

Archives of Labor History and Urban Affairs

ORAL INTERVIEW

MRS. DOROTHY JONES

HERBERT HILL, INTERVIEWER

JULY 19, 1968



Wayne State University
Detroit, Michigan

This is an interview with Mrs. Dorothy Jones, New York City, July 19, 1968. The interviewer is Herbert Hill.

HILL: Mrs. Jones, would you please begin by perhaps telling us something of your professional involvement with the question of northern school desegregation, and your evaluation of the role of the United Federation of Teachers either in New York City, or in other cities throughout the country.

MRS. JONES: That gives me Carte Blanche.

HILL: You have.

MRS. JONES: First of all, I got started in this not as a professional. I moved to New York in 1955 with three children, two of them school age and one pre-school, and inevitably got involved in school affairs as a mother. I was very much disappointed in the first year in New York to discover that the education my children seemed to be getting was even poorer than that available in Boston from which we moved. I myself am a product of the Boston school system back in the days when it still provided a decent education. Then I came to New York just on the heels of the Supreme Court's 1954 decision. The Public Education Committee's study of the New York City schools pointed out that the problems of de facto segregation were in terms of result undistinguishable from the problems of de jure segregation so that inevitably I got involved in the whole struggle around integration in the New York City schools as I began to get more deeply involved. When Milton Clammison organized Parents Workshop, I was right there and was a charter member. By 1961 I was working for the United Negro College Fund doing radio and T.V. publicity, but increasingly I was stealing time from my work to attend hearings and meetings and organized demonstrations.

HILL: As a mother.

MRS. JONES: As a mother, and when by 1962 Ciro Tison had moved out of the education spot at the City Commission on Human

Rights, he suggested me as his successor, and it seemed sensible since my spare time occupation was spilling over so to my full time work, to take a job where legitimately I could work on it, and I've been working professionally in the field ever since.

HILL: What was your former position in the New York City Commission on Human Rights?

MRS. JONES: I was the Education Consultant. In fact I was for two years the entire Education Division.

HILL: For what two years?

MRS. JONES: 1962 and '63; by 1964 they hired an assistant and when I left the Commission in '65 I went to the Protestant Council of the City of New York. First as associate director for public education in the Office of Church and Race then when the director Dr. Benjamin Payton moved on to the National Council of Churches, I became the director of the Office of Church and Race, and our major focus programmatically was public education and its related problems. During that period, the major thrust of community action around schools began to shift from the efforts to desegregate and integrate the school system which have proved fruitless over the past decade to, increasingly, demands for community control of local schools.

HILL: Are you an official of BOFF?

MRS. JONES: Not an official, I am a fellow at MARC. When I left the Protestant Council in January, Dr. Clark offered me a fellowship at MARC to work full time on school decentralization.

HILL: Is that what you are doing now?

MRS. JONES: That's what I'm doing.

HILL: You are a fellow at the Metropolitan Applied Research Council.

MRS. JONES: Center, center.

HILL: Center, under Dr. Kenneth Clark. Now Mrs. Jones, may I begin by asking you to give us an evaluation of the role of the United Federation of Teachers in New York City

around the major issues involving Negro children in the public schools of New York City; their role as a trade union as you see it.

MRS. JONES: I'll go back to the days before the Union became the bargaining agent, because it was a different animal in those days. At that time, first of all, it had opposition. It had rivals.

HILL: Who were those rivals?

MRS. JONES: The old Teachers Union still existed and there were smaller groups. I've forgotten what they were. Remember, this was during the time when I was new in New York City.

HILL: Did the Teachers Union ever have collective bargaining agreements?

MRS. JONES: No. No, when the city finally reached a point of recognizing a bargaining agent for teachers, it was the United Federation of Teachers.

HILL: That was the first time there was an across-the-board collective bargaining agreement in the Board of Education and a teachers union.

MRS. JONES: Right.

HILL: That was the U.F.T.

MRS. JONES: United Federation of Teachers.

HILL: What year was that?

MRS. JONES: Oh dear, you know I do not remember.

HILL: Approximately.

MRS. JONES: It was in the early 60's, and we can check the exact date, that's simple enough. It was in the 60's. Up until that time, the major unions were the Teachers Union and the U.F.T. and there were other smaller groups.

