

# **Gertrude Wilson Reports: The Will And The Way Of Boycotters**

**By GERTRUDE WILSON**

**This is what I saw.**

In the rooms of the Siloam Baptist Church in Brooklyn, and in the offices of the Lenox Terrace Tenants' Association, donated as headquarters of the City-Wide School Boycott Committee, I saw the will of a people. A whole people.

I didn't see Negroes, I saw a mixed group of people. White, Negro, Asian. I saw middle-aged housewives; stunning young women, registered nurses, teachers, actors, and playwrights.

I saw college students with their faces streaked with ink from the mimeograph machines.

## **In Brooklyn**

I saw Victor Newton, age 3. He walked into the room, over television cables, past twelve desks where phones were shrieking.

One foot caught the cable of a

phone waiting for the Rev. Galamison, but he just turned and plugged it in again. He was a man of business.

He must have learned to say, "Our Father, who art in Heaven", in that room, because he knew exactly where to go to hang his hat.

He hung it behind the Rev. Galamison who was then talking on the phone. Young Victor, with the symbolic name for the chaos of this drive was then ready for business.

He turned, made his way back

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# -The Will

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across the room, and climbed into his mother's lap — a lady who cared that Victor should be victorious. As she gave him a welcoming hug, she answered the 'phone. "BOYCOTT!", she said.

## Fighting City Hall

I saw organization in the heart of chaos. These people were fighting City Hall. But they either hadn't heard, or didn't care about the old cliché that "you can't fight City Hall!"

They were organized, despite the fact that they were informed daily by professional educators that they didn't understand the problem.

## Lurie and Johnson

They understood their problem well. I saw Mrs. Thelma Johnson, 600 West 150th St., Manhattan coordinator, direct activities in the Lenox Terrace headquarters. It would be hard to believe what she did.

You'd have to see it. Perhaps her greatest single achievement was the serenity she imparted, the consideration and kindness which marked the relationship these people had with each other.

Ellen Lurie, of 180 Cabrini Boulevard, carried out the details and policies set up by Mrs. Johnson. "I'm Manhattan coordinator," said Mrs. Johnson. "but Ellen does all the work."

## Like a Machine

Work Ellen Lurie did. I never saw anything like her. I watched her myself. All day Friday, Saturday, Sunday and Monday Ellen Lurie worked - like a machine.

She instructed picket Captains. She organized every line, she sent out orders, and answered phones. Mother of five children, ranging in ages from 1 to 10. Mrs. Lurie is also Secretary of the Local School Board, 12, 13, and 14.

## Others

With Thelma Johnson and Ellen Lurie was Helen James, of 1430 Amsterdam Avenue, coordinator of food for the children in Freedom Schools, as well as chief of the Speakers' Bureau of the City-Wide Boycott Committee.

She and about 20 other speakers filled over 100 speaking engagements in the weeks preceding the boycott.

Jack Schwartz, of 4320 Van Courtlandt Park East, Bronx, sat at the right hand of Mrs. Lurie, as she said. "Get this young man's story. He has slept here all week, and we don't know how we would have managed without him."

## It's What You Believe In

But there were hundreds of them, each with a personal sacrifice, and concern. Charles Saun-

ders, a Senior student at Charles Evans Hughes High, who has applied to NYU, said, when asked about the time he spent in Manhattan Headquarters instead of on his studies, "It is no longer a question of what is good for you, it's what you believe in."

There was Bill Gross, of 511 West 113th Street, answering the telephones; Elena Kehoe, who lives in Brooklyn, and attends the High School of Music and Art; Jack Fisher, of 659 West 162nd Street, also from Music and Art.

There were kids in trench coats, and ladies in mink. You sit there and watch and you see people not feeling fatigue. You wonder why the Board of Education, and the Superintendent of Schools don't understand that these are people who care, fighting for something good. They want good schools, and they're entitled to them.

This is a City of turbulence, and you feel it here. You see a cross-section of the city's people - not all poor, not all middle-class, and not all privileged.

But the one thing you see above all, in this myriad group of races and religions — you see Americans together, working for a common goal.

## **Jimmy Booker Reports:**

# ***JHS 103, PS 194 And City Hall***

**By JAMES BOOKER**

Miss Jeanne Robinson, a teacher in JHS 13, 106th St., and Madison Ave., halted her marching around City Hall and told the Amsterdam News: "This is the first organized expression of New York City Negro parents showing that they are interested in things that affect them, and I had to join it."

"It's worth it to lose a day's pay and earn a lifetime of dignity and self-respect," she added proudly. At her school, more than half the teachers were absent from classes Monday as only 82 of the 1,415 students showed up.

Leroy Smalls, who coordinated boycott activities in the Harlem

area from 125th to 135th Sts., between Lenox and Lexington Aves., said, "Everybody feels something has to be done, and we are ready to face it and want action now."

