

NORTH HARRIS COUNTY COLLEGE UNITED FACULTY

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THE ADVOCATE

NHCC United Faculty
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Edited by Olin Joynton
Secretary, NHCC UF

Union Ramblings

by Link Hullar

"Do I really want to be publicly associated with the union at this particular point in time?!" This question sprang to mind after Steve Davis left my office. Steve, who is the East Campus Vice President of the AFT organization at NHCC, had dropped by to discuss a few union matters and asked if I would contribute a brief piece for our union newsletter, The Advocate. I agreed to do so, but then this question began to cloud my thinking, making it necessary for me to clarify my own feelings before proceeding with any writing assignment.

Obviously, the union has been the subject of some controversy in recent months. This is unfortunate, but it is necessary. NHCC United Faculty is not a social club. We have a responsibility to our faculty, to our institution, and to our profession to speak out on issues that affect same. Agreement and cooperation with the administration are important and desirable but not always possible; differences will arise from time to time. I hope that we can put our occasional differences into the larger context of our generally positive working relationships so that administration and union can work together to promote progress with our institution and our profession. When conflicts occur, as they undoubtedly will, the union and administration must not let their temporary roles as adversaries blind them to the more positive nature of the ongoing relationship. Still, "Do I really want to be publicly associated with the union at this particular point in time?!"

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I have been a union member for a little over a year now. In the rough time frame of the past academic year we have been involved in a variety of activities. Our members have won awards this past year (as in previous years). Our members have been recognized by the institution for teacher and writing excellence. We sponsored the Hobby-Delco Awards Ceremony that brought to our campus the distinguished public servants, Lt. Governor Bill Hobby and State Representative Wilhelmina Delco, who, by the way, had high praise for AFT. We have sponsored seminars designed to inform faculty of some possible dangers involved in faculty-student relationships. We are currently involved with putting together a seminar on teacher excellence for each of the three campuses. Finally, I would like to quote from an excellent piece by Gary Clark titled "What? Me Join a Union?" which appeared in The Advocate early in 1988: "No one I've talked to in the local union . . . has any personal rancor toward Dr. Airola and the 'administration.' Indeed, I find the AFT people to be genuinely loyal to this institution and as committed to working with, not

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"Education for Democracy — Democracy for Education"

C. against, the 'administration' . . . disagreement does not equate with disloyalty." This is the attitude and atmosphere that the union has promoted over the past year of my experience as a member.

So, "Do I really want to be publicly associated with the union at this particular point in time?!" Of course I do! I am proud of my association with the union. Also, it seems that in answering this question for myself that I have managed to write my page for the upcoming newsletter. I hope that my own clarification process might assist you as well. The union represents concerned faculty devoted to excellence; so the real question is why anyone would NOT want to be publicly associated with our union.

Writing Achievements of Members

by Olin Joynton

In the latest edition of the NHCC Journal to reach our mailboxes (Volume 10, Number 1), I was pleased to note that four of the nine authors are union members. This is a far higher percentage (44%) than the proportion of faculty who are union members. Congratulations to Stephen Davis for "Joseph Jay Pastoriza and the Single Tax in Houston, 1911-1917," Link Hullar for "Herbert Croly and the Architectural Record," Michael McFarland for The Eight of January and Other Stories, and Allen Vogt for "The Kennedy Assassination and the History Teacher."

President's Column

by Alan Hall

At the job protection seminar jointly sponsored by the AFT and the Faculty Senate on the South Campus, Dr. Phillips said that faculty need to realize that the administration does not judge a faculty member based on one incident. Instead, he said, "the administration looks at patterns of conduct." I have serious concerns about such a comment in that procedures in this regard are unclear. For instance, how does a faculty member know that a "pattern of conduct" is developing? Is he notified by his supervisor? Is he counseled by anyone? For an official "pattern of conduct" to be established, must the faculty member receive only verbal notice, or must there be an official record placed in his personnel file? Most importantly, what constitutes a "pattern of conduct"? Just guessing, I would say that it is the same kind of conduct repeated in two or more instances. Is a previous allegation which has been investigated and proven untrue an event which becomes part of a "pattern of conduct"? In the specific episode to which Dr. Phillips alluded, there was no established "pattern of conduct." Administrative action against a faculty member, whether it be reassignment, suspension, or dismissal, is far too serious a matter to be acted upon with so many unanswered questions.