HILL: The Guild?

MRS. JONES: The Guild eventually merged with the U.F.T. I do remember that, at what point I'm not sure, but at that time not being the bargaining agent, not having any control over wages and hours and so forth, the union took positions it takes today. It professed much more concern about education per se and functioned more as an agent attempting social change, than as I think it's accurate to say, a protective association for those who are employed.

HILL: The conflict between functioning as a craft union perhaps than that of social goals.

MRS. JONES: Right. Once the union achieved status of bargaining agent, several things happened. A lot of people who had not been pro union, pro any union but who were teachers in the system joined the U.F.T. for protection.

HILL: Now, does that include the Negro teachers?

MRS. JONES: I think there were more Negro teachers in the two unions prior to this time, then there are today. I think more of the white teachers, the more conservative element of white teachers, who had not been pro union, who tended to feel that unions for teachers were not the thing to do, did not join in those days, began to join in increasing numbers as year after year the contract provided more benefits for them.

HILL: May I ask you a question please? What proportion of the teaching force of New York City consists of black teachers today, roughly, an approximate figure?

MRS. JONES: I think there are roughly 15,000.

HILL: 15,000 Negro teachers.

MRS. JONES: Negro teachers.

HILL: Employed by the Board of Education.

MRS. JONES: Yes.

HILL: Out of a total of.....?

MRS. JONES: Out of approximately 50,000.

HILL: 15,000 Negro teachers out of approximately 50,000.

MRS. JONES: 50,000 total.

HILL: 50,000 total in the Board of Education of New York. Do you think these 15,000 are loyal now to the U.F.T.?

MRS. JONES: No. Quite the contrary, there's been a growing alienation.

HILL: At one time the teachers did flock to the U.F.T.?

MRS. JONES: At one time they did flock to the U.F.T. Many who had been active in the old teachers union, either held dual memberships during those few years that the teachers union still survived. It didn't attract new members; new people coming into the school system saw no reason to join a union that was not the recognized

bargaining agent, so that the teachers union sort of died of old age. Its original leadership died off and most of the people who had been active and who stayed in the school system transferred their allegiance to the U.F.T.

HILL: And you would say that the early stages of organizing, Negro teachers were interested in benefits and protection of the Union, they were still ardent supporters of the U.F.T., but there has been a very rapid disaffection of Negro teachers from, and alienation from the Union?

MRS. JONES: It's been accelerated in the last couple of years, and a number of things I think caused that, both nationally and locally. Nationally there was a shift on the part of Al Shanker, the President of the United Federation of Teachers, in, in terms of his recognition and cooperation with the goals of Negro teachers per se at the convention either 2 or 3 years ago, and I can check some of this for you in terms of actual details, or I can tell you with whom you can check. This stimulated the organization here in New York City, of originally a caucus of black teachers within the U.F.T., and eventually the formation of the African American Teachers Association.

HILL: What year was the African American Teachers Association formed?

MRS. JONES: I became aware of it two years ago. It may have been formed 3 years ago, I'm not sure.

HILL: But it became active about 1966?

MRS. JONES: Yes.

HILL: Although you think it had its first organization in 1965.

MRS. JONES: It may have actually been born the previous year. It didn't really become important until about '67.

HILL: Why do you think black teachers began to organize into separate black caucus in the Union? What were the issues?

MRS. JONES: The issues were, first of all, the whole question of the rights of blacks, independently of the totality, the recognition or lack of recognition as they saw of the particular needs of black teachers. The unwillingness of the U.F.T. leadership to go along either with the increasing concerns of the Negro community, including teachers, but mainly focused around parents' activity which many of the teachers recognized as their fight too. And also the feeling that the Union leadership, increasingly was catering to a more conservative element within the Union, who had by now become a majority.

HILL: Do you think Shanker is their spokesman?

MRS. JONES: Shanker is very much their spokesman today. Three years ago I still considered Shanker a person I could work with and it wasn't until a year ago that I really decided that this was no longer true. It was a progression, but by a year ago, I felt that the kinds of things I was interested in, in terms of changes in education, were not things that Shanker would cooperate with, and that many of them were things he would fight. However, going back a bit...

