. Throughout the week, 75 percent of teachers were on strike and approximately 78,000 students were not in attendance. According to Golin (2002), the strike was about "power."⁹² Power for each teacher was different. Some wanted money, job security, and no extra duties. Black and White teachers were in this strike together. A couple of interviewees for this Golin's study stated they wanted power because they wanted to "protect themselves as White teachers."⁹³ They wanted to ensure they still had jobs because of the population change and lack of skills displayed by Black students; while other teachers stated they wanted "to end racism, especially as it affected children."⁹⁴

The strike lasted for three and half weeks. During the strike, teachers were arrested because the school board wanted to force them back to work. In the first week of the strike about twenty teachers were arrested for picketing. Once again, Shanker, the AFT president, had his hand in the strike. He headed down to Newark to support their

⁹¹ Steve Golin. *The Newark Teacher Strikes: Hopes on the Line*. (New Brunswick, N.J.: Rutgers University Press, 2002), 82.

⁹² Ibid., 82

⁹³ Ibid., 83

⁹⁴ Ibid., 83

efforts. With his support and the teachers working together, the strike ended in a binding arbitration. The contract limited class sizes, hiring of teacher aides and included a slight salary increase.

Despite the successful outcome of the 1970 strike, the 1971 Newark strike was not as pleasant. The dynamics of race was different with this strike. Unlike the 1970 strike, the 1971 strike had a non-White school board, a Black mayor, and Black parent groups. Golin (2002), states that the strike was not just labor versus management, but also Italian versus Black.⁹⁵

Similar to the St. Louis Public Teacher Strikes, parents and community members became involved in the strike by showing their support. Parents sent their children to makeshift schools that were located in basements, whereas the community members provided breakfast and a warm place to setup. What is interesting about this is that more White people were on strike than Black people. With the 1970 strike, more Blacks were on strike than White. There was also violence in this strike. Teachers were being assaulted and sent to the hospital by people that were striking. Strikers were also attacked. Union members were being arrested and kept in jail for months at a time. It was stated by Dupont (1971) that according to the press, “striking Newark teachers had been fined more than \$200,000 and three union officers were sentenced to six month terms for contempt.”⁹⁶ During the St. Louis Public School Teacher Strike, union

⁹⁵ Steve Golin. *The Newark Teacher Strikes: Hopes on the Line*. (New Brunswick, N.J.: Rutgers University Press, 2002), 144.

⁹⁶ Ralph P. Dupont and Robert D. Tobin. “Teacher Negotiations into the Seventies.” *William and Mary Law Review* 12, no.4 (Summer 1971): 743.

members went to jail because they broke the law, and when ordered to stop picketing they continued.⁹⁷

Race and power were the issues in the Newark strike. Black people were controlling something the White supremacist wanted. White union members were dumbfounded that Black parents were making decisions about education and their careers.

Oakland Teachers' Strike

In 2001, according to Patricia Young, there were race related issues that ensued within the Oakland strike. The site for Young's study was in an elementary school in Oakland. The population is predominately Black students; six faculty members participated in the study. Young analyzed the strike and ask the question "What's Race Got to Do with It?" In 1996 teachers in Oakland, California were on strike, but not everyone was in agreement. The majority of Black teachers crossed picket line while most of the White teachers walked the picket lines. Since 1985, teachers in Oakland were working without a contract. Finally in 1995, teachers went on strike for two days, but were unsuccessful. On January 30, 1996, they staged a 1-day walk-out, but this was also unsuccessful and as a result, the teachers decide to strike for twenty-three consecutive days. Teachers were striking for a reduction in administrative spending, smaller class sizes, and an increase in salaries. The demands were similar to the St. Louis Public School strikes of 1973 and 1979.⁹⁸

⁹⁷ Thomas Kupferer, Tom Morgan, & Al Serkin. 1973. Interview by Dr. Paul D. Travers. February 12. Interview T232. Western Historical Manuscript Collection University of Missouri-St. Louis: St. Louis, Missouri, Archives Department.

⁹⁸ Patricia. A. Young "What's Race Got to Do with It? The Dynamics of Race Relations in the Oakland Teachers' Strike." *Race, Ethnicity, and Education* 5, no. 2 (2001).

Young's study examined how race is woven into teachers' strikes and how perceptions about race are revealed especially using teacher speech. According to Young (2001), race and teacher strikes in the fields of education are underexamined.⁹⁹ The themes of the study included: racial identity, race relations, name-calling as a racial action, and the confusion about race. In concluding this study, Young found that race is a dirty word that is not talked about. The findings for the study resulted in understanding that race and identity are one in the same. Race for most people is based on one looks rather than how they are defined. Each of the interviewees kept discussing their skin color, and that was what defined them within the aspect of the strike. When race relations was looked at, the researcher found that the participants kept referring to each other as them. When asked what race has to do with the strike, participants believed race was not a major factor. A Black teacher thinks race became part of it when the White teachers were striking; the Black teachers went inside the school. In conclusion, the researcher believed that the participants' perception about race is confusing. They did not seem to know what race was, the participants seemed to believe that their race was their skin color. Race and racism can be examined using Critical Race Theory (CRT). Yosso (2005) defines CRT as, "theoretical and analytical framework that challenges the ways race and racism impact education structures, practices and discourses."¹⁰⁰

⁹⁹ Patricia A. Young "What's Race Got to Do with It? The Dynamics of Race Relations in the Oakland Teachers' Strike." *Race, Ethnicity, and Education* 5, no. 2 (2001):128.

¹⁰⁰ Tara J. Yosso, "Whose culture has capital? A Critical Race Theory discussion of community culture wealth." *Race Ethnicity and Education* 8, no. 1 (March 2005): 74.

Chapter Three: Methodology

This study investigates how race relations shape the historical relationship between the AFT and the NEA and how that relationship influenced the outcome of the 1973 and 1979 St. Louis Public Schools (SLPS) teacher strikes. The historical relationship gave insight into St. Louis race relations in education, and more broadly, the metropolitan area. Archives used in this analysis were gathered from the University of Missouri St. Louis Western Archives and the Walter P. Reuther Library of Labor and Urban Affairs, Detroit, Michigan. The voice of Black teachers and community members is required for a complete analysis of the strikes during the research period. The voice of Blacks is reported by the *St. Louis American* and the *St. Louis Argus*. The voice of White supremacy is reported through the *St. Louis Globe-Democrat* (morning daily) and the *St. Louis Post-Dispatch* (evening daily).

The St. Louis Public School (SLPS) district faced two teacher strikes in the 1970's. The strikes occurred because teachers were unhappy with their working conditions. Before the *Brown v Board of Education ruling* (1954), the Association (NEA) did not affiliate themselves with Black teachers, whereas the Federation (AFT) was supportive of the integration of civil rights from 1918 when they actively fought for equitable pay for Black teachers. After the *Brown ruling* (1954), the NEA and the AFT instructed its local chapters that were not racially integrated to write letters explaining why they have yet to integrate.¹⁰¹ Both teacher organizations expected their local chapters to support the educational rights of all children and the rights of all teachers. The teachers' strike in St. Louis Public Schools of 1973 appeared as a collaboration between

¹⁰¹ William E. Eaton, *The American Federation of Teachers, 1916 -1961: A History of the Movement*, (IL: Southern Illinois University Press, 1975), 160.

the St. Louis Teachers' Association, an affiliate of the NEA and the St. Louis Teachers Union, AFT-Local #420, but at this time an internal battle ensued. That struggle played out several years later, during the teachers' strike of 1979 when the Local #420 voted to strike, against the will of the St. Louis Teachers' Association.¹⁰² The move to strike exposed the rocky relationship between the two organizations. Because the relationship was rocky, the St. Louis Board of Education (SLBOE) used this to try divide the members.

Researcher's Role

The researcher has chosen to study the teacher strikes of 1973 and 1979 in St. Louis Public Schools because it appears that the relationship between Black teachers, and teacher organizations helped shape the outcome of the strikes. The researcher assumed that the two teacher organizations united during strikes for the sole purpose of wanting what was best for teachers. Preliminary research indicated the teachers' strike of 1973 appeared to be a collaboration between the St. Louis Teachers' Association (White union) and the AFT-Local #420 (Black union), but there was a battle. The battle resulted from the teachers wanting to be considered professional or laborer. The decision results in the history of the teacher organizations. The National Education Association (NEA) is known as a professional organization whereas the American Federation of Teachers (AFT) is known as laborers due to their affiliation with the American Federation of Labor-Congress of Industrial Organizations (AFL-CIO). Several years later during the teachers' strike of 1979, the Local #420 voted to strike against the will of the St. Louis

¹⁰² St. Louis, MO., University of Missouri-St. Louis Western Archives, Teacher Strike 1979.

Teachers' Association once again. The Local #420 was the sole negotiator for the teachers during this strike.

It was assumed that most Black teachers during 1950-1980 belonged to the American Federation of Teachers (AFT) because they were unwelcome in the National Education Association (NEA). According to Urban (2000), the NEA ignored Black teachers until the 1960s.¹⁰³ On July 2nd at the NEA Convention, President Johnson signed the Civil Rights Act of 1964.¹⁰⁴ With the history of racial division among the organizations from the beginning it is assumed that this led to the racial divide among the St. Louis Public Schools' teacher organizations. The union (AFT) represented the predominately Black north St. Louis, while the association (NEA) represented the White south.

As a result of early research, the researcher's peaked interest wanted to understand more about the relationship Black teachers in SLPS had with teacher organizations. The researcher's own experience with a couple of districts in St. Louis City and St. Louis County confirmed the lack of choice in what organization to join. While working in the City, the chosen organization was the AFT whereas, in the County the organization was the NEA.

When working for the St. Louis Public Schools, the only teacher organization presented to me was the AFT Local #420. During this time, I chose not join the union not knowing much about it. The organization was practically forced upon new teachers

¹⁰³ Wayne J. Urban, *Gender, Race, and the National Education Association: Professionalism and Its Limitations*. New York, NY: RoutledgeFalmer, 2000.

¹⁰⁴ Carol Karpinski, *Invisible Company of Professionals: African Americans and the NEA During the Civil Rights Movement* (New York: Peter Lang Publishing, Inc., 2008).

with all the fliers, invitation to social events, etc., asking us to join and be protected. There was not much discussion or information about what the organization offered teachers. After a year of teaching in the City, I began teaching in the county of St. Louis in a predominately employed White district. Once again, I was presented with one teacher organization, the NEA. Fortunately, I was aware of the NEA because of my University training. I did opt to join, but later questioned why. Yes, both organizations want to support teachers and the education of children. But why choose one over the other? As the researcher my bias toward either organization will not affect my position because I am not for or against either organization. However, I feel the research gave an understanding as to why different school districts chose a specific organization; is it based on the predominate ethnic group of the teaching staff or based whether teachers want to be considered laborers or professional?

Research Design

Through detailed analysis of historical data, the researcher assessed the magnitude to which the relationship Black teachers had with teacher organizations nationally further separated Black teachers and White teachers within local organizations. Current research had not addressed how teacher organizations related to Black teachers during 1950 to 1980 and how the outcome of strikes during this time may have been shaped by these relationships, specifically with the St. Louis Public Schools in 1973 and 1979 strikes. Critical Race Theory offered a critical lens that serves as both a theory and interpretive technique.

Critical Race Theory (CRT) uses an approach that is, “grounded in sense of reality that reflects the distinctive experiences of people of color;” that is being used to

examine the historical events of the teacher organizations during 1950-1980.¹⁰⁵ I assessed the relationship between Black teachers and teacher organizations and how they shaped the outcome of the St. Louis Public School District teacher strikes of 1973 and 1979 and the racial divide within the district's teacher organizations.