### **Not Scared**

Mrs. Louise Gaither, community coordinator at PS 194, led a large group of teachers and students from her school and told this newspaper, "We're marching for freedom and we're not scared of anybody or any jobs." Support of the boycott was so complete at the school, located at 244 W. 144th St., that officials closed it down shortly after 9 a.m.

These expressions were similar to many heard as more than 2,000 boycotters left their individual school demonstrations in the freezing cold to join the warmth of the march against "Segregation, Substitutes, and Overcrowding," at City Hall.

They came from all over. Jim

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OH! FREEDOM — Two George Washington High School co-eds sing "Oh Freedom" while picketing before the well integrated school Monday in pro-

test against the Board of Education policy of racial distribution.

(Gilbert Photo)

## —City Hall

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Horton, a labor official, led more than 300 white and Negro youths from the Lower East Side Committee for Civil Rights. Rev. Robert Rhodes, a white Methodist minister, said, "This is my way of helping in this fight. I just don't believe Donovan has any feeling for the problem."

A white youth in the group, Steve Rappaport, said he was marching, "For Freedom for Everybody."

### Integration

And so it went, 2,000 strong, black and white, Negro and Puerto Rican, Jew and Gentile, as they came from the Village-Chelsea NAACP, New York NAACP, Bronx NAACP, Hughes Student Council, Parents Workshop Committee, Local 1199, Drug and Hospital Workers Union, Negro War Veterans, Lower Harlem Tenants Council, and many individual schools, to join in the protest demonstrations and chant, "Integration," and "Jim Crow Must Go."

Unfortunately, the man they had come to lay their protests before, Mayor Robert Wagner, was not at City Hall all day Monday, remaining at Gracie Mansion.

Leaders of the citywide school boycott were in Brooklyn and after an hour's marching, demonstrators at City Hall decided to join them and then continued their march across the Brooklyn Bridge to the Board of Education headquarters.

Earlier Monday students in two fringe schools, PS 117, 240 E. 109th St., and JHS 54, 103 W. 107th St., made the boycotts almost complete. PS 117 which has 1,920 students attending, had only 360 students in school Monday, a majority white and Puerto Rican, and only three teachers absent.

The boycotters at the school, named after Booker T. Washington, were mainly teachers, with Harold Schenchler, of 14 W. 90th St., as school captain, assisted by another teacher, John Fish. When we arrived at the school shortly after 6:30 they were on duty, and already a couple of teachers had entered quietly.

The first Negro teacher to arrive, Mrs. M. Reed, entered quietly, and turned her head when an Amsterdam News reporter sought to question her. Another teacher came to her defense, however, saying she was concerned because she had an exam Monday.

### Off Work

Within minutes, however, two mothers, Mrs. Eliase Johnson, of 140 W. 104th St., and Mrs. Addie Wroten, of the same address, joined the demonstrators. "I'm taking off from work because I'm tired of my child going to a segregated school," Mrs. Johnson said.

"My son just isn't getting the kind of education here that he

would get in a white school," Mrs. Wroten declared as she put on her sign which read, "Fight Jimcrow Now."

Several blocks away, at the Jefferson Park School, which has a 65 per cent Puerto Rican census, 30 per cent Negro, and 5 per cent white, at 240 E. 109th St., David Tirado, school captain said he was dedicated to the fight.

### Segregated School

"I have four children going here and three at PS 101, and they are getting a poor education. They have no books and no integration. I will continue fighting," he said.

Down the street a blonde student from Barnard, who refused to give her name, said she had joined, "because I went to segregated schools in El Paso, Tex., and I know the damage it does to you."

Mrs. Dorothy DuPont, of 1809 Lexington Ave., who was the co-captain at the school, said she was demonstrating "For better school standards and a better school for my four children who are deprived of so many things at this school that white kids receive in other neighborhoods."

Another of the school's pickets, Mrs. Bessie Pritchard, of 1830 Lexington Ave., said while she had transferred her child from PS 117 to PS 43 because of the poor quality of education he was getting there, "I am back here picketing to help the other parents whose kids still attend school here."

And so it went, in conversations with pickets throughout Monday, the mood was similar, the fever is rising, and despite the freezing cold, it was obvious, from children to parents and teachers, "we shall overcome."

# The Boycott And The Policemen

By **GEORGE BARNER**

**"Very effective and all quiet — not a single incident."**

Thus did Deputy Chief Inspector Harry Taylor, commanding officer of the Police Department's Sixth Division, summarize the condition of the battle-ground on Monday afternoon, seven hours after the official commencement of the Feb. 3 school boycott and five hours after most pupils were scheduled to have reported to class.

His survey of the scene framed by the boundaries of the E. 126th St., W. 123rd St. and W. 135th St. police precincts (including schools district 10 and 11 and parts of districts 9, 12 and 13) echoed the summations of commanders of the other Harlem-binding divisions, the Fourth (East 104th St. station) and the Fifth (West 100th St., West 126th St., West 152nd St.).

"The pickets lived up to their promise," said Inspector Taylor.