HILL: May I ask you a question? First because I don't want to lose the thread of the black caucus. This is a very important thing. As you see it, I would like to ask two questions regarding the black caucus, first what proportion of the 15,000 Negro teachers in the school system that most of the black teachers felt Shanker was less than enthusiastic about. There has been about six years now since the issue was raised that New York City does not have its proper proportion of blacks in supervisory and administrative positions.

HILL: Did not the U.F.T. support these demands?

MRS. JONES: The U.F.T. gave lip service to these demands but the U.F.T. never put its muscle into it.

HILL: Do you feel that they're collaborative with racist elements within the whole bureaucratic situation?

MRS. JONES: I think recent events have documented this. Furthermore...

HILL: By the way, later on, I'm going to ask you to indicate some of the documents.

MRS. JONES: Very specific things, I'm trying to give you an overview now and then we can go back. It became obvious that the U.F.T., thought it always had policy positions for integration of the schools, again was not putting its muscle behind any of the efforts to desegregate the school system. At one point I was very much involved in the attempts to convince teachers and community people of the positive effects of the school pairings. Earlier than that the whole open enrollment drive, and though Shanker and other union leaders always promised help on specific projects back when I was working at Commission, at one point I asked Shanker for a very specific kind of help that he could give. I asked him to use the pages of the Union's newspaper to encourage teachers to volunteer to go into the ghetto schools not just new teachers who would welcome a challenge. I am convinced that there are many more such in the school system than we have gotten to transfer into the ghetto schools. And I offered to help him to locate the schools where the administration would be cooperative, would welcome such people. Schools like the one that Elliott Shapiro was principal of, P.S. 119 at that time in Central Harlem. Shapiro kept a stable staff. People came into his school, fell in love with him and stayed.

HILL: White and colored.

MRS. JONES: Right, and he had at that time one of the best integrated staffs in Harlem.

HILL: Elliott Shapiro, at his -- what was the number at that school?

MRS. JONES: That was P.S. 119, the so called "rat school."

HILL: P.S. 119 really proved in a sense, if one is to believe Nat Hentoff's articles on Elliott Shapiro, that it can be done.

MRS. JONES: Right, and that's why the people down at District one on the lower east side fought the Board of Education tooth and nail to get him appointed their district Superintendent and they won that fight, in spite of all the odds.

HILL: Did the U.F.T. support Shapiro in the fight?

MRS. JONES: The U.F.T. I don't think took a position on that.

HILL: No position in the Shapiro matter?

MRS. JONES: As far as I know they took no position. I wasn't aware of any involvement of the U.F.T., though I was aware of the involvement of some teachers, individually.

HILL: You're saying then that the U.F.T. in New York City not only did not use its considerable influence as the collective bargaining agent, to secure an increase in the number of black teachers of the schools, furthermore, it did not use its power to assist the movement of experienced teachers into the black ghetto schools where such experience was most necessary, and furthermore, they did not use their powers to assist the various community programs for desegregation, such as pairing and bussing and the like.

MRS. JONES: We always had a good policy statement, but the union never took action that it was capable of taking to back up its own policy statements.

HILL: Would you say that these were empty, ritualistic policies, statements that the Union did not carry out?

MRS. JONES: Right.

HILL: Would you give me a formulation on this so I can quote you perhaps?

MRS. JONES: All right. Let me give you a very specific example of what I mean. When the More Effective Schools program was being developed, ...

HILL: What year?

MRS. JONES: 1963 was when the idea was born and I can give you the whole story there. The Board of Education announced that it was going to spend two million dollars on an experimental program of trying to get teachers, on an

experienced teachers, to go into go into ghetto schools by giving teachers \$200.00 a year, bonus really, for so doing. Community people and the U.F.T. were agreed that, for different reasons, this was bad. The U.F.T. has always opposed this kind of differential because it would create problems for them within the union. The community saw this as combat pay for teachers to come into the bad schools and didn't feel that it would guarantee necessarily that better teachers would come. So we were agreed that this was not the proper approach. At a Board of Education meeting the Union leadership was given a challenge by the then resident of the Board of Education, James Donovan, if they didn't like this idea, to come up with something else. They developed the concept of more effective schools, and they invited a number of community people to meet with them to discuss the concept, and to support it. I went to the first such meeting and discovered they had what looked to me like a very interesting concept with one basic lack. There was no mention of the need to integrate these schools, and this was at the time when that was our major thrust, and presumably the Union was with us on that. I raised the question about integration and they suggested that I make some notes as to how it would be done, and I wrote a piece on... they... had their proposal in several parts. I wrote, oh I guess about five or six paragraphs on the integration aspect which I hoped would then be integrated into the total approach and I sent it to the chairman of the committee for the Union.