Data Sources

Three primary sources of data were accessed to study the 1973 and 1979 strikes and the relationship Black teachers had with these organizations. The primary sources are (1) archival information, (2) newspaper clippings, and (3) existing literature written on the strikes and teacher organization relationships with Black teachers.

Archival analysis is a method used to assess the worth of the records. The main components of archival information used were oral histories, board minutes, and local newspaper articles from *St. Louis Post Dispatch* (evening daily) and the *St. Louis Globe-Democrat* (morning daily) during this time; these are located at the Western Historical Manuscript Collection at the University of Missouri-St Louis, St. Louis, Missouri, and the Walter P. Reuther Library of Labor and Urban Affairs, Detroit, Michigan, and the St. Louis Public Library-Central Location. In contrast other archival sources will come from newspaper clippings generated by the *St. Louis American* and *St. Louis Argus* newspapers as a voice of color. The voice of people of color was required for a complete analysis of the historical events during the research period. It is important that the marginalized group, Black people be placed at the center of the analysis. Ladson-Billings maintains it

¹⁰⁵ Edward Taylor. (2009). "The Foundations of Critical Race Theory in Education: An Introduction." In *Foundations of Critical Race Theory in Education* edited by Edward Taylor, David Gillborn, & Gloria Ladson Billings (New York, NY: Routledge, 2009), 7.

is necessary to discuss and define race and racism in specific historical and social contexts.

Books and journal articles were read detailing events during the strikes as well as documentation of relationships between Black teachers and teacher organization were analyzed and quoted throughout Chapter Four and Chapter Five. Board and strike meeting minutes offered insights into the actions of St. Louis Public School Board and the teacher organizations in addressing the issues arising during the strikes. The minutes provided insight into the attitude of board and organization members.

Data Collection

Preliminary data collection began in spring 2009 when the researcher was introduced to oral histories by a seminar professor. During this time, the researcher was given the topic and was asked to work with another individual to locate oral histories of the strikes of St Louis Public School in 1973 and 1979. The information gathered prompted the researcher to ask why there were two teacher organizations and the reason for racial separation because the researcher is not a native of St. Louis, Missouri. The research of the strikes took place on the campus of the University of Missouri-St. Louis in the Thomas Jefferson Library where the St. Louis Public School teachers' 1979 strike collection is currently housed. After accessing the archives, the researcher noticed that information from the 1973 strike was missing. Because some of the occurring events in 1979 needed to be explained, the researcher located the archives for the 1973 strike with the help of the advisor. The information for the 1973 strike is housed on the campus of Wayne State University in Detroit, Michigan, in the Walter P. Reuther Library of Labor and Urban Affairs.

The researcher spent roughly a week accessing the archives on Wayne State's campus with the help of the archivist who brought the work with him after being relocated to Detroit. The information in the 1973 collection explained several events in the 1979 collection. The information in both collections included information such as board minutes, fliers from strike meetings, negotiations between organizations and board members, oral history of a couple of teachers, and newspaper clippings.

Literature on teacher organizations corroborated information collected from the archives. Also, the newspaper clippings from local Black newspapers assisted in understanding the Black teachers' perspective on the strikes that were not reflected fully in the 1973 and 1979 archival collections. The clippings gave insight into Civil Rights leaders addressing the teachers during the strike and congratulating them on fighting for their right to live pay for basic life essentials. Some comparison was made between the strikes and the Civil Rights Movement fight's for human rights. The newspaper article also gave insight into how parents and students supported teachers during the 1973 strike, but not so much during the 1979 strike. Parents and students called upon outside help to end the strike of 1979.

Data Analysis

Data collated from archival sources, literature, and newspaper clippings was first organized by date. After separating the sources, each piece of literature, newspaper clipping and archive was read and documented with the main idea. The sources were then arranged according to the main idea and then analyzed using the theoretical framework of Critical Race Theory (CRT). According to Parker and Lynn, CRT can be used to "foster the connections of theory to practice and activism on issues related to

race.”¹⁰⁶ Through the use of CRT, the data mined to unearth the relationship Black teachers had with White teacher organizations and how this shaped the outcomes of the teacher strikes broadly, but specifically in St. Louis Public Schools. The following CRT tenets are being used to analyze the data collected, (a) counter-storytelling, (b) Whiteness as property, (c) interest convergence, and (d) racism as normal.

Counter-storytelling is a tenet of CRT that is a method of storytelling from people whose experiences are often untold. According to Solórzano and Yosso (2002), counter-storytelling is defined by the following statement, “the counter-story is also a tool for exposing, analyzing, and challenging the majoritarian stories of racial privilege.”¹⁰⁷ The *St. Louis Argus* and *St. Louis American* had a different perspective of strikes compared to the *St. Louis Globe-Democrat* and *St. Louis Post-Dispatch*. The *Argus* and the *American* focused on a Civil Rights comparison of the strikes, Blacks uniting and possible internalized racism. The *Democrat* and the *Post-Dispatch* focused on the teachers illegally striking and not setting a great example for students. Racism as endemic is a notion that racism is normal; it is here permanently. Racism was noticed throughout the strike: the division of the teacher organizations, the discussion of the strike leaders in the *Post-Dispatch*, to name a few. CRT also explores interest convergence meaning that White supremacist have interest in Blacks when they, White supremacist benefits. Interest convergence was noticed when the association did not want to strike, but followed the union because it was going to benefit all teachers, Black and White.

¹⁰⁶ Laurence Parker & Lynn, Marvin. “What’s Race Got to Do With It? Critical Race Theory’s Methodology and Epistemology.” In *Foundations of Critical Race Theory in Education*, edited Edward Taylor, David Gillborn, & Gloria Ladson-Billings, 148-160. (New York, NY: Routledge, 2009), 157.

¹⁰⁷ Daniel G. Solórzano and Yosso, Tara J. “Critical Race Methodology: Counter-Storytelling as an Analytical Framework for Education Research.” *Qualitative Inquiry* 8, no. 1, (2002), 32.

Limitations

According to Roberts (2010), limitations are features of a study and something the researcher has no control over.¹⁰⁸ A limitation for this study is the sparse archival data that was available. Even though there are two archival sites that were located with data on the SLPS teacher strikes, the data was limited to what the sites were given or able to retrieve. The researcher recognized that additional information could have been obtained through interviews, but felt there was a considerable amount of documents that sufficed in telling the story about the SLPS strikes of 1973 and 1979.

Conclusion

Even though the teacher organizations were divided initially, they were able to unite for the benefit of their students and themselves. The 1973 and 1979 strikes were organized because teachers were not happy with their working conditions. The union, AFT-Local #420 wanted to strike and the St. Louis Teacher Association did not. Later, the Association realized that the only way to get what they all wanted was to come together and strike. Going into this research, it was unclear why there were two teacher organizations. Was it because of the racial divide within the district or because teachers wanted the option of being considered professional or laborer? The framework of CRT helped challenge this notion of the relationship between Black teachers and teacher organizations shaping the outcome of the St. Louis Teacher Strikes of 1973 and 1979. The use of CRT challenged the effects the past had on teacher strikes. An examination of historical data was used to expose the racial divide within national teacher organizations

¹⁰⁸ Carol M. Roberts *The Dissertation Journey: A Practical and Comprehensive Guide to Planning, Writing, and Defending Your Dissertation*, (Thousand Oaks, California: Corwin-SAGE Company, 2010), 162.

and their insight on what is professional or not. The past practices and relationships of the teacher organizations could not be ignored.

Chapter Four: Context

For many years, St. Louis City has been dealing with demographic changes. In 1916, St. Louis City was the first to pass housing segregation ordinance, which was later nullified. In the early 1950's thousands of rural migrants, mostly Black moved to the City. In 1953 St. Louis City schools consisted of 25% Black and 75% White; by 1967, demographics changed to 63% Black and 37% White. As more Blacks migrated to St. Louis, *de facto* residential segregation took place. Black families were housed in public city housing projects.¹⁰⁹ In 1955, the construction of Pruitt-Igoe homes were completed which created more of a racial divide among the residents in the City of St. Louis. The thirteen Igoe apartments were reserved for White tenants whereas the twenty Pruitt apartments were for Black tenants. The residential segregation did not last; in December of 1955, a federal judge ordered that segregation in all St. Louis public housing end.¹¹⁰ However, this was not the end of the fight for residential equality for St. Louis Black residents.

Black Power and Women

Prior to the St. Louis Public School Strikes of 1973 and 1979, Black people in St. Louis were fighting for better housing conditions and education for their children. Black Power (1966 – 1975) manifested from the Black Nationalist Movement as a representative of “social, political and cultural movements in the twentieth century.”¹¹¹ It brought the Black community together to unite on issues affecting them. Activists of the

¹⁰⁹ Daniel L. Schlafly *28 Years on the St. Louis School Board 1953-1981: Rooting Out Corruption Desegregating Schools in a Segregated Society Coping with Massive Shifts of Population and Wealth*. St. Louis, MO: Daniel L Schlafly, 1995: 59-60.

¹¹⁰ Lang, Clarence. *Grassroots at the Gateway: Class Politics & Black Freedom Struggle in St. Louis, 1936-1975*. Ann Arbor, MI: The University of Michigan Press, 2009: 99.

¹¹¹ Peniel E. Joseph “Reinterpreting the Black Power Movement.” *OAH Magazine of History* (July 2008): 4.

movement fought for equality and pride, especially women. Black women were instrumental in this effort, as with the strikes.

The women embraced aspects of the Black Power, later heading “Woman Power.”¹¹² In 1968, more than two hundred Black female activists joined the group. The women believed that “if the Negro in America is to strive toward developing a meaningful self-identification, then this fundamental concept of ‘self-help’ projects becomes increasingly important.”¹¹³ This is evident in the Renter’s Strike of 1969 led by Jean King and the Liddell vs Board of Education for the City of St. Louis was led by Minnie Liddell.

Renter’s Strike

In 1967, nine Black women sat-in at the Human Development Corporation (HDC) protesting low wages and racial discrimination. The women completed the HDC courses in electronics, but were not able to gain employment. Activist Margie Carter stated, “We have been to fifteen different places seeking employment and received fifteen different excuses from employers for not hiring us.”¹¹⁴ The court ordered an injunction ordering the women to leave HDC unless they were invited. After a few weeks, HDC found the women employment. The sit-in is the first example of the protests led by women in St. Louis. But not long after this protest, sixty Black women picketed the St. Louis Housing Authority to advocate for rent reductions and policy change. The picketers wanted rent payments limited to twenty-five percent of their income, increase of Black representation

¹¹² Michael Karp. “The St. Louis Rent Strike of 1969: Transforming Black Activism and American Low-Income Housing.” *Journal of Urban History* (December 2013): 6. <http://juh.sagepub.com/content/early/2013/12/18/0096144213516082> [accessed April 6, 2014].

¹¹³ *Ibid.*, 6.

¹¹⁴ *Ibid.*, 5.

on the Board of Commissioners on the Housing Authority, and better police protection.¹¹⁵ The women threatened to strike if the City officials did not concede to their demands.

Prior to the Rent strike, Jean King was preparing to move to the City's public housing, but was not happy about the inequity of tenants. Tenants were paying more for rent than the income coming in. The St. Louis Housing Authority did not base rent off resident's income, but on occupied space. King decided to attend meeting about the rent strike and was voted to chair the strike. In 1969 in the City of St. Louis, Black women went on a rent strike lasting nine months.¹¹⁶ The residents refused to pay rent until their demands were met. The women protested unfair rent increases and dilapidated living conditions. Due to federal and municipal policies, housing in the City of St. Louis started to deteriorate. The people within the city depended on municipal tax base to improve housing conditions; however that was lacking due to racial segregation and job loss. Tenants were now being exposed to rodent and insect infestations, poor plumbing, and exposure to lead.¹¹⁷ The tenants asked for limited rent payments of twenty-five percent of resident's income and a guarantee that rent would not increase for three years. The Housing Authority executive at the time claimed that the demands were impossible. Similar to the SLPS teacher strikes, the issue came down to money. The Housing Authority claimed the only way to meet the demands the state and federal government would need to increase government subsidies. The SLPS board claimed they also need more funding to increase teacher pay. Like the teacher strikes, the renter strike had the backing of Black activist.

