American Federation of Teachers: Stellar Integration Record

Special To The Post By Libby Clark

If a report card was demanded today, The American Federation of Teachers would get an "E" for Excellence. It's far and away the most integrated union in organized labor from top to bottom. The union has seven vice presidents. They are Sandra Irons, Jacquelyn Vaughn, Lorretta Johnson, Nathaniel LeCour, John Elliott, Carol Graves and

George Springer.
Since its founding in 1916, the AFT has been in the forefront of organized labor's battles to gain civil rights, economic parity and security for blacks.

In the first half of the 20th century, when segregation and discrimination was widespread and many trade unions excluded blacks from membership, the AFT was among the first unions to break down racial barriers and open its membership to blacks and other minorities. In southern states, black

teachers in segregated school districts organized their own unions locals and readily affiliated with the AFT. Local 9, an all-black Washington, D.C., unBlack teachers elsewhere joined on equal footing with their white counterparts to or-ganize integrated AFT locals in their respective school districts

in other parts of the country.

In 1918, the AFT demanded equal pay for black teachers and years later backed up its plea with a generous contribution to the NAACP fund earmented for extrated the state of the stat

marked for equal pay activities.
Also in 1918, AFT called for the election of blacks to local school boards, and it lobbied for compulsory school atten-dance by black children, and equal educational opportunity for said students.

In 1928, AFT demanded that the historical contributions of Black Americans be taught in

the public schools.

The union has not been without racial strife within its own ranks. As late as 1950, it was necessary for AFT to expel a number of locals who steadfastly refused to admit blacks to their membership. This action resulted in a loss of nearly 10,000 members. The results a fully integrated union.



The American Federation of Teachers receives a grade of "E" for excellence.

The 60s found the AFT in the vanguard of the civil rights movement alongside such venerable fighters as A. Philip Randolph, the Rev. Martin Luther King Jr., Whitney Young, Roy Wilkins, James Farmer and oth

AFT members helped to organize the 1963 "March on Wash ington" for Justice and Jobs, and over the next five years AFT staffers and members traveled South to register new, black voters and to teach in the "freedom'

Along with other unions and civil rights organizations, AFT also lobbied for passage of key civil rights legislation, re: the Equal Employment Opportunity
Act, the Fair Housing Act and
the Voting Rights Act.
Further involvement of AFT,

along with civil rights groups and the AFL-CIO includes lob-bying efforts on behalf of a decent minimum wage, for which legislation was favorably passed last year; school integration, adequate integrated housing, Medicare, full employ-ment and aid to education. The battle to keep these programs and to expand them continue, and AFT remains in the thick of the battle.

Headquartered in Washington, D.C., the 680,000-member American Federation of Teachers is an international AFL-CIO union, whose membership is made up of primarily elemen-tary and secondary school teachers, college and university professors and other nonsupervisory teachers in urban, suburban and rural school districts throughout the United States, its strongest concentra-tion is in the large cities across the country.

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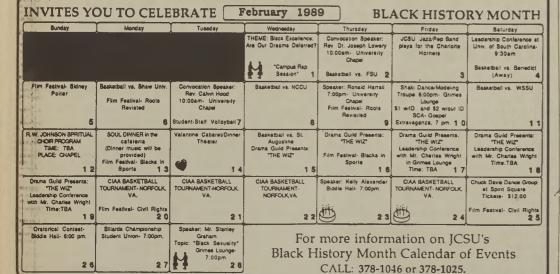
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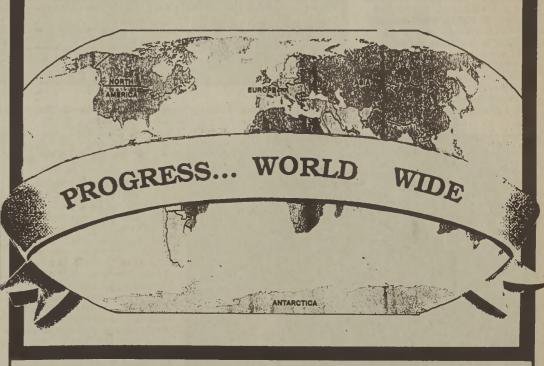
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