When I saw the final thing worked out, it really proved to me that they really weren't that much interested in my thinking, though they included it, they had the section on personnel, the section on the structure of the schools and all of the various sections, and then at the very end, without changing a comma, they'd stuck on my section on integration, and it remains a part of the

the official policy on more effective schools.

HILL: But it was never acted upon.

MRS. JONES: It was never acted upon and it had no meaning because they didn't even bother to include it where I talked about integrating the personnel, it should have been with the personnel. It was just tacked on to the end, they didn't change a comma of it, I'm not even sure they even read it.

HILL: By the way, before I forget, may I go back to the earlier question which you did not answer? What proportion of black teachers, the 15,000, are involved to one degree or another in the black caucus, and what is the name of the black caucus?

MRS. JONES: Well, at this point, there really is not within the Union, any longer, a black caucus, with the local here. There is a National one.

HILL: There is a National Caucus?

MRS. JONES: And I don't know the size of it, but Ed Simpkins in Detroit is the leader of it.

HILL: He's the National leader. There is a Nation wide caucus of black teachers in the American Federation of Teachers, and would you say a substantial number of the 15,000 in New York City who belong to the U.F.T. belong too?

MRS. JONES: Probably not because most of the 15,000 black members, black teachers, in the system, many of them no longer belong to the U.F.T. They have dropped their membership.

HILL: Would you tell me about that?

MRS. JONES: Others are still members of the union, but not active members. There are only a small proportion of the black teachers in New York City who are active in UFT affairs.

HILL: Now, you just told me something that's very important. You have suggested that there are three forms of disaffection of black teachers with the U.F.T. One, the formation of the Black Caucus, two, you say that a significant number of Negro teachers who once were active are no longer active, then even more significant you suggest...

MRS. JONES: Some have stopped paying dues.

HILL: They have dropped out.

MRS. JONES: And have instead joined groups like the African American Teachers Association, which is separate from the U.F.T. now.

HILL: That's not a caucus within the U.F.T. now?

MRS. JONES: No, that's a separate organization of black teachers and...

HILL: How many members?

MRS. JONES: I do not know, they are reluctant to give accurate figures.

HILL: Would you say it would run into the thousands?

MRS. JONES: Not yet. I would say that they have several hundred active members. There may be many more who carry the dual membership or have a membership and are not active.

HILL: And are they part of the National Caucus? Or are they apart on the outside?

MRS. JONES: This I don't know. I suspect that they're completely outside, though I know that some of them will be going to the A.F.T. convention either as observers or participant members.

HILL: Do you anticipate that these tendencies will continue, that is, the growth of separate activities falling outside the U.F.T.?

MRS. JONES: To the extent that the U.F.T. increasingly speaks for the more conservative white element, to that extent will they lose their black membership.

HILL: Now, are you saying Mrs. Jones, that, that the U.F.T. in fact does speak for the more conservative white element, the reactionary element, on both the question of professional issues involving black teachers as well as school desegregation?

MRS. JONES: Right. The two things in the past year that have really brought this into focus were the U.F.T. strike last fall and the whole fight around school decentralization in New York City this year.

HILL: Now you're referring to the strike of the United Federation of Teachers in the Fall of 1967, against the Board of Education. Now, I would like you to go into some details

as you recall it regarding the efforts of the Negro parents to keep the schools open and freedom schools in Negro Churches, parents' community centers and the adamant refusal of the U.F.T. to permit it.

MRS. JONES: One of the, well, the problems with the U.F.T. began before the strike was announced, and it's related to it. I won't go into great detail now about the struggles around I.S. 201, I'll only say that as of April '67 I participated with other people concerned with I.S. 201 in really negotiations with the executive board of the U.F.T. around the role of teachers in the experiment that was at that point evolving, at 201, and reached an agreement which has not been abrogated by the people at 201, but which the union apparently changed its mind about sometime between April and July '67 and fought openly and with some effectiveness against the efforts of the community group to develop an experimental decentralization around I.S. 201.