¹¹⁵ Michael Karp. "The St. Louis Rent Strike of 1969: Transforming Black Activism and American Low-Income Housing." *Journal of Urban History* (December 2013): 5
<http://juh.sagepub.com/content/early/2013/12/18/0096144213516082> [accessed April 6, 2014].

¹¹⁶ Ibid., 1

¹¹⁷ Ibid., 3.

Ivory Perry, Black activist announced that the “Black United Front, and all the groups associated with it, supported and endorsed the rent strike.”¹¹⁸ Unfortunately for the only Black executive for the Housing Authority, he was fired for supporting the strike; therefore activist pushed back harder. Later Mrs. King met with William Clay, Missouri’s first Black congressional representative and introduced a bill that would guarantee rent prices not to exceed more than twenty-five percent of the resident’s income. By the fall of 1969, the Housing Authority was on the verge of bankruptcy; 2,400 tenants withheld rent resulting in more than \$600,000 dollars. As in the teachers’ strike, Mayor Cervantes stepped in to help negotiate with the strikers. His efforts were rejected by Mrs. King. Later, Harold Gibbons, president of Teamsters Joint Council decided to help with the cause, in which strikers gained leverage. In October, Gibbons, National Tenant Organization (NTO) and striking tenants met with officials. Gibbons met with seventy civic leaders and gained trusteeship over the Housing Authority; Cervantes administration agreed to the demands of the renters.

St. Louis had the largest and longest rent strike in the U.S. during its time. The strike received national attention; Massachusetts first Black popularly elected senator, Edward Brooke, took the housing bill to the Senate. Mrs. King testified in front of the Senate; the Brooke Amendment to the Housing Act of 1969 was passed.¹¹⁹ The bill increased federal support for housing nationwide. The renters strike helps to understand the housing demographics around St. Louis City, which leads to the schooling

¹¹⁸ Michael Karp. “The St. Louis Rent Strike of 1969: Transforming Black Activism and American Low-Income Housing.” *Journal of Urban History* (December 2013): 8. <http://juh.sagepub.com/content/early/2013/12/18/0096144213516082> [accessed April 6, 2014].

¹¹⁹ Ibid. 10

demographics within the St. Louis Public Schools. Mrs. King fought for residential equality and years later, Mrs. Minnie Liddell fought for education equality.

Liddell Case

The Black Power continued in St. Louis with Minnie Liddell, a Black mother who fought for a better education for not only her children but all children in St. Louis City. Mrs. Liddell remembered attending schools that were unequal. When she was growing up, “White schools were better equipped, better maintained and received new books while Black students were often housed in inferior overcrowded schools.”¹²⁰ Because of this experience, Mrs. Liddell wanted more for her own children. After the *Brown vs Board of Education*, St. Louis schools were still racially segregated. By the year 1963-1964, 71 of 134 elementary schools within the district were completely Black. Schools that Black students attended had outdated textbooks and was overcrowded. This is something that Mrs. Liddell dealt with while living on the North side of the City.

Pre-Brown, the district attempted to relieve the overcrowding by placing an “intact busing” policy. Intact busing policy sent an entire class of students with a teacher to a vacant classroom somewhere else in the district.¹²¹ White students were first bused to White schools; later Black students were bused to White schools, but were isolated from White students. The Black students had separate lunch and recess times. Due to the constant transferring of children, Mrs. Liddell had enough. Boundaries kept changing, but Black students were still attending Black schools. Mrs. Liddell began speaking with neighbors and parents about the inferior education the children were receiving and the desire to do something about it.

¹²⁰ Kimberly Norwood. “Minnie Liddell’s Forty-Year Quest for Quality Public Education Remains a Dream Deferred.” *Washington University Journal of Law & Policy*, 2012, no. 40: 3.

¹²¹ *Ibid.*, 9.

Mrs. Liddell and other parents formed a parent group called Concerned Parents of North St. Louis, she was the leader. The group of parents attempted to meet with the School Board, but was not acknowledged, not even by the four Black board members. The parents then took measures into their own hands; they picketed the schools and withdrew their children and homeschooled them. The boycott lasted six weeks, school officials agreed to send the students to another school.¹²² Because some Black students were relocated, the Board decided to relocate White students also, but the parents protested and students were sent back. The Concerned Parent group was not happy, therefore decided to fight for better schools. The parent group sought help from the Black community but was met with resistance. The group found two lawyers, Williams Russell and Joseph McDuffy to represent them pro bono. The parents rallied together to raise the money to cover court filing fee; the lawsuit was filed on February 18, 1972. At first the parents were concerned with the quality of education, updated books, adequate resources, and qualified teachers. It took five years before a trial was set; the trial lasted thirteen weeks. The court found that the Board of Education did not violate the United States Constitution. The Eighth District Court of Appeals unanimously voting to reverse the ruling and stated “the Board of Education of the City of St. Louis and the State had maintained racially segregated educational systems.”¹²³

The district had to put a plan together to desegregate the schools; Mrs. Liddell and nineteen others were on the committee. The committee consisted of parents from the North and South side of the district. The committee implemented citywide busing which

¹²² Kimberly Norwood. “Minnie Liddell’s Forty-Year Quest for Quality Public Education Remains a Dream Deferred.” *Washington University Journal of Law & Policy*, 2012, no. 40: 11.

¹²³ *Ibid.*, 16.

led to White student enrollment dropping in 1971-1972. White parents were enrolling their children into the local Catholic and Lutheran schools. The court also ordered the district to create a voluntary desegregation program with county schools by 1980-81 school year.

This case contextualizes with the strikes of 1973 and 1979 in that the teachers on the North side were majority black and their classrooms were overcrowded. The teachers asked for better wages and working conditions based on the busing system that was implemented by the district. If the district desegregated years before the strikes, before this case, they may not have faced the turmoil that came with the two situations. Blacks have long fought what they thought was right, equal opportunity for all. The Black Power movement did not stop with the Renter's Strike or the Liddell Case, it continued to the St. Louis Public School strikes of 1973 and 1979, Blacks came together to equalize wages for not just themselves, but for all. We cannot forget the women that were influential in the strikes; both strikes had women who felt strong enough to stand up for what was just.

Summary

According to Joseph (2008), "black women utilized Black Power rhetoric to create political, intellectual, and cultural spheres of influence that advocated a variety of issues ranging from welfare and tenants' rights to black feminism."¹²⁴ Black women were with the National Urban League and the March of Washington Movement. It was during this time Black women found their niche within the labor movement. This

¹²⁴ Michael Karp. "The St. Louis Rent Strike of 1969: Transforming Black Activism and American Low-Income Housing." *Journal of Urban History* (December 2013): 5. <http://juh.sagepub.com/content/early/2013/12/18/0096144213516082> [accessed April 6, 2014].

seemed to have an influence on the women in St. Louis during the late 1960s, early 1970s. Women in St. Louis not only fought for themselves, but their community. Similar to the SLPS strikes of 1973 and 1979, women were active in getting the strikes underway. According to Williams (2008), “the overall scholarship of Black women and Black Power provides rich descriptive and analytical starting points for framing our historical understanding of this era.”¹²⁵

¹²⁵ Ronda Y. Williams. “Black Women and Black Power.” *OAH Magazine of History* (July 2008): 26.

Chapter Five: Analysis

The analysis focused on how the history of the national organization and their relationship with black teachers had an effect on the St. Louis Public School (SLPS) strikes of 1973 and 1979. The teacher organizations involved in the strikes were the St. Louis Teachers Association (SLTA), majority White teachers and the St. Louis Teachers Union Local #420 (SLTU), majority Black teachers. The organizations were divided similar to the City of St. Louis. The *St. Louis American*, a local recognized Black newspaper since 1928 reported a study conducted by the Human Development Corporation (HDC) stating, “St. Louis is divided into areas 96% Black and 96% White [with] one mile corridor racially mixed.”¹²⁶ The research claimed the “Black ghetto” extended north of Franklin Avenue and the “White ghetto” south from Oakland and Chouteau. The separation in St. Louis dates back to the 1890s.¹²⁷ SLTU and SLTA members were separated by where teachers taught; SLTU on the north side and SLTA on the south side of the district. The organizations represented half of the teachers within the district. Each organization has an affiliation with a national organization. The Association is affiliated with the National Education Association (NEA) and the Union with the American Federation of Teachers (AFT). The national organizations were also known to be divided by race. When the NEA was founded, they did not accept Black teachers as quickly as AFT. It was not until the 1960s that Blacks were allowed to join the NEA whereas AFT accepted Blacks from their origination.

During the strikes, teachers were fighting for better wages, working conditions and the right to collective bargain. Teachers were determined to do; what was needed in

¹²⁶ “St. Louis Divided, Whites South, Blacks on the North,” *St. Louis American*, 25 May 1972, 13.

¹²⁷ *Ibid.*

order to get the desired results. The results were not obtained without disputes among the teacher organizations and the board. The teacher organizations did not always agree on how to handle situations, but stuck together to achieve their goal. The strike impacted the schools and students. The impact was so detrimental that parents and political members joined in efforts to end the strikes. During the strike of 1979 Bayard Rustin, former president of the A. Phillip Randolph Institute and leader of the Civil Rights Movement of the 1960s compared the strikes to Civil Rights. He stated,

in the 60s we were fighting for the human rights – to be able to vote; to go to restaurants of our choice; for our children to be able to go to school. Now we have achieved those rights, but we are still fighting for the right to have the money to pay for those things or go to those places.¹²⁸

American Federation of Teachers and the National Education Association responded differently to the Civil Rights Movement which reflects the style and structure of the organizations.

After the *Brown* (1954) decision, the AFT requested that local Unions assist with the problems of desegregation in their schools. Unfortunately the AFT lost 14% of their members in 1958 because they supported school integration. However the NEA was slow in responding to the civil rights movement. In the 1950s the Association still had segregated Associations, Black and White at the state levels. It was not until 1953 they had their first integrated national convention. In 1961 the NEA began to slowly support the Supreme Court decision on desegregation. After the slow start, the NEA began talks with the American Teachers Association (ATA), Black Association about a possible

¹²⁸ “Strike by Teachers is Compared to the Struggle for Civil Rights,” *St. Louis Post-Dispatch*, 12 February 1979, 1C.

merger. The merger would benefit the NEA because it showed progress with their efforts to integrate. In 1967, the NEA nominated Elizabeth Koontz as their first Black president. The nomination was “asserting that the change was genuine and deep.”¹²⁹ The term only lasted a year. If the Association wanted to truly show genuine efforts, there would have not been any hesitation when teachers protested against the 1700 Black children being denied an education in Prince Edward County, Virginia in 1962. The American Federation of Teachers did not hesitate, they supported the efforts by sit-in demonstrations. Because there was so much outrage, the NEA decided to join efforts with AFT, but not physically, monetarily.¹³⁰

Laborer and/or Professional

Until the mid-twentieth century, teacher strikes were rare because most teachers signed a contract when hired by a school district, therefore “saw themselves not as ‘workers,’ but as ‘professionals.’¹³¹ This was strengthened by the NEA; the organization developed professionalism during the 1880s and 1890s based on male domination. The members during that time were college professors and superintendents.¹³² Education leaders were against teacher strikes, however, teachers were not reluctant to fight for the right to bargain collectively when salary increases were on the line. Unionization of teachers began in the early twentieth century with the rise in membership among the American Federation of Teachers. Teachers that joined the federation identified with

¹²⁹ Marjorie Murphy, *Blackboard Unions: The AFT and the NEA, 1900-1980* (New York: Cornell University Press): 206.