Interested in Joining?

NHCC United Faculty is trying to promote the conditions under which instructors can best exercise their talents in a professional way for the benefit of our students. Our regular dues are \$9/month for adjunct faculty and \$18/month for fulltime faculty. We offer patron memberships at \$25/month to help cover costs like the printing of this newsletter. To join, send a check made out to NHCC United Faculty for at least one month's dues to Allen Vogt, Treasurer, Suite A-264, South Campus.

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The following article from the Houston Post is reprinted by permission from the Associated Press.

Students stop teacher from leaving job, teach elders a lesson in tolerance.



AP photo

Librarian Lois Bostic with senior class president Roy Rainey III in the high school library in Gould, Ark.

By Scott Charton

ASSOCIATED PRESS

GOULD, Ark. — A racial slur uttered in frustration nearly ended Lois Bostic's 27-year career in education. Then her black students stepped in, taught their elders a lesson in tolerance, and saved Bostic's job.

"We were ready to forgive and go on," said senior Angela Matthews, 17, one of six students who initiated, typed and distributed petitions in support of the white librarian. "Anybody ought to get a second chance."

After the slur was reported last month, parents in this farming town 80 miles southeast of Little Rock circulated petitions calling for Bostic's ouster, and she told school officials she would quit. The board promptly endorsed her decision.

But then high school students mounted their own petition drive, the school board rescinded its resolution, and Bostic is here to stay.

Bostic, who is in her first year here teaching both elementary and high school students, said her troubles began Sept. 27 as she taught her seventh class of the day on using the library at Gould Ele-

mentary.

As she recalls it, the 20 sixth-graders in the class weren't paying attention and were growing increasingly rowdy. In an effort to settle them down, she told the students, all of them black: "I think you're trying to make me think you're a bunch of poor, dumb niggers, and I don't think that."

Bostic, 50, said she immediately realized the inappropriateness of the word.

"I opened my mouth and put my foot in it," she said in an interview. "In our part of the country, we call each other hicks and hillbillies and that's OK. But if somebody from California moves in and they refer to us as hillbillies, we get angry. And I realized that it was wrong."

"I was at my rope's end. I was just trying to get these kids to behave. I wasn't even conscious that I was using a word that would offend them," she said.

Children told their parents about the remarks, and parents went to the school board in this town of 1,670 people, about 60 percent of them black.

On Oct. 3, a petition calling for Bostic's dismissal was presented to the board. Many of the 91 par-

ents who circulated and signed it say they remembered routine discrimination and hateful use of the word in their youth. The parents' petition alleged other insulting racial remarks had been made by Bostic. She denied that and said her only use of the slur was before the sixth-graders. It was, she told the board, "a dumb, stupid mistake."

Bostic recalls that she didn't encounter many blacks while growing up in southern Missouri. "That word I used is not part of my vocabulary. My mother would have slapped me across the mouth if I'd said that when I was growing up," she said.

Overhearing the word in conversations between black students, usually in a humorous context, Bostic concluded she could relate to them better if she used it. "I had no prejudices. I was going to be one of them and went so far as using a word I should not have used, that I didn't realize would offend them," she said.

Repentant and tearful, the librarian announced she would quit by the end of that week. The school board endorsed her exit, saying she had lost effectiveness.

Bostic was preparing to move out of town with her retiree husband, her career ended, less than three months after she moved to Arkansas.

On the day before her self-imposed departure deadline, she learned that pupils were circulating petitions asking the board to reconsider. They bore signatures from 124 of the town's 147 high school students, only two of whom are white.

Surprised, board members reopened their discussion and reversed the request for Bostic's resignation. "It's their school. They're the ones that have to be with her every day," said school board president Alan Minor, who is black.

"We figured this: Why would this woman move to this town with more blacks than whites if she's a bigot? She just made a bad mistake, and we decided she deserved a second chance," said senior class president Roy Rainey III, 17.

"I'm encouraged about the future of our little town," said Mayor Dave Rochelle, who is white. "This petition indicates we have 124 young citizens who are good people."