HILL: Why do you think the U.F.T. has taken such a reactionary position?

MRS. JONES: I think Shanker personally, and I'm separating now Al Shanker as Union President from the vast membership of the Union. Shanker personally sees a danger to his leadership in decentralization in New York City, and I think that fear is legitimate in the sense that, if the school system is effectively decentralized, the Union must also change its approaches to meet the needs. The Chapter Chairman and especially the District Chairman of the Union will become the important leadership in a decentralized school system.

HILL: It means decentralizing the Union structure as well as the schools.

MRS. JONES: Right. And it's interesting to me that the Union, like the Board of Education has been talking decentralization for itself for some time, but they mean decentralizing certain administrative procedures and not decentralizing power. If the District Chairman is related to a community

school board in the local district, he is going to be the important person in the eyes of the teachers in that district, not the centralized Union leadership. So I can understand Mr. Shanker's own personal fears about decentralization, particularly since he's an ambitious labor leader as most union presidents are.

HILL: Would you say that some of his involvements with the trade union bureaucracy in New York City after all he now is part of the New York City A.F.T. of L.C.I.O. Central Trades and Labor Council that he's part of the whole trade union bureaucracy in New York and their political involvements?

MRS. JONES: And the Central Trade and Labor Council has representative on the Board of Education.

HILL: Who is that representative?

MRS. JONES: Maurice Ushevitz.

HILL: And what do you think of Maurice Ushevitz's role in the Board of Education regarding these questions?

MRS. JONES: Its been indistinguishable from Mr. Shanker's positions except possibly during contract negotiations. I say possibly since I haven't been on the inside, I don't know what his role is there.

HILL: Has Maurice Ushevitz distinguished himself from the other members of the Board of Education on school desegregation issues?

MRS. JONES: You keep talking school desegregation and I keep saying school decentralization because we have stopped pressing for desegregation as an immediate goal.

HILL: I understand.

MRS. JONES: Though I've never given it up as an ultimate goal, frankly it's a personal thing. Many of the people involved in the decentralization efforts have decided we will never see desegregation in their lifetime or their children's lifetimes. So we'll get that out of the way for the moment.

HILL: You'll forgive me if I continue to use old fashioned terminology.

MRS. JONES: Nationally it's still valid though, and it's still valid in many communities; it just doesn't happen to be valid as an immediate goal in New York City.

HILL: It's still operative.

MRS. JONES: Right.

HILL: Well, what roles does Ushevitz play in the Board of Education?

MRS. JONES: Ushevitz has been, in my opinion, an important member of the more conservative faction within the Board that has for the last couple of years been the dominant faction. That would include the present Board President Rose Shapiro and I must admit the present Vice President of the Board Aaron Brown, the only Negro until the new appointments or should I say the only non-white, it's easier that way, that way I don't have to identify with him. He's a very sweet person, but he's not been effective in representing the black community in New York City.

HILL: That's why he got the Board.

MRS. JONES: Exactly. He was picked for that reason. It includes also Mr. Burke and Mr. Barcoen. Mr. Burke is essentially an unknown quantity to me. I just know he votes with that faction. I don't know much else about him.

HILL: I'm rather curious even though this represents a digression. What role does Harold Segal play?

MRS. JONES: Harold Segal before and after he became an employee of the Board of the Board of Education, before he was head of the United...

HILL: Before he was head of the United Parents Association...

MRS. JONES: Right, and is responsible I think, for many of the, what I consider undesirable positions that the U.P.A. had taken in those days. How Segal has allied himself with the dominant element on the Board and the top echelon staff at the Board of Education. He is very much their creature.

HILL: Is there a demand for his removal as secretary to the Board?

MRS. JONES: We haven't bothered to demand his removal because he's only part of the problem and to remove him would only mean they'll find someone else just like him. I think over the years we've developed a kind of sophistication that leads us to realize that changing a Superindendant of Schools or a Board Secretary or even individual Board Secretary or even individual Board members is not the answer. We're going to have to break the structure which has developed a personality, a life of its own.