¹³⁰ *Ibid.*, 207.

¹³¹ *The Encyclopedia of Strikes in American History*. s.v. "[Teachers' Strikes](#)." Armonk: M.E. Sharpe, 2009.
http://search.credoreference.com.ezproxy.umsl.edu/content/entry/sharpestrikes/teachers_strikes/0 (accessed February 28, 2011).

¹³² Marjorie Murphy, *Blackboard Unions: The AFT and the NEA, 1900-1980* (New York: Cornell University Press): 48.

labor movements throughout various cities. During this time, it was illegal for teachers to strike; there was also a lack of bargaining rights. However in the 1930s teachers began to articulate their frustrations about class size and static salaries. In 1945, teachers began to strike; the first was in Norwalk, Connecticut. The teachers in Norwalk were affiliated with the NEA; therefore the organization did not call it a strike, it was “a professional group action by professional methods.”¹³³ In 1946, AFT had their first strike in St. Paul Minnesota; teachers were on strike for five weeks wanting increases in salaries. It was not until after the New York City strike that the NEA adopted collective bargaining policies. Similar to the strikes in the 1940s and 1950s, St. Louis Public School teachers wanted to improve working conditions and enhance the salaries.

Local organizations were affected by the national organizations wanting to determine rather to be professional or laborer. In 1964, the St. Louis Post Dispatch reported about the SLTA and SLTU during membership recruitment.

The SLTA president, Norman Cockrell stated, “[we] shun militancy...we stress the importance of constantly improving teacher benefits as much as we emphasize the importance of improving the level of instruction in our schools.” He then stated, “As a professional organization we believe we should have a close, amicable relationship with the Board of Education and school administrators to achieve our objective.”

Whereas the SLTU president, Betty Finneran stated, “we want to give dignity to the teaching profession and we want the public to know that teachers can and are

¹³³ *The Encyclopedia of Strikes in American History*. s.v. "[Teachers' Strikes](#)." Armonk: M.E. Sharpe, 2009.
http://search.credoreference.com.ezproxy.umsl.edu/content/entry/sharpestrikes/teachers_strikes/0 (accessed February 28, 2011).

willing to negotiate for themselves.” She also stated, “When teachers have a real voice in determining their salaries and working conditions and in educational policies of the school system, then we can achieve this dignity.”¹³⁴

The teacher organizations, SLTA and SLTU fought for better wages, working conditions and bargaining rights in 1973 and 1979. Teachers wanted the financial ability to live a comfortable life, being able to take care of life’s basics. While fighting for this right, a battle ensued between the organizations, professionalism or laborer. The history of their national affiliates, NEA and AFT are known for one or the other. AFT was concerned with academic freedom and teacher rights. AFT formed as a Union from origination whereas the NEA did not consider themselves Union until 1968 when they accepted collective bargaining.¹³⁵ Because the national organizations were divided about professionalism and Unionism, it affected the strikes in St. Louis Public Schools. According to a St. Louis Post Dispatch reporter in 1964, “the NEA speaks in terms of “professional negotiations;” the AFT seeks “collective bargaining.”¹³⁶ The local affiliates argued about whether to strike or not. The local Association, SLTA did not want to strike, but the Union, SLTU did. All teachers in SLPS, no matter the affiliate wanted better salaries, therefore decided to strike. Even though during the 1973 strike, there was a merge between the organizations, both organizations conducted business differently whereas the 1979 strike a sole organization represented the teachers, SLTU.

¹³⁴ “Rival Groups Try to Sign Up 1300 Teachers,” *St. Louis Post-Dispatch*: St. Louis Teachers Union, Box 4, Folder Membership Drive 1964-68, Walter P. Reuther Library, Archives of Labor and Urban Affairs.

¹³⁵ Kerchner, Charles Taylor and Krista D. Cauffman, “Lurching toward Professionalism: The Saga of Teacher Unionism,” *The Elementary School Journal: Special Issue-Teacher Leadership*, 96, no. 1 (Sept. 1995): 111.

¹³⁶ “Rival Groups Try to Sign Up 1300 Teachers,” *St. Louis Post-Dispatch*: St. Louis Teachers Union, Box 4, Folder Membership Drive 1964-68, Walter P. Reuther Library, Archives of Labor and Urban Affairs.

The Right to Live Comfortable

In 1968, during the Civil Rights Movement, Black sanitation workers went on strike. The strike occurred because of the working conditions. Prior to the strike, the president of the sanitation workers' Independent Workers Association asked the Commissioner of the Department of Public Works (DPW), to fix a packing truck. Because the commissioner refused, two Black sanitation workers were killed when the truck broke down.¹³⁷ All the workers during this time were Black, paid hourly and were not guaranteed work most days. The act of the commissioner proves a measure of the basic tenet of Critical Race Theory (CRT): racism is permanent in America. Sanitation workers were offered a self-paid life insurance policy, but most could not afford it because of their low wages. Therefore when the two workers died, their families were not able to bury them right away. Two weeks after the tragic death, the workers walked off the job, “[challenging] generations of White supremacy in Memphis.”¹³⁸ The strike lasted two months. The strike symbolized the struggle for human rights.

Similar to the sanitation workers, teachers in SLPS were fighting for the right to live. Teachers wanted better wages to take care of themselves and help take care of their families. The Association and the Union questioned the school boards about why they had not received raises and board paid hospitalization insurance. In May of 1972, the Local AFT Union #420 (SLTU) presented signed petitions to the School Board asking for collective bargaining, the request was refused. Despite an excess fund over \$15 million, the board announced there will be no pay raises, but added sixteen steps to the salary schedule. The SLPS teachers started the 1972-1973 school year without a pay raise.

¹³⁷ Honey, Michael. April 2008. Forty Years Since King: Labor Rights are Human Rights. *OAH Magazine of History*: 18.

¹³⁸ Ibid.

Because the raise was not given, the St. Louis Teachers Union investigated and charged the Board with “illegal use of increased state aids.”¹³⁹ At the same time, the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP) charged the board with improper use of Federal funds. Because the Board was being charged, they were asked to present their financial reports. Three months after the original request, the Board delayed supplying the report.

Because teachers could not collective bargain, however they were able to meet and confer. Teacher issues were taken to the school board for discussion and voted upon. St. Louis Public School (SLPS) had a Teacher Concern Committee (TCC) appointed in 1968, which addressed teacher issues, such as salaries, class size, etc. While the Union was demanding action from the Board, the St. Louis Teachers Association (SLTA) was praising the Committee for addressing teacher concerns. The Association stated, “Under your chairmanship the committee seemed to really live up to what its name implied – concerns. Problems brought to the Committee’s attention were dealt with not just listened to and filed away.”¹⁴⁰ The TCC met with Union and Associations leaders to discuss improvements in salary and fringe benefits. The teachers then decided that if the raise demand was not made by January 29th, they would strike. Several national organization leaders came to St. Louis to assist the teachers with the strike. The National Education Association (NEA) had their legal staff in attendance: Robert Chanin, Stephen Nasau, and Robert Thomas Jr. The American Federation of Teachers (AFT) sent in Joseph Cascella, national organizer. Eighty-percent of the SLPS teachers went on strike.

¹³⁹ What has happened?, March 2, 1973, SL 86, F7, SLTU A243, Western Historical Manuscript Collection University of Missouri-St. Louis: St. Louis, Missouri, Archives Department.

¹⁴⁰ St. Louis Board of Education: For Your Information, SL 86, F6, Western Historical Manuscript Collection University of Missouri-St. Louis: St. Louis, Missouri, Archives Department.

The board reported that in 1971 by request of the teacher groups “salary increases ranging from \$50 to \$490 for the great majority of [the] teachers were given on the top of the normal increase.”¹⁴¹ Even with the increase in 1971, the St. Louis Board of Education (SLBOE) promised teachers that a pay raise would come the next year, 1972-1973, but that was not satisfactory for the Union and Association members. Teachers in SLPS had not received a raise since 1969 with a starting salary of \$7,200.¹⁴² This was far below the starting salary of other districts in the area. Unlike other districts, SLPS did not offer board paid health benefits. Teachers grappled with the reason because in a county district, majority White teachers where per pupil average daily was \$9,819 compared to SLPS per pupil average of \$17,854 paid for their teachers to have health benefits, but SLPS would not.¹⁴³ With this information, SLTU sought \$1,000 and paid hospitalization for teachers by January 1973 from the SLBOE.¹⁴⁴ With a joint coalition, a letter was sent to the Board President, Adella Smiley, stating that if the board does not commit to negotiations presented by both organizations, they will withhold services as of January 29, 1973.¹⁴⁵ With unsuccessful efforts by both organizations to gain better salaries and benefits, they decided to join forces.

¹⁴¹ Background on St. Louis Public School Salaries, January 19, 1973, SL 86, F6, Western Historical Manuscript Collection University of Missouri-St. Louis: St. Louis, Missouri, Archives Department.

¹⁴² “Teachers Call Strike Meeting,” *St. Louis-Post Dispatch*, 10 January 1973, 3A.

¹⁴³ Professional Negotiations: Up to Date Salary Report, September 11, 1972, SL 86, F1, SLTA, Western Historical Manuscript Collection University of Missouri-St. Louis: St. Louis, Missouri, Archives Department.

¹⁴⁴ St. Louis Teachers Union, Local 420 News Release, November 8, 1972, SL 86, F7, SLTU, Western Historical Manuscript Collection University of Missouri-St. Louis: St. Louis, Missouri, Archives Department.

¹⁴⁵ News Release: Teacher Organizations Agree to Joint Efforts, December 22, 1972, SL 86, F1, SLTA, Western Historical Manuscript Collection University of Missouri-St. Louis: St. Louis, Missouri, Archives Department.

Collaboration

In the spring of 1971, the St. Louis Teachers Union (SLTU) had 2,300 teachers sign a petition asking for the SLBOE to determine which teacher organization represented the teachers. The board denied the request because it was illegal for school boards to negotiate with teachers.¹⁴⁶ SLTU is similar to their national affiliate AFT in that they want to negotiate for their rights. They are about collective bargaining whereas SLTA was not ready to strike. Therefore the SLTU asked for SLTA to join them in the salary and benefits effort. The SLTA responded by presenting a proposal of each organization pledging \$3000 to show their commitment to the temporary merger for the efforts to accomplish their goal. Along with the money, the Association proposed three goals: 1) establish coalition between SLTA and SLTU, 2) establish relationship conducive to eventual merger, and 3) all teachers under one organization.¹⁴⁷ The Association was hopeful that the merge would attract non-members of both organizations. The objective of the coalition was to obtain a salary increase and paid benefits for all teachers. The conditions of the merger were that the organizations were going to be 'separate but equal.' There was only one account with the shared money. Each organization obtained their own national representation; they held their own meetings and communicated with their own members. The merger of the organizations is a glaring example of Interest Convergence tenet (CRT). The Association of majority White teachers from the south side came to the realization that if they merged with the

¹⁴⁶ St. Louis Teachers Union Local #420 News Release, November 8, 1972, SL 86, F7, SLTU, Western Historical Manuscript Collection University of Missouri-St. Louis: St. Louis, Missouri, Archives Department.

¹⁴⁷ SLTA Merger News, November 30, 1972, SL 86, F1, SLTA, Western Historical Manuscript Collection University of Missouri-St. Louis: St. Louis, Missouri, Archives Department.

Black teachers, members of the Union then they, the White teachers, would benefit from the fight that the Union was willing to take on.

