

Portland School District hiring patterns exclude Black teachers

(Continued from page 1 col. 6)
Commissioner, Bill Stevenson, dismissed the case.

HEW threatens

That June, HEW Region X, moved on one of the allegations of Ms. Spencer's complaint -- that the district discriminated in the assignment of Black teachers. HEW had found that six schools with majority Black student bodies had teaching staffs of from 20.5 per cent to 32 per cent Black, although the district's teaching staff was only 6.5 per cent minority.

HEW notified the district that it was not eligible for Emergency School Aid Act (ESAA) funds because it discriminated in "the assignment of full-time classroom teachers to the schools of such agency in such a manner as to identify any of such schools as intended for students of a particular race, color or national origin."

The district was advised that not only was it ineligible for ESAA funds but that it would be contracted by the Office of Civil Rights in regard to compliance with Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964. The district was advised that it could request a waiver of ineligibility by demonstrating that it would adhere to the Singleton Rule.

The district complied by transferring minority teachers out of Black schools. Thereafter, a battle raged between the district and the Oregon Minority Educators Organization.

"When HEW found the district in non-compliance we expected that the situation would be remedied by hiring additional Black teachers.

"If enough new Black teachers had been hired to place at least one in each school, that would have raised the percentage of minority teachers and not as many would have had to be moved. Compliance could have been accomplished by allowing those who wanted to transfer to do so."



Reginald Grey, a community agent at Adams, said that possible closure of the school would be "one of the greatest tragedies to ever come down." Grey also wondered what would happen to Black staff members assigned to Adams. (Photo: Richard Brown)

parents who carry the burden of desegregating the Portland Public Schools by the 'one way' busing plan. Black teachers are now forced to satisfy ESAA staff balance regulations of 1972. When will white students and parents be forced to comply with the Civil Rights Act of 1964?"

Because of the district policy of maintaining segregated schools and of assigning Black teachers disproportionately to those schools, Black students and teachers were forced to bear the burden of forced compliance with HEW regulations.

harassment and pressure. Parents and some teacher didn't know the Black teachers were forced there.

"Some teachers were harassed by principals, parents and even students. Those who were not overtly harassed were isolated in schools with no other Black adults and in some cases with few or no Black students.

"Another result -- one that was predicted -- was that access into the district ended. Most Black teachers had been assigned to Black schools, then some moved out to other schools. As they moved out, prin-

for 1977-78; from 16 per cent of new hires in 1973-74 to 2 per cent in 1977-78. After the Coalition found exactly the same thing I charged in 1969, the district hired a few more in 1978-79. This drop in the hiring of Black teachers took place in spite of Mr. Blanchard's public statement in 1973 that the rate of resignations of Black teachers exceeds that of non-Black teachers to the extent that 'We must hire two to keep one'.

"We don't accept the excuse that Blacks go to better jobs. We know Black teachers who have left because of mistreatment who are still unemployed."

Continued discrimination

The Community Coalition for School Integration documented the lack of Black teachers in the system and recommended that the Board move quickly to have a teaching staff that would approximate the percentage of minority students -- approximately 20 per cent. The Board rejected the idea and chose instead to associate the teaching staff with the work force statistics (4.5 to 5.5 per cent). OMEO had included discrimination in hiring in their 1977 HEW complaint, which was in-

vestigated in April of 1979, but that section was separated and is to be refilled with the Equal Employment Opportunities Commission.

The Black United Front included in its demands the hiring of additional Black teachers and appointing them in greater numbers to schools with greater concentrations of Black students.

The remedy

The School Board has accepted the advice of its attorney, Mark McClanahan, and has voted to notify HEW that it will no longer adhere to the Singleton Rule. The district plans to follow the guideline that no school with more than twice the district's minority population (schools with 40 per cent or more minority enrollment) will have double the percentage of minority teachers (not more than approximately 15 per cent). This will apply only to district assignment of teachers, with an allowance for exceeding that level if teachers request assignment to those schools.

If HEW disagrees, the district will request a summary judgment or will file suit.

McClanahan advised that, first of all, the Singleton decision does not

apply to Portland because it involved court ordered desegregation of a de jure segregated district while Portland has de facto segregation.

Also, Portland's promise to adhere to the Singleton Rule in order to receive federal funds was for the 1975-76 school year only.