HILL: And would you regard the U.F.T. as an essential part of that structure?

MRS. JONES: The U.F.T. as it functions today is definitely a part of the structure.

HILL: Would you elaborate on that?

MRS. JONES: Yes, I have spent four and a half months in Albany, the state Capitol. This year from January through May, during the time that the legislature was in session, and the effort to get, a really effective decentralization bill from New York City passed was my focus, and I could not distinguish between the functioning of Mr. Shanker representing the United Federation of Teachers, the representatives of the Council of Supervisory Associations, which is the Federation of Professional Associations representing everyone below superintendent of schools, and above classroom teacher, and the Board of Education's own representatives. They were indistinguishable in terms of their functioning in Albany. They were the establishment we were fighting, quite unsuccessfully as it turned out. I have to distinguish again between the interests of some of the teachers, and I think a case in point is what happened around the experimental complex in Oceanhill, Brownsville, where the publicity would indicate that all of the teachers are on one side and all of the community, or at least the loud mouth militant part of the community is on the other side. This is not true; there were 500 odd teachers employed in the eight schools in that experimental

complex. When Mr. Shanker called for a strike of the teachers, 350 some teachers came out, 200 odd teachers, I guess there must have been nearly 600 altogether because there were more than 200 teachers who did not miss a day, who continued to work in spite of the objections of the union. In fact, their attitude is not that they were opposing the Union, but that their Union turned its back on them, and these were not all black teachers. This was a nicely integrated group of teachers, who felt that the community was attempting to do something constructive in terms of education that they wanted to support, and that they did not agree with the kind of role that Shanker was playing. I'd like to be very specific about the role that Shanker played during this whole struggle to decentralize the school system, because to me it is an example of the worst kind of labor misleadership. One, he consistently lied to his own membership. He lied to his own membership. He lied to them about the content of the Regents' Bill which was the bill that I was supporting for decentralization. He lied to them about the content of the bill that was passed with his support. He told them that the Regents' Bill contained provisions that would destroy the protection that the Union presently offers teachers, which is inaccurate in that every legal protection that teachers now have would be continued under the Regents' Bill, collective bargaining would remain city wide, and centralized; some of us didn't feel that this was necessarily the correct way to do it, but it was a compromise we felt was necessary. Tenure would continue to have the same protections it has now. All that would happen is that the people who would set policy for the schools, in a given district the policy would be set close to where the policy would be carried out, and to the extent the teachers understood this and understood that they were not threatened by it to that extent they supported it.

HILL: In reality teachers were not threatened by this, their interests were not threatened.

MRS. JONES: No, Shanker's interests were threatened. Teachers' interests were not. The Union would not be destroyed by decentralization.

HILL: You're saying that Shanker and the Union bureaucracies began to have interests separate and apart really, not only from the interests of the teachers in the school system.

MRS. JONES: Teachers in general.

HILL: Of teachers, yes. But they now have your private interests separate and apart from institutions for people who belong to that institution.

MRS. JONES: And one of the things that Al Shanker did, was to use the fact that inevitably most of the principals and teachers who were being attacked by community groups in their growing feeling that the people who were not doing a job in the local schools must be attacked and gotten rid of and most of them happened to be Jewish. That's logical when you consider that a tremendous proportion of the teachers in the school system in New York City today are Jews.

HILL: Is it still more than a majority, more than half?

MRS. JONES: It's more than majority, and even larger proportions of the people who have achieved supervisory and administrative positions in the school system are Jews. These are people, many of whom went into the school system during the depression days, when Jews were the people who were going into white collar professions and careers, and one of the few open to them during the depression was teaching. That also, I think, would account for the low quality of many of the administrators. These were people who would not normally have gone into teaching. They would have been, some of them would have been very good businessmen, or insurance men, or brokers, or something, and they're not good school-teachers, and not good administrators, and they approach

their job as if they are in a brokerage firm and so forth.

HILL: They're conducting their business.

MRS. JONES: And not too well in terms of the product. I don't need to go into that, the statistics are public knowledge, so that when a community group or parents association decides that dirty S.O.B. of a principal has to go, nine times out of ten he's a Jew. Shanker has used this and has played on the fears of the Jewish community, parents and teachers, has fed their fears, has predicted blood in the streets, has made the most flagrant kinds of speeches - rabble-rousing speeches, has gotten people to a point where they cannot listen to the truth.