Clyde C. Miller, superintendent tried to speak to the teachers over the radio. The radio plea helped confirm the strike for the Union, but not for the Association. Teachers not associated with either organization became acquainted quickly after the speech. Each organization's membership rose shortly after.¹⁴⁸ Before the actual day of the strike, the organizations were in disagreement about when to actually strike. The disagreement was not surprising, considering the Association wanted to be 'professional.' When an injunction by the court came forward, the date to vote moved up for the Union. The Association did not want to vote. The reason for the hesitation from the Association was that the board asked the Association for a meeting to discuss the strike. Union officers stated, "The board was hoping to divide teacher strength along geographical lines, thereby weakening the effect of the strike."¹⁴⁹ The divide was not just geographical, but racial. The board member that attempted the situation was a Black female. Surprisingly the *St. Louis Argus* and *St. Louis American* did not pick up on the sexism portrayed here. The Association refused to speak with the board member.

The teachers called to strike, but the vote meetings were held in different locations and the votes were handled differently. The different locations came about because the Union wanted members only to vote. The Association, so 'professional' had a secret ballot vote, but any teacher was allowed to vote. Only 59.9% of Association members voted to strike, whereas with the Union members all but one voted to strike.¹⁵⁰ The difference in vote is not surprising, the Association was known for wanting to be

¹⁴⁸ "Miller's Talks Fails to Mollify Teachers," *St. Louis Post-Dispatch*, 14 January 1973, 1A.

¹⁴⁹ "School Board Willing to Discuss Strike Call," *St. Louis Post-Dispatch*, 20 January 1973, 1A.

¹⁵⁰ "City Teachers to Strike Today," *St. Louis Globe-Democrat*, 22 January 1973, 1A.

professional and not engage in collective bargaining, however, the Union is all for collective bargaining. January 22, 1973, 3,000 teachers participated in the strike.

The board filed an injunction with the court on the strike leaders. The court granted the board a restraining order against the strike leaders. SLTA and SLTU had national and local representatives assisting with the strike. SLTA's representatives were Jerry Abernathy, local president of the Association; the White male was characterized by the *St. Louis Post Dispatch* as a "mild-mannered boyish-looking man, former south St. Louisan."¹⁵¹ However it was reported that the SLTU rep, Demosthenes DuBose local president, a Black male, "constantly puffs a pipe to ward off the urge for cigarettes which he gave up a few years ago after an attack of emphysema."¹⁵² The description of SLTU's representative is another form of CRT tenet, that racism is normal. The national representatives for the organizations were, Charles Bolden, Black male, strike coordinator for the National Education Association and James Robinson, White male, strike coordinator for the American Federation of Teachers. The injunction claimed the leaders were forcing the board to engage in collective bargaining with teachers. The leaders tried to get the injunction reversed but it was denied. The leaders were asked to join several mediation sessions with the board, requests that they complied with. When mediation did not help, the board asked the Circuit Court Judge to fine the teacher organizations for contempt of court. SLTA was fined \$25,000 plus a graduated amount of \$5,000 for each day the strike continued. Their strike leader, Abernathy was fined \$1,500 plus \$100 for each day the strike proceeded; SLTU was not fined.¹⁵³

¹⁵¹ "Strike Leaders: Different, But with Same Aim," *St. Louis Post-Dispatch*, 1 February 1973.

¹⁵² *Ibid.*,

¹⁵³ "Board Urges Fining of Teacher Groups," *St. Louis Post-Dispatch*, 5 February 1973, 1A.

After several days in court and mediation, the school made their first offer to the teachers, an average salary boost of \$1,520. There was one condition, teachers would have to wait for money from the legislature or tax election. The offer was rejected. The school board hired two auditing firms, the boards' choice and teachers' choice to determine if there was money. Elmer & Fox and Co., auditors for the teachers claimed money was available for salary increases. However, Ernest & Ernest Co claimed the board could not afford salary increases.¹⁵⁴ The strike continued with the board making another offer of four-hundred dollars across the salary board, but only two-hundred at the moment because the school year was almost over. Another offer was turned down. After meeting with the alderman and the mayor, the board was able to make a final offer; \$200.00 at the end of the school year and \$600.00 the next school year. Teachers were offered pay for the make-up days because of the strike. The last part of the offer was board paid hospitalization, formalized grievance procedures and extra pay for elementary teachers having to teach physical education.¹⁵⁵ After the offer acceptance, teachers decided to return to work. The first strike caused for the racial and demographical divided teacher organizations to merge for the benefit of all teachers. However that was not the case in the 1979 strike. The second strike for St. Louis Public Schools had one negotiator, the St. Louis Teachers Union.

Sole Negotiator

In 1976, the St. Louis Board of Education (SLBOE) learned that the settlement for the 1973 strike was illegal. It became illegal because negotiations were made while teachers were striking illegally. The ruling was handed down after the St. Louis Teachers

¹⁵⁴ "Auditors Disagree of Ability of School Board to Boost Pay," *St. Louis Post-Dispatch*, 11 February 1973, 1A.

¹⁵⁵ "28-Day Teachers Strike Ends," *St. Louis Post-Dispatch*, 19 February 1973, 1A.

Association filed suit against the board for not dealing with grievances submitted by teachers.¹⁵⁶ In the 1973 strike, teachers were granted formalized grievance procedures. Entering into the 1978-1979 school year, St. Louis Public School teachers were without a contract. Teachers and support staff rejected an agreement between the Union and board prior to the school year. Teachers felt the board did not support their efforts to promote academic achievement. Unlike in 1973, the teacher organizations were united from the beginning of the strike, however operations were still ‘separate but equal.’ In the 1974-1975 school year the school board allowed the teachers of the SLPS to vote for a bargaining agent. SLTA and SLTU leaders campaigned at their local schools before election time. SLTU already had about 50% of the teachers as members. SLTU gained several members after the forced teacher transfer. After the election, the Union became the sole negotiator for SLPS teachers.

In 1972, Mrs. Liddell filed a class-action lawsuit against the St. Louis School Board seeking to end the segregation in the schools throughout the city. In 1970, 86% of the students in St. Louis Public Schools were Black.¹⁵⁷ Also during that year, the schools were segregated; on the north side were Black students and teachers, the south side was opposite. Judge H. Meredith required the district to make changes. The school board was ordered to transfer a percentage of White and Black teachers to each school. Each year following the order the percent increased; by 1979, the percent of Black teachers in each of the schools was thirty-percent.¹⁵⁸ Having the teachers integrate offered an opportunity for the Union to gain membership. According to Fultz (2004), “the integration of teachers

¹⁵⁶ “Teacher Settlement in ’73 is Ruled Illegal,” *St. Louis Post-Dispatch*, 16 March 1976, 1A.

¹⁵⁷ Malcolm J. Barnett, Missouri Advisory Committee. “School Desegregation in the St. Louis and Kansas City Areas,” *U.S. Commission on Civil Rights* (1981): 3

¹⁵⁸ “Teacher Shift Assailed by Blacks and Whites,” *St. Louis Post-Dispatch*, 27 April 1978.

might actually be more difficult than the integration of students.”¹⁵⁹ The teachers of SLPS wanted to fight the transfers, wanting them to be voluntary.

The Union was the sole bargaining agent for the strike. The Union in 1973 consisted of only teachers, in 1979 the Union included: teachers, teacher aides, school nurses, school treasurers, and security guards. Because SLTU was the sole agent, they had to “represent all the workers in a bargaining unit, [but] those workers were not obligated to pay Union dues.”¹⁶⁰ When deciding to strike, both organizations held meetings but in different locations. The St. Louis Teachers Union (SLTU), Local #420 held a pep rally; standing room with speakers and the vote was yeah or nay. The Association voted through secret ballot, as was done in the 1973 strike. The concerns for this strike was salary, overcrowded classrooms, underpaid employees, teaching several hours with only a lunch break, to name a few.¹⁶¹ Several months before deciding to strike, the school board offered the Union a \$400 raise for beginning teachers and \$500 for returning teachers, the offer was rejected. The board went ahead and gave the raises to the teachers.¹⁶² The Union later asked for either negotiations or mediation, the board chose mediation. The mediation was handled by the Federal Mediation and Conciliation Service; nothing came of the mediation. The Union then decided they were going to strike in November of 1978, but held off when the district claimed to know more about the budget in January of 1979.

¹⁵⁹ Michael Fultz. “The Displacement of Black Educators Post-Brown: An Overview and Analysis,” *History of Education Quarterly* (Spring 2004): 13.

¹⁶⁰ 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* (June 2008): 127.

¹⁶¹ Flyer: Our Children Deserve the Very Best! October 26, 1978, SL 365, F1, Western Historical Manuscript Collection University of Missouri-St. Louis, Missouri, Archives Department.

¹⁶² “Path to Agreement in Teachers Strike,” *St. Louis Post-Dispatch*, 12 March 1979, 1C.

January 15, 1979, St. Louis teachers rejected a last-minute offer by the board; therefore the strike began the next day. The offer was one-hundred dollars payable next semester and an extra thirty-one teachers at the elementary level to allow for prep periods.¹⁶³ The teachers asked for \$1,000 salary increase for the current school year and \$950 for the 1979-1980 school year.¹⁶⁴ Nat Lacour, president of New Orleans teachers Union, spoke to teachers at a rally the Sunday before the strike showing his support and stated,

Some administrators think teachers don't need a decent wage because they're mostly women who have husbands who provide for them." "The fact that teachers and nurses are the lowest-paying professions shows that sexism that exists. You can't call yourself a professional if you don't demand professional wages."¹⁶⁵

After the Civil War, most teachers were women and most men were principals. According to Murphy (1990), principals "played the roles of benevolent master guiding teachers in their intellectual growth allowing them to experiment with their new knowledge."¹⁶⁶ The women during the strike of 1973 were not guided; they were a strong force. The *Post-Dispatch* reported that the strike "is largely a women's movement."¹⁶⁷ Women made up most of the SLTA and Local #420 teacher organizations. The younger women during the strike were more concerned about

¹⁶³ "St. Louis Teachers Reject Wage Offer, Vote to Strike," *St. Louis Post-Dispatch*, 15 January 1979, 1A.

¹⁶⁴ *Ibid.*, 4A

¹⁶⁵ "St. Louis Teachers Rally Around Cry: No Contract, No Work!" *St. Louis Post-Dispatch*, 15 January 1979, 4A.

¹⁶⁶ Marjorie Murphy, *Blackboard Unions: The AFT and the NEA, 1900-1980* (New York: Cornell University Press): 13.

¹⁶⁷ "Women Push School Walkout," *St. Louis Post-Dispatch*, 24 January 1973, 3A.

working conditions and wages, whereas the older women were concerned about medical insurance and bargaining rights.

Similar to the strike of 1973, it was illegal to strike and bargain collectively between teachers and school board members. Resembling the strike of 1973, the board filed a temporary restraining order against teachers for illegal striking. Circuit Judge Ivan Lee Holt issued a temporary restraining order against the teachers on strike, the Monday before the strike actually happened. Despite the order, 4,400 teachers went on strike the following morning. The restraining order only lasted for a thirteen days; the board asked for the order to be withdrawn. Back in the court, the judge order for the attorneys for both sides to jointly write statements clarifying the issues behind the strike. Judge Holt then postponed the injunction order. In the meantime, the board decided to hold public meetings to discuss the district financial situation and contact an audit company to determine if additional funds were available for salaries.¹⁶⁸ The school board had asked for the teachers to attend the meetings, but the president of Local #420, Evelyn Battle believed the meetings were “a public relations ploy to turn public sentiment against the striking teachers.”¹⁶⁹ The teachers turned down the meeting with the board stating the forum was, “not proper because negotiations would be impractical and inconclusive.”¹⁷⁰ Teachers could not negotiate or agree on issues while teachers were on strike. This law was made after the strike of 1973 was made illegal in 1976.