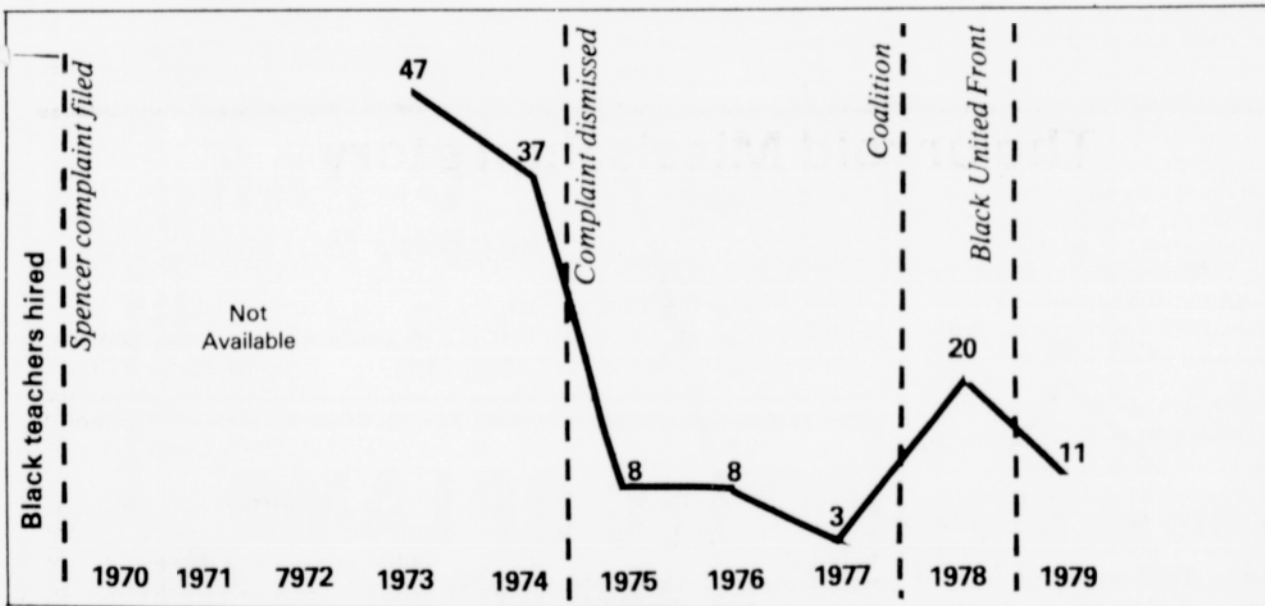
Spokesmen from HEW disagree, saying that because of a past finding of discrimination Portland has a "continuing obligation" under the Singleton rule.

Just an excuse

"It doesn't really matter what they do about the Singleton Rule," Ms. Spencer said. "They are only using this as an excuse to delay hiring Black teachers.

"The Singleton Rule never said they couldn't hire Black teachers. They have used it as an excuse and will continue to use it. All this fuss about the Singleton Rule is just a way to delay. There have been court suits all over the country and the Singleton Rule still stands. All that will happen is that they will spend two or three years in court and the attorney will make a lot of money.

"During all this time, the district will still refuse to hire more Black teachers."



Black teachers hired by PPS

(Statistics provided by the Portland Public Schools)

OMEEO accused the district of identification of Black teachers with up to 30 years seniority as "surplus status teachers" and of mandatorily transferring out Black teachers while allowing white teachers to volunteer to transfer in. They also pointed out the detrimental effect the move would have on Black children.

"We feel that HEW and the Civil Rights Department are playing a game of political checkers with Portland's powerless Black students and

Ms. Spencer warned at the time that the children would suffer.

The method the district chose to reach compliance with HEW regulations had several detrimental effects.

"Blacks had always been assigned to schools where principals wanted them," Ms. Spencer explained. "Dispersal of teachers to schools where there had never been a Black; where principals, staff members and parents did not want them brought

principals who knew they needed Black teachers asked for Black replacements.

"Now that the pressure from the 1969 complaint was off, the district used the Singleton Rule as an excuse not to hire more Black teachers. Rather than increase the percentage of minority teachers so they could place more in Black schools, they have made the excuse that they cannot place more than three teachers in a Black school. The Singleton Rule does not limit the hiring of Black teachers."

As the result of harassment and isolation many Black teachers have left the district since 1975 and they have not been replaced. The district's teaching staff was 6.5 per cent minority in 1975 and only 8.2 per cent minority last year, even though teachers for Southeast Asian students and non-English speaking students have been added.

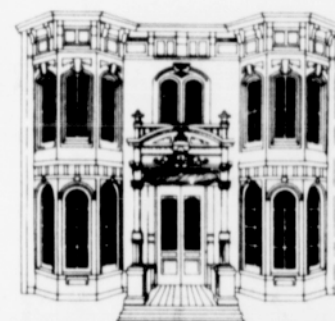
The hiring ends

Following the dismissal of Ms. Spencer's case, Black hiring dropped significantly. In 1975-76, eight teachers were hired, six per cent of the new hires. That year 6.8 per cent of the teaching staff was minority.

In 1976-1977, eight Black teachers were hired, 4 per cent of the new hires, and in 1977-78 three Black teachers were hired, 2 per cent of the new hires. That year the teaching staff hit a low of 5.5 per cent minority, while minority students made up 20 per cent of the school population.

"The drop off in hiring of Black teachers since 1975 is drastic -- from 47 for the 1973-74 school year to 8

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