HILL: Are you suggesting that Shanker and his colleagues have introduced or interjected the Jewish issue?

MRS. JONES: They didn't have to interject it, unfortunately it was already interjected, he used it. He has blown it up all out of proportion and even people whom I've known for years find it difficult in many cases to sit down and discuss the issues dispassionately. They are so panicked and constantly Shanker has gone to teacher groups and even to parent groups in predominately Jewish communities and predicted all kinds of dire results if those people, and he has said this in so many words, gained control of the schools.

HILL: Who are those people?

MRS. JONES: Those people quite obviously are people of the type that are running I.S. 201 and the Oceanhill, Brownsville complex and those people are predominately Negro.

HILL: Is the issue in Oceanhill also merely control of the schools?

MRS. JONES: Yes.

HILL: The basic issue as you see it of the Oceanhill fight is local community control?

MRS. JONES: Even more basic than that is good education. These are people teaching in those schools who've been there for years, who have on the record many, many charges against them, but only because of the bureaucracy's inertia, they have never been removed from those positions of teaching and principalship.

HILL: And the Negro students are victims.

MRS. JONES: Right, and one of the things that the new governing board decided to do was to clean house.

HILL: Now, may I go back a moment to the strike last fall? It was the fall of 1967.

MRS. JONES: Yes, I got off, that didn't I?

HILL: Yes, in fact this is very important, I do want to get your views on this. It seems to me, this was the first big major public break between the people in the Negro community and the U.F.T.

MRS. JONES: This is when it all came up.

HILL: As you say, it came out into the open. Why do you think Shanker and his colleagues were opposed to Negro parents maintaining what they call the freedom schools while the strike was going on? They called it strike breaking.

MRS. JONES: Well, up until that time, people like me had always supported the Union whenever it went out on strike. Parents had picketed with teachers, I've worn out many a bit of shoe leather.

HILL: This encouraged Negro parents.

MRS. JONES: Negro parents and many white parents too. Negro parents had felt in earlier years that the fight of the U.F.T. was also our fight. The enemy was the Board of Education. During the early days of the struggles around 201 we began to see that the interests of the U.F.T. and Board of Education were closer together than they had been, and contrary to the interests of the community, at I.S. 201 specifically, because the thing came into focus there initially in the days preceding the strike. The I.S. 201 complex had been through a very difficult year. During the summers we had worked with those teachers from 201 itself and its feeder schools, those five schools, those who wanted to work with the community group. All summer long we were prepared to open that school on a very different basis. Even before the Board of Education had approved the Governing Board taking titular control of the schools because titular control is all that it has. It has no power even yet. There were teachers and

parents, and community leaders who worked together, worked out programs some of which could be implemented in spite of not having real community control. All this time the U.F.T. and the Board of Education had been in prolonged, protracted, dilatory negotiations. On the Friday prior to the Monday that the strike was to begin, Shanker said in a public statement, and I confirmed this in a telephone conversation directly with him, that most of the money issues had been resolved. He later said this was not true, but at that moment he said it and when I talked to him about two hours after I heard it on the radio, he said yes, this is true that the only issues remaining were the more effective schools and the disruptive child.

HILL: Could you elaborate a little bit on the disruptive child issue?

MRS. JONES: Yes. Some of us as 201 I should point out that I had been from the beginning a consultant to the Planning Board, and prior to that the Negotiating Committee of the I.S. 201 complex, in fact, I was one of the people they asked to sit as negotiator for them.

HILL: By the way, I.S. stands for Intermediate School?

MRS. JONES: Intermediate School.

HILL: What grades does that cover?

MRS. JONES: At 201 it covers grades 5 through 8, some schools only 6 through 8, but it's either 5 through 8 or 6 through 8, part of the whole change from the Junior High School's concept to different grade level. The original position paper that the Union issued around the disruptive child was one of the most racist documents I have ever seen. It was amended very quickly, it was never intended to be public, the copy that we got, I prefer not to tell you how we got it, but there are still some people within the U.F.T. who are friends, and they felt that we ought to see this.