The board decided to hire an accounting firm, Peat Marwick Mitchell and Company to conduct an analysis of the board’s finances. While the analysis was

¹⁶⁸ “Board Drops Suit Against Teachers,” *St. Louis Post-Dispatch*, 29 January 1979, 1A.

¹⁶⁹ “School Board Asks Teachers Union for Public Meeting,” *St. Louis Post-Dispatch*, 30 January 1979, 1B.

¹⁷⁰ “Mediation Begins: School Strike Continues,” *St. Louis Argus*, 1 February 1979, 14.

happening, board and striking teachers decided to meet with federal mediators. Federal mediator, Theodore Clark of Chicago decided to help settle the dispute between the board and teachers; he had experience with public sector relations. The mediations that started in February 1979 with the board and teachers were not the first one. There were mediations before the teachers went on strike. Mediation did not go as planned; both sides were focusing on the money and what they wanted. The board was focused on the lack of money and the illegal issue of striking. While the teachers focused on the board having they money, but not wanting to give them more. Two other mediators helped Clark, Jim Kelly and Gilbert Kannenberg. Kannenberg stated, “The dispute is much more complicated than regular negotiations because it involves such legal aspects of rights for public employees.”¹⁷¹ The meetings continued, but the board did not budge on their previous offer of a 7.99% increase in salary. After several days of meetings, the mediation went into an impasse because there was no progress made. The result of the accounting firm was discussed, but still no movement from the teachers. The accounting company confirmed money did not exist to meet the demands of the teachers.¹⁷² The teachers still wanted their raise and expected the board to reconfigure the budget to make it successful.

Mediation continued after an eight day break. Joining the mediation group was state commissioner of elementary and secondary education, Arthur Mallory and Paul Bowers, regional director for mediation services. Mallory was brought in because he understood the district budget. During the mediation, the board made its final offer,

¹⁷¹ “Teachers reject another request to end strike,” *St. Louis Globe-Democrat*, 2 February 1979, 1A.

¹⁷² “Money Does Not Exist For Teachers,” *St. Louis American*, 15February 1979, 1.

\$2,150 raise over two years.¹⁷³ The Union leaders rejected the offer, refusing to present it to teachers. Mrs. Battle, Union president, stated the offer was not reasonable, that is why it did not go for a vote.¹⁷⁴ While negotiations resumed, the Union leaders were back in court. The injunction made by the board was being followed through by the court system because a parent group wanted the court to mandate that teachers return to work. The judge ruled on the hearings and injunctions were made against the teachers. During a mediation session, injunctions letters were delivered to Union leaders. The court asked for a written report stating whether the Union was going to comply with the injunction, return to work, or continue to strike.¹⁷⁵ After the Union refused to return to work, another offer was made by the school board. The school board offered: \$475 midyear increases; \$750 increase for all teachers with bachelor's degrees; and a base salary of \$10,400. Teachers voted and accepted the offer from the board. The final offer granted teachers increases of 6.17% to 7.77% depending on experience.¹⁷⁶ The strike was over and teachers returned to work.

Stakeholders' Involvement

Teachers were able to return to work after the 1973 and 1979 strikes because various stakeholders' reactions. Stakeholders are people that are invested into an organization. When it comes to education, various stakeholders are involved from the federal government to the student in the classroom. The stakeholders involved in the strikes ranged from parents, political figures, and community members. Parents filed

¹⁷³ "School Board Makes Final Offer: \$2,150 Raise," *St. Louis Post-Dispatch*, 22 February 1979, 41A.

¹⁷⁴ "Teachers Reject School Board's Final Offer," *St. Louis Post-Dispatch*, 23 February 1979, 1A.

¹⁷⁵ "Deputies Barge in on the Teacher Talks with Orders to End Strike," *St. Louis Post-Dispatch*, 10 March 1979, 1A.

¹⁷⁶ "Teachers Back in School After Ratifying," *St. Louis Post-Dispatch*, 13 March 1979, 1A.

injunctions against the teachers and asked for schools to reopen. In March of 1968 Martin Luther King Jr. arrived in Memphis to support the strike of the sanitation workers. Along with Dr. King, the following groups also supported the workers, interracial coalition of ministers, Union leaders, students, and community members.¹⁷⁷ For the SLPS strikes, politicians' reactions ranged from offers of mediation, rallies to money.

Political Leaders

The St. Louis Mayor Alfonso Cervantes was instrumental in ending the 28-day strike of 1973. The settlement offer given to teachers was made by the mayor. Cervantes asked for the board and teachers to “sit down in negotiations until the dispute is solved.”¹⁷⁸ Cervantes would not intervene unless both the school board and teachers wanted him to. He felt, “the school board is elected by the schools have very few links with the city government.”¹⁷⁹ The court has now decided on mediation to resolve the issue. Two conciliators, David Grant and Harold Elbert conducted the mediation. Mr. Grant, Black male, a legislative research director for the Board of Alderman, was an attorney and Democrat; he was also the former president of the local National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP) chapter. Mr. Elbert, White male, lawyer, Republican, lived in Clayton, but had offices in the city.¹⁸⁰ Several weeks into the strike, the mayor's offer changed. Attempting to use political power, the mayor offered efforts of a task force to find more money for salaries in exchange for teachers returning to work. After several meetings between the aldermen and the mayor,

¹⁷⁷ Charlotte Garden and Nancy Leong, “So Closely Intertwined: Labor Interests and Racial Solidarity,” *The George Washington Law Review*, 81 (2013): 1136.

¹⁷⁸ “3000 Teachers Strike, Picket Schools,” *St. Louis Post Dispatch*, 22 January 1973, 8A.

¹⁷⁹ *Ibid.*

¹⁸⁰ “School Board, Teachers will meet out of Court.” *St. Louis Globe-Democrat*, 27 January 1973,

the aldermen agreed to give \$1,000,000 to help with mid-year salary increases. The money given would pay for nurses and security; therefore freeing \$1,000,000 from the district budget to pay for the teacher demands. With the extra money, the SLBOE was able to offer a settlement to the teacher organizations.

While Mayor Cervantes was involved in the 1973 strike, Governor Teasdale was involved in the 1979 strike. Governor Joseph Teasdale invited the school board and teachers to meet with him; they accepted. Teasdale stated, "I am prepared to use my full power as governor to assist in resolving this matter."¹⁸¹ This was forty days after the strike began and many offers were rejected by the teachers. Teasdale also set up a meeting with James Antonio, state auditor to do a special audit of the district's finances. Antonio was asked to look at whether the board is allocating the funds properly under statutes and regulations.¹⁸² While the audit was being performed, Governor Teasdale offered to free \$1.4 million of state allocation to the Board of Education that was being withheld because of an administrative dispute. The money was a reimbursement of funds for the district running Harris-Stowe College in 1977-1978.¹⁸³ Private businesses also gave up to \$600,000 to end the strike efforts in 56-day strike of 1979. While local politicians were contributory during the strike, a national leader was also called in to assist in the negotiations.

The effect of a Civil Rights leader coming to speak to a Black community cannot be told better by anyone, but from a voice of color. Counter-storytelling is a tenet of CRT

¹⁸¹ "Teasdale to Meet with Teachers, School Board," *St. Louis Post-Dispatch*, 24 February 1979, 1A.

¹⁸² "Antonio to audit St. Louis schools in effort to end 45-day-old strike," *St. Louis Globe-Democrat*, 2 March 1979, 1A.

¹⁸³ "Teasdale See 'Ray of Hope' in \$1.4 Million School offer," *St. Louis Post-Dispatch*, 3 March 1979, 1A.

that is a method of storytelling from people whose experiences are often untold. The *St. Louis American*, helped in printing the untold story; Blacks united to end the strike. The students from North St. Louis High school formed an organization called Group of Concerned; they called upon Reverend Jesse Jackson, Civil Rights leader to come to St. Louis to mediate the strike of 1979. The students were animated about getting schools open. The president of the organization stated,

We have been silent long enough...it is important that we as students, Black and White, male and female, come together and concentrate on getting the schools open.¹⁸⁴

Reverend Jackson responded to the letter and urged students to, “insist upon your rights to an equal and high quality education.”¹⁸⁵ Bernard LaFayette, Washington University instructor helped and praised the students for their efforts. He was tired of Black people being silent about the strike. Before Reverend Jackson arrived to St. Louis, he encouraged local churches to open “freedom schools” during the strikes. Between June and August of 1964 during the Civil Rights Movement, middle and high school students across the South attended “freedom schools” which addressed segregated political, social, and economic context.¹⁸⁶ The students discussed the issues of Black people during that time, voting rights, equal opportunities, what it meant to be/live in a democratic society. When the students left the freedom school, they were able to challenge and articulate the issues of discriminatory actions. The actions taken by the students included walkouts,

¹⁸⁴ “Students ask Jackson’s help in Strike,” *St. Louis Globe Democrat*, 20 February 1979, 1A.

¹⁸⁵ *Ibid.*,

¹⁸⁶ Jon N. Hale. “The Freedom Schools, the Civil Rights Movement, and Refocusing the Goals of American Education,” *The Journal of Social Studies Research* 35, no. 2, (Fall 2011): 260.

boycotts, sit-ins, etc.¹⁸⁷ SLPS students were encouraged to do the same: challenge the strike.

When Jackson arrived in St. Louis, 600 parents, students, ministers, and teachers came to hear him speak. Reverend Jackson expressed to the audience the need to fight for the children, Black children. According to Siddle Walker,

“A more visible form of parental support is the ‘advocacy role’, ‘advocates’ were parents and community leaders who imposed themselves between the needs of the school community and the power of the White school board and made requests.”¹⁸⁸

SLPS parents made several requests of the school board. The first request, that all students graduating in January be given final grades. It was brought to the attention of the Black parents that majority of White students and few Blacks at Southwest, Cleveland, and Beaumont received final grades before and after the strike. This is an example of Whiteness as property, “Whiteness-the right to White identity as embraced by law-is property if by ‘property’ one means all of a person’s legal rights.”¹⁸⁹ Urrieta (2006) reported that “Whiteness as property is helpful to understand how White identity and Whiteness function to ascribe racial privilege and status to predominantly White

¹⁸⁷ Jon N. Hale. “The Freedom Schools, the Civil Rights Movement, and Refocusing the Goals of American Education,” *The Journal of Social Studies Research* 35, no. 2, (Fall 2011): 265.

¹⁸⁸ Vanessa Siddle Walker. “Valued Segregated Schools for African American Children in the South, 1935 – 1969: A Review of Common Themes and Characteristics,” *Review of Educational Research* 70, no. 3, (Fall 2000): 271.

¹⁸⁹ Cheryl I. Harris (1995). “Whiteness as Property.” In *Critical Race Theory: The Key Writings that Formed the Movement*, edited by Kimberle Crenshaw, Neil Gotanda, Gary Peller, Kendal Thomas (New York, NY: The New Press, 1995), 280.

schools.”¹⁹⁰ Black parents also requested that they become an active role in negotiations between the Union and board. The parents were supportive of the teachers; they just wanted their children back in school and the right to receive an equal education. A spokesperson for the parents said the “educational crisis in St. Louis and other problems have brought the Black community together a little.”¹⁹¹ Reverend Jackson also addressed putting pressure on local officials to help resolve the fight. He compared the pressure to Montgomery Bus Boycott, 1955, when Rosa Parks refused to move to the back of the bus, which led the law demanding the segregation of riders to change. Reverend Jackson wanted parents to put pressure on elected officials to come up with money to help end the strike.