"They were very cooperative and very orderly. Negro and white, they were well instructed. The boycott seemed to be very effective, too, many children stayed away about 75 percent. I'll say this extra about the conduct of the pickets—they were a lot more pleasant than I would have been out there (Monday) morning; they almost froze."

Almost froze is an understatement.

The first stop in one reporter's

appointed rounds led to JHS 45, a five-year-old red and blue brick structure at First Ave. and 120th St., where two hearty, placard-wearing pickets—both women—were shifting their weight from one frosted foot to the other and frequently clapping their hands in the frigid blackness of an East River dawn not yet tinted or

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# -Policemen

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warmed by the reluctant sunrise.

They were Mrs. Hannah Brockington, of 2390 Second Ave., doughty captain of the picket line assigned to JHS 45's polygot plant; and Mrs. Viola York.

It was 6:45 a.m., fifteen minutes past the appointed time of arrival for pickets.

"They'll be here," shuddered Mrs. Brockington, her words vaporizing away on a wind wafting icily from the river. A huge bulk of very dark blue highlighted by glints of silver emerged from the shelter of the school lobby and, in the now rapidly broadening sun, separated into four overcoated police officers led by a sergeant from the E. 126th St. station.

## Alert

After sniffing to see that the reporter was not the bearer of the dawn's first trouble, the cops moved outward to post themselves.

Mrs. Brockington's prediction gradually fulfilled itself as, all smiles and b'r-r-ing at the cold, the first contingent of reinforcements stomped up to beef the line in the persons of Mrs. Ada Kelly and Mrs. Vandalia Lovett, both of 2375 First Ave., and Mrs. Queenie Bell, of 2360 First Ave., all of the Harlem Parents Committee.

## At Ben Franklin

"We're here for freedom and equality; we'll stick it out," they laughed through chattering teeth as the reporter bucked the river wind on his way to Benjamin Franklin High School at 116th St. and the FDR Drive.

Doing guard duty there was a decidedly younger detachment of sentinels patrolling briskly in a tight ellipse on the buff asphalt outside the teachers entrance and parking lot—the windward side of the clay-red school building.

A jovial-faced bear of a youngster courageously removed the glove and introduced himself as Benjamin Garcia, a member of a Columbia University's CORE chapter and a political science major. He explained that his squad, which was growing almost as rapidly as the sun was now rising, was made up at the moment mainly of high school students from a current seminar on education in the slums and in the suburbs sponsored by the American Friends Society service committee at 94 E. 11th St.

## Drifting Pickets

Many of the youngsters were from out of town. Garcia called over Don Bailey from Westchester, Pa., and Matt Hobbs from the Connecticut who were vowing that they understood the worth of their venture in the cold and were happy to be doing it when a big police sergeant sauntered up and quite civilly reminded Garcia that his pickets, who had begun to "drift" slightly, were to tighten their elliptical patrol to remain between the curb and the center seam of the sidewalk. The pickets obliged.

Michael Flug, picket captain and also from Columbia, explained that Franklin was the "largest, most rundown, understaffed and overcrowded school" in the area with a segregated student population of about 90 percent.

## Metal Trades

A trip to Machine and Metal Trades High School at 320 E. 96th St. found Bob Miller, picket captain, and Clint Willis, East Harlem coordinator, trooping a platoon in front of the old-fashion-

ed high-stooped building. Miller complained that his pickets were not arriving fast enough at that moment to effectively block the entrance to the annex across the street where teachers were entering but that they would be on hand at any moment.

## Teachers Picket

Back at Franklin, which was expected to be the most likely site of incidents should any arise, teachers were beginning to arrive for duty in autos and afoot. They were also helping to man the picket line in greater numbers than elsewhere.

Among the teachers on the Franklin line—a line whose numbers grew to over 100 in varying shifts—were Sandy Adicke, G. Beauchamp, N. Curtis, P. Curtis and M. Kaplan.

The teacher pickets, in a prepared statement, explained that they supported the boycott because they felt it "will focus public attention upon the urgent need for quality integrate education. The schools... can and must be improved."

One of the first instructors to challenge the line (he went by unmolested) was William Doonan who said he "(felt) sympathy for the purposes of the boycott but (would) not engage."

Another teacher, a woman who would not identify herself, said she was of the opinion that the "Board of Education is trying very hard. We should go further with them and give them more of a chance."

## Ticking Clock

Inside, the principal, Irving Anker, had waited until the last moment to see who was coming and who was not and now had an assistant principal preparing the switches in scheduling of substitutes and reserves that would insure coverage of every class. As the clock ticked past 9:30 (Anker had ordered his students in at 8:40 and kept them until after the pickets departed) the attendance total for teachers was given as 28 absent or late of a roster of 133, twelve of the absentees "called in sick," he said.

## 400 Out Of 2650

A little later the assistant principal, Salvatore Pergalo, verified the teacher attendance and said that, of his student body of 2650, only 400 ventured across the lines to register and obtain programs for the first day of the new term.

Among the 25 percent minority who came to school was Ralph Alonso, an 18-year-old academic course senior who plans to enter City