HILL: Was this an official document of the Union; a statement?

MRS. JONES: It was a statement to be used by its Negotiation Committee.

HILL: What was the essence of it?

MRS. JONES: The essence of it was that the classroom teacher should have the right to decide that a child was disruptive and to refuse to have that child any longer in the classroom.

HILL: Negro parents opposed this. Why?

MRS. JONES: Negro parents opposed this because our experience has been that it is usually the Negro child in the classroom who is considered disruptive, and a white child guilty of the same kind of activity is considered sick, or full of high spirits, in need of therapy, but also entitled to sympathetic attention. The Negro child is immediately disruptive and should be removed from the classroom. "I don't want the child in my room! Do something!" And this initial demand of the Union was to give the teacher, any teacher, the right essentially to decide that this child should no longer remain in this classroom. There was no real provision for any help for a child who might really be disturbed, there was no provision for the parent to be involved, there was no provision for consultation. Later on it was amended so that the local school board would be involved in this original proposal. The parent would be notified at the end of the process that would get the kid completely out of the school. No provision for the parent being involved early in the game. No requirement that the teacher consult with the parent when problems first arose. It was educationally completely unsound. Dr. Kenneth Clark objected violently to it as a psychologist, but this is nothing.

HILL: Are there some statements from the records of Kenneth Clark?

MRS. JONES: I think there are, and we could check this out. It was really a horrible statement. And even though it was somewhat amended in the final demands of the Union, it was not sufficiently amended that it not have my hair standing on end. And practically every Negro parent, Puerto Rican parent who read this in any of its forms

objected to it. Further, those of us who had really been supportive of the Union, and who felt strongly about the concept of Unionism for teachers could not see that these issues should be the basis for a strike of teachers, and some of the issues, the issue of the disruptive child, to me is a clinical issue and should never be decided by collective bargaining between the teachers and the Board of Education without the involvement of parent groups. And we sent this word to the Union and to the Board of Education, "if these are the issues to be discussed, we want to be involved too. They're our children".

HILL: You say we.

MRS. JONES: We, meaning...

HILL: The Negro Parents?

MRS. JONES: And some white parents. The United Federation, I mean the United Parents Association also objected an organization representing predominately white, middle-class parents. It was not just Negro parents who opposed this.

HILL: The major issue in prolonging the strike was the question of the disruptive child.

MRS. JONES: The disruptive child and the more effective schools, and at best the black community is ambivalent about the more effective schools. As for us, we can tell the M.E.S. program proved to be very good but not excitingly good for students. There have been many evaluations of M.E.S. and they conflict.

HILL: Now can we get to the strike?

MRS. JONES: So we said to the Union, and I'm speaking now when I say we, very specifically the Planning Committee for the I.S. 201 complex. We cannot support you in this strike if you insist on pulling teachers out on strike on these issues, without involving in the discussions, and in negotiations the people who represent the children. Shanker ignored the protests. When I talked with him on the telephone he said "you must do what you have to do, but I don't think you're right. We're going ahead with this."

HILL: Did many parents try to take their children through the picket lines?

MRS. JONES: Many did.

HILL: Did many Negro teachers go into the schools during the strike?

MRS. JONES: Many did.

HILL: Could you give me an estimate?

MRS. JONES: I can give you the estimate at I.S. 201. I know that only on the first day did a single Negro teacher assigned to that school appear on the picket line. Some of the teachers stayed out, but they did not picket. The majority of the Negro teachers at 201 were in school every day; technically speaking, they didn't cross the picket line. They came in the back door.

HILL: Was this true at other schools?

MRS. JONES: This was true in several other schools.

HILL: In the ghetto areas?

MRS. JONES: In the ghetto areas.

HILL: In Brooklyn as well as...

MRS. JONES: The various ghetto community organizations decided to make a point of keeping certain schools open. There was not an attempt made to keep every single school open.

HILL: Certain schools were pinpointed?

MRS. JONES: That's right, and teachers who were on strike from other schools where the effort was not being made to keep open, were asked to volunteer to come into the schools we were trying to keep open, to cover classes, and in many cases they did. At 201 we had black teachers, a few white teachers, National Teachers Corps people who'd worked with us through the summer and parents and community people.