Parents

Parents’ reactions during the strikes varied between the strikes. During a meeting in 1973, north side parents expressed that if teachers are not happy then their children were probably not learning. One parent stated, “If teachers are not happy with what they are being paid, then they will just be babysitters and not teach our children anything anyway.”¹⁹² Other parents were more concerned about the overcrowded classrooms and lack of materials. There was a concern that the board was racist, a concerned parent stated, “the School Board was guilty of racism in supplying South Side schools with better equipment and providing smaller classes.”¹⁹³ At the south side meeting, parents were upset that teachers defied a court order, stating, “defiance of the court...set a bad

¹⁹⁰ Luis Urrieta Jr. “Community identity discourse and the heritage academy: colorblind educational policy and White supremacy,” *International Journal of Qualitative Studies in Education* 19, no. 4, (July-August 2006): 458.

¹⁹¹ “Blacks Unite to End Teachers’ Strike,” *St. Louis American*, 8 March 1979, 12.

¹⁹² “Teachers, Parents Trade Views,” *St. Louis Post-Dispatch*, 16 February 1973, 10A.

¹⁹³ *Ibid*

example for school students.”¹⁹⁴ Similar to the north side parents, south side parents were concerned with large classes even though their classes were not as large as the north side. The quality of education their children received was another concern for south side parents. While parents showed concern and support in the strike of 1973; that was not the case in 1979.

Parents placed pressure on teachers and school board members to end the strike of 1979. Like the teachers, parents and students were picketing. Parents displayed an anti-strike picket in front of schools on the south side and the administration building downtown. School Options for City Parents and Students (SOCPS) explored legal options they could take against the board and teachers. The options were: (1) suing the board for violation statutory duty, not providing educational services to students; (2) against the board again for reimbursement of taxpayers school money not spent; (3) against the board and teachers for loss of income student may have received during the summer or after graduation.¹⁹⁵ Because of the expense to sue the board and teachers, the SOCPS group sent a letter to the president of alderman, Paul Simon asking the Board of Alderman to place pressure on the board to take other measures to end the strike. The board made a final offer to teachers, but it was rejected. White privilege was used when parents from the south side, majority White area asked the board to reopen schools. Local #420 president’s response to the reopening of schools was “that opening some schools while leaving others closed could destroy racial and geographical ‘harmony’ in the city.”¹⁹⁶ In 1979, twenty-five years after *Brown* and the implementation of the St.

¹⁹⁴ “Teachers, Parents Trade Views,” *St. Louis Post-Dispatch*, 16 February 1973, 10A

¹⁹⁵ “Teachers Strike may be Back on Court,” *St. Louis Globe-Democrat*, 7 February 1979, 15A.

¹⁹⁶ “Long Union Picket Lines Keep Most Teachers Out of School,” *St. Louis Post-Dispatch*, 28 February 1979, 1A.

Louis desegregation plan, 77.3% of St. Louis schools were essentially one-race schools.¹⁹⁷ The school board made every effort to comply with the request. Parents said they would escort their students past the picket lines if their safety was insured.¹⁹⁸ About 444 teachers crossed the picket lines to reopen schools, not enough to keep them open. The north side, majority Black schools did not have any teachers trying to return. DuBose, Local 420 representative stated, “This is a situation where we all win or we all lose as professional teachers.”¹⁹⁹ No attempt was made on the north side to open schools; this exhibits the support the Black community had for the strike.

Strike Impact

As the strikes of SLPS lengthened, the support of the teachers from the Black community grew. Most social movements have an impact on people not directly involved. The strike did impact school closings, but more importantly it impacted the Black community in St. Louis, more broadly.

School Closings

In 1973, the superintendent, Clyde C. Miller, stated to the *Post-Dispatch*, “A strike would not serve the best interests of the community, particularly the children.”²⁰⁰ As expected, due to the strike numbers, several schools had to close. Students are required to attend 174 days of school each year; with schools closed, the days had to be made up. However data did not prove if the days were made up. Some teachers chose not to picket. Some crossed the picket line while others stayed at home. The first day of the

¹⁹⁷ Justin D. Smith, *Hostile Takeover: The State of Missouri, the St. Louis School District, and the Struggle for Quality Education in the Inner-City*, 74 Mo. L. Rev. (2009): 1151

¹⁹⁸ “Teachers Reject School Board’s Final Offer,” *St. Louis Post-Dispatch*, 23 February 1979, 1A

¹⁹⁹ “SLTA Criticizes Local 420 Leadership, “Lack of Homework,” *St. Louis Argus*, 1 March 1979.

²⁰⁰ “Teachers Choice to Carry Textbooks or Picket Sign,” *St. Louis Post-Dispatch*, 14 January 1973, 8B.

strike, school was in session, but most high schools had to close because they did not have enough teachers to fill the classrooms. Many parents, especially labor Union members kept their children at home; therefore attendance was low. Unfortunately, while at school, they students vandalized the schools. It was reported that students broke trophy cases, windows, and threw desks out the windows. At other schools, students set fires and stopped up toilets.²⁰¹ A bus leased by the district was set on fire in the back parking lot of a school. Students pranked call several schools making bomb threats.²⁰² Due to the extent of the vandalism, police and the fire department were called to help. After two days of low attendance and vandalism, the school board closed the city schools. City schools were closed for twenty-eight days. Despite the school closings, several teachers around the area opened ‘free schools’ for students.

Ten ‘free schools’ were opened by former teachers; approximately 500 students attended the schools. The ‘free schools’ were in teachers’ homes, community centers and local churches.²⁰³ The purpose of the schools were “to keep children off the streets and involved in the learning process and provide teachers with an opportunity to show their commitment to students.”²⁰⁴ The teachers followed the official SLPS the curriculum. Free schools were a great alternative for students, but parents wanted schools open. Mosier, teacher and supporter of the Strike, who opened his home to students to learn, “All children, but especially inner city children, need to build self-confidence in order to learn.”²⁰⁵ He helped transport the students and parents helped with lunches. Many

²⁰¹ “Vandalism erupts in city schools,” *St. Louis Post-Dispatch*, 23 January 1973, 1A.

²⁰² *Ibid.*, 13A

²⁰³ “500 City Students Go to ‘Free Schools,’” *St. Louis Post-Dispatch*, 30 January 1973, 10A.

²⁰⁴ *Ibid.*

²⁰⁵ “A Striker’s Priority-The Pupils,” *St. Louis Post-Dispatch*, 7 February 1973, 1A.

parents petitioned for teachers to end the strike while others asked board members to resign.

During the 1979 strike, the superintendent of schools, Mr. Wentz tried to keep schools open during the strike. The first day of the strike, some of the students were sent home upon arrival while others were in makeshift classrooms. Principals were given the choice to close or hold classes; many closed school the first and second day of the strike.²⁰⁶ Many of the SLPS students did not attend school because buses were suspended by superintendent Wentz. Schools closed two days after the strike started. There were reports of violence at the picket lines, tires were slashed and automobiles of other teachers damaged. Teachers reported being taunted when they crossed the picket lines.²⁰⁷ Five teachers were arrested while on the picket line for peace disturbance and alleging harassing teachers crossing the line.²⁰⁸ With the schools closed, several churches opened their doors so students would have somewhere to go during the day. Similar to the free schools in the 1973 strike, community churches had recreational activities for students. Unfortunately educational opportunities were not there. It was not until the strike was over that students stepped back into a classroom. Needless to say, they would be in the classroom for majority of their summer. Students' summer vacation and job opportunities became affected. After the strike of 1973, students had to attend school during the summer to make-up the days missed. The state required 174 days of school per year in order for the district to get their state funding. To make up the days students attended school on Saturdays, and an extra thirty minutes a day and during the summer.

²⁰⁶ "Pupils Kayoed Minutes after Starting Bell," *St. Louis Post-Dispatch*, 16 January 1979, 1A.

²⁰⁷ "Violence on Picket Lines Closes St. Louis Schools," *St. Louis Globe-Democrat*, 18 January 1979, 1A.

²⁰⁸ "Strike Violence Closes Schools," *St. Louis Argus*, 18 January 1979, 1A.

The closing of schools affected the Black community; parents and community members expressed their feelings about the racism they experienced due to SLPS actions.

Black Community

The reaction from the Black community in St. Louis represents the CRT tenet: counter-storytelling. The community supported the teacher strike, but felt it hurt Black students and that the board could have done more. In regard to Black students, a *St. Louis Argus* editorial stated, “This strike has hurt the Black students most because they don’t have the financial background to transfer to another school in session or to a school in the county.”²⁰⁹ Even though the Black community supported teachers, they still wanted what was best for their son/daughter. A Black parent reported to the *St. Louis Argus* “...as a Black man who believes the chance for our young people to attend college is more important than any priority in this disagreement between teachers and board members.”²¹⁰ Governor Teasdale was concerned about student admission into college and the military. He asked for local colleges and universities to grant considerations of scholarship applications deadlines for students in the city. While there was concern with students learning, there was also concern regarding the SLPS Black school board president. In both strikes, the board presidents were Black females; in the 1979 strike the Black community voiced their issues about the president. Percy Green II, chairman for ACTION stated,

²⁰⁹ “SLTA Criticizes Local 420 Leadership, “Lack of Homework,” *St. Louis Argus*, 1 March 1979.

²¹⁰ “Onion Raps: An Open Letter to The Officials of Local 420, AFL-CIO, *St. Louis Argus*, 8 February 1979.

“Is your lust for White folks’ acceptance so strong that you have forgotten that what little freedoms that exist came as a result of street action, like picket lines and works stoppage?”²¹¹

An example of the freedom that Green spoke of existed as a consequence of actions in the Memphis Sanitation Workers’ Strike in the 1960s.

Early on in the strike of 1979, SLBOE president, Anita Bond began having issues with Black people claiming the strike was a Black on Black issue. Bond responded by saying, “we are both working for the same thing and that is the quality of education of the children.”²¹² Election year was approaching and the south side community was focused on Black women battling against each other. The women were the Union president and board president. Considering that Bond was elected, the community had to vote for her to be placed on the board. The school board only had three Black individuals, Bond, an elected official and Nicholson and Howard, appointed officials; the remaining members were White. With only three Black board members, this did not reflect the student population of the school district: SLPS was 75% Black students, but the SLBOE was 75% White.²¹³ As previously mentioned, in 1979 integration laws were being enforced, the board had to transfer Black teachers to the south side schools and White teachers to the north side schools. Bond supported the strike and represented the community from north city. Another organization wrote, “Since slavery has been abolished no one should be expected to work without the right to strike for better wages and working

²¹¹ “Teacher Strike Letters: Thought Ms. Bond was Black,” *St. Louis American*, 15 February 1979.

²¹² “School Board President Says Strike is Not a Black-on-Black Issue,” *St. Louis American*, 8 February 1979, 1.

²¹³ *Ibid.*, 14.

conditions.”²¹⁴ Ms. Green warned Ms. Bond about playing plantation politics, “the house Negro who for a crumb from the slave master’s table bad mouths those field Blacks who are seeking freedom.”²¹⁵ The Black community believed Bond to be the “overseer” of the teachers, feeding them information to deter the board from negotiating with the teachers.

In Summary

The SLPS strikes of 1973 and 1979 ended with the teachers getting the majority of their demands. The journey did not go unnoticed by the community, non-strikers and board members. The teachers held steadfast even with obstacles in their way. The teacher strikes are similar to other strikes during the Civil Rights Movement. The teachers were fighting for the right to live comfortably, but the fight came down to Union or professional; the Union won.

²¹⁴ “Teacher Strike Letters: Thought Ms. Bond was Black,” *St. Louis American*, 15 February 1979.

²¹⁵ *Ibid.*

Chapter Six: Summary

Summary of Study

The St. Louis Public School (SLPS) strikes of 1973 and 1979 were organized because the teachers wanted more; reduced class sizes, board paid health benefits, extra preparation, and most importantly an increase in salary and collective bargaining. The teacher organizations involved in the strike were, St. Louis Teachers Union Local #420 (SLTU) and St. Louis Teachers Association (SLTA). They were divided because the union was militant and the association was professional. They were also divided racially; the SLTU teachers were majority Black and taught in north city whereas the SLTA were White in south city. The union wanted to strike and the association did not, but wanted the same benefits. Later, the association realized they had to join forces with the union to achieve the same goal. The division among the local organization can be traced back to their national affiliates. The National Education Association (NEA) —SLTA's affiliate professionalism developed in the 1880s and 1890s based on the male-domination. Professionalism shaped the lines of authority in school administration, segregating the less desirable ethnic and social origins with requirements for higher education;²¹⁶ the less desirable ethnic group, meaning Blacks. During the slave era, Blacks were known as laborers; they worked in the cotton fields and in the masters' house. During the early years of NEA, few Blacks belonged; they were ignored until the 1960s when the NEA decided to participate in Civil Rights. The American Federation of Teachers (AFT) — SLTU's affiliate joined forces with the American Federation of Labor (AFL). Founded in 1916, AFT as a labor union represents teachers, paraprofessionals, and school-related personnel. The union accepted Black teachers from their origination and supported

²¹⁶ Marjorie Murphy, *Blackboard Unions: The AFT and the NEA, 1900-1980* (New York: Cornell University Press): 23.

integration during the Civil Rights Movement. Currently, there is little research investigating the relationship that Black teachers had with teacher unions and/or associations and how it affects teacher strikes.

This chapter provides a summary of the findings, an essential conclusion and offers recommendations for future research. The information discussed reflects the data analysis in Chapter Five; the St. Louis Public School strikes of 1973 and 1979 and how the history of the national teacher organizations affected them. To accomplish this goal it became apparent to research the history of teacher organizations in general; history of NEA and AFT in relation to Black teachers and teachers in general. I chose to conduct a detailed analysis of historical data that assessed the relationship of Black teachers had with national teacher organizations further separated within local teacher organization. Archival data was collected from the Western Historical Manuscript Collection at University of Missouri-St. Louis and the Walter P. Reuther Library of Labor and Urban Affairs, Detroit, Michigan. Other data gathered was through newspaper clippings generated by the *St. Louis American*, *St. Louis Argus*, *St. Louis Post-Dispatch*, and *St. Louis Globe-Democrat*. The data was analyzed using the theoretical framework of Critical Race Theory (CRT). According to Parker and Lynn, CRT can be used to “foster the connections of theory to practice and activism on issues related to race.”²¹⁷ CRT unearthed the relationship Black teachers had with White teacher organizations using the following tenets, (a) counter-story telling, (b) Whiteness as property, (c) interest convergence, and (d) racism as normal.

²¹⁷ Laurence Parker & Lynn, Marvin. “What’s Race Got to Do With It? Critical Race Theory’s Methodology and Epistemology.” In *Foundations of Critical Race Theory in Education*, edited Edward Taylor, David Gillborn, & Gloria Ladson-Billings, 148-160. (New York, NY: Routledge, 2009), 157.

The data revealed that the history of NEA and AFT and their relationship with Black teachers impacted the strikes of 1973 and 1979. This was shown in the laborer or professional section of chapter 4 and the demographics of the organizations itself. However the data unexpectedly offered a comparison of teacher strikes to the Civil Rights Movement. The other finding was the involvement of politicians and parent efforts to end the strike. The most important finding related to the impact the strikes had on school closings and the Black community.

Conclusions

The data revealed the rocky relationship between SLTU and SLTA. SLTA and SLTU were not only fighting a racial battle, but also a battle of being labeled as laborer or professional. When first analyzing the data, the racial divide among the organizations was clear. The SLTU teachers taught in north city, predominately Black teachers and Black students. The SLTA teachers were in south city, majority White teachers and White students. St. Louis City was divided during this time; in a study conducted by the Human Development Corporation (HDC) stating, “St. Louis is divided into areas 96% Black and 96% White [with] one mile corridor racially mixed.”²¹⁸ The research claimed the “Black ghetto” extended north of Franklin Avenue and the “White ghetto” south from Oakland and Chouteau. The division was similar in that of the national organizations, AFT and NEA. The NEA was not accepting of Black teachers when it originated; it was not until the 1960s. This impacted what organization was going to represent the teachers during the strikes. The strike of 1973, there was a merger, SLTA and SLTU joined forces to achieve their goal. In 1998, AFT and NEA tried to merge, but issues of

²¹⁸ “St. Louis Divided, Whites South, Blacks on the North,” *St. Louis American*, 25 May 1972, 13.

professional orientation and organizational cultures stopped it from happening.²¹⁹ St. Louis is still segregated; it is just segregated by city and county. After the Blacks started moving to the city, White people started moving out: White flight. Teacher organizations are the same; in the city SLPS still has SLTU Local #420 whereas in the county schools where the staff is majority White, local organizations are affiliated with the NEA.

In 1979, the sole negotiator was SLTU. This was not a surprise considering most strikes involved AFT being the leader of the strikes. SLTU being the sole negotiator was made because during that time, SLPS was ordered to transfer teachers; more Black teachers were teaching on the south side of the district. It was under this circumstance that the first desegregation lawsuit in St. Louis was filed on February 18, 1972, by a north St. Louis parents' group on behalf of their children. In 1976 parents claimed that the defendants, comprised of the St. Louis Board of Education, the individual board members, and the school superintendents, violated the Fourteenth Amendment by perpetuating racial segregation and discrimination in the St. Louis school district. The parents sought to force the district to take steps to integrate the St. Louis schools.²²⁰ Some teachers that taught on the south side now had to teach on the north side; same with north side teachers, moved to the south.

During the analysis of race relations within the strikes, emerged the issue of laborer or professional. According to Kerchner and Cauffman, "professionalism has always been problematic for teachers."²²¹ Unionization of teachers began in the early

²¹⁹ Lance D. Fusarell and Bruce S. Cooper, "Why the NEA and AFT Sought To Merge--and Failed," *School Business Affairs*, 65 no. 4 (Apr 1999).

²²⁰ Justin D. Smith, *Hostile Takeover: The State of Missouri, the St. Louis School District, and the Struggle for Quality Education in the Inner-City*, 74 *Mo. L. Rev.* (2009): 1151

²²¹ Charles T. Kerchner & Krista D. Cauffman, "Lurching Toward Professionalism: The Saga of Teacher Unionism," *The Elementary School Journal*, 96, no. 1 (September 1995): 107.

twentieth century with the rise in membership among the American Federation of Teachers. NEA was a “professional” organization until 1960, when they accepted collective bargaining in 1968. Even though NEA accepted collective bargaining, the local chapter SLTA still did not want to strike, because they considered it unprofessional.

In 2013, associations affiliated with the NEA do not consider it unprofessional to strike. For example, in Litchfield, IL, Litchfield Teacher Association threatened to strike because they wanted better health benefits and salaries. The strike was halted when the board presented the teachers with an offer and it was accepted. School boards are moving quickly to negotiate with teachers to avoid schools closings.²²² School closings were an unexpected find in the results and the impact it had on students and the community.

Unexpected findings

The strikes had an impact on school closings and the Black community. Schools were closed for weeks and months at a time. Because teachers were trying to bargain with the board, they refused to go to work. The board tried to keep schools open, but was not successful. Students vandalized the schools before the board actually closed them. Students were out of school for days and weeks at a time. Those days had to be made up during the summer which hurt student chances of graduating or getting jobs. However the parents of majority of the White students got the board to graduate their children, but a few Black students were given this option. How can a district not graduate all students? This revealed the racial tension in St. Louis which leads to racial tension among teachers. The racial tension was not just among the Black and White people, it was among the Black community.

²²² “Litchfield schools avoid teacher strike,” *St. Louis Post-Dispatch*, 8 January 2013.

Parents in the Black community were for the teachers wanting better pay, but outraged with the school closings. One parent stated, “This strike has hurt the Black students most because they don’t have the financial background to transfer to another school in session or to a school in the county.”²²³ Other community members felt that the board president was siding with the other White board members. This could be the case, during the 1973 strike the Black school board president wanted to speak with the association trying to stop the strike. Why does the Black president want to speak to the White people about a strike they did not want in the first place? One would think that SLTU would be the one to talk; the president and union leader should be able to relate racially. Consequently, internalized racism remain one of the most neglected and misunderstood components of racism.²²⁴

Unexpectedly, the data revealed the correlation between teacher strikes and the Civil Rights Movement. Garden & Leong (2013) state there is,

“labor unions and civil rights groups work together to advance a broad array of mutual interests, work that ranges from lobbying all levels of government to protesting working conditions at workplaces across the country.”²²⁵

This is in agreement with what Bayard Rustin, former president of the A. Phillip Randolph Institute and leader of the Civil Rights Movement of the 1960s said during the strike of 1979,

“in the 60s we were fighting for the human rights – to be able to vote; to go to restaurants of our choice; for our children to be able to go to school. Now we have

²²³ “SLTA Criticizes Local 420 Leadership, “Lack of Homework,” *St. Louis Argus*, 1 March 1979.

²²⁴ Karen Pyke. “What is Internalized Racial Oppression and Why Don’t We Study It?” *Sociological Perspectives*, 53, no. 4, pp. 551.

²²⁵ Charlotte Garden and Nancy Leong, “So Closely Intertwined: Labor Interests and Racial Solidarity,” *The George Washington Law Review*, 81 (2013): 1139.

achieved those rights, but we are still fighting for the right to have the money to pay for those things or go to those places.”²²⁶

AFT participated in the civil rights movement from the beginning. However the NEA was slow in responding to the civil rights movement. In the 1950s the association still had segregated associations, Black and White at the state levels.

Implications

The study revealed that history has an impact on the future. The difference now, Black and White teachers unite for the fight to live comfortable; being able to pay their mortgage, buy groceries, etc. Majority of the unions and/or associations around the United States encompass Black and White teachers united in one teacher organization. Even though at times race is still an issue; teachers are more concerned about being paid like a professional. In the twenty-first century, teachers are striking for better wages, smaller class size, and benefits. In 2012, Chicago Public Schools went on strike for the first time since 1987.²²⁷ The teachers are part of the Chicago Teachers Union, where AFT originated. Schools closed during the strike, a Civil Rights activist, Jesse Jackson offered to help mediate between the Mayor of Chicago and the teachers.²²⁸ The fight to live comfortable has not changed over the years; from the first teacher strike to now.

Future Research

Teacher strikes not only affect teachers, but students and parents. From my data analysis, parents and students were involved in the SLPS strikes and it impacted the lives

²²⁶ “Strike by Teachers is Compared to the Struggle for Civil Rights,” *St. Louis Post-Dispatch*, 12 February 1979, 1C.

²²⁷ William Bennett. “Chicago teachers’ strike is a test for Democrats,” CNN.com. http://www.cnn.com/2012/09/13/opinion/bennett-chicago-strike/index.html?eref=rss_mostpopular (accessed September 13, 2012).

²²⁸ “Late-night talks fail to get deal in Chicago teachers strike,” CNN.com. <http://www.cnn.com/2012/09/13/us/illinois-chicago-teachers-strike/index.html> (accessed September 13, 2012).

of students and parents. It determined how long they attended school during the summer, but also their lack of schooling received. Future educators and researchers should examine how strikes impact the lives of Black and/or minority students, not just academics, but personally. Children appear to be affected by what adults do to them indirectly. Another way to enhance this research is to reveal what role parents have in the strikes. The SLPS strike of 1979 revealed the parents fighting for their children to return to school but what else did they do. “A parent’s point of view would be a great counter-narrative to a teacher strike story.”²²⁹ Another avenue to enhance the study is the perspective of the district administration and principals. Principals seemed to be the middle man during the strikes; they wanted to be loyal to their teachers, yet had orders from the supervisors, district office officials.

²²⁹ Daniel Opler. “Race, Class, and Teachers’ Unions.” *Radical Teacher*, no. 71 (2004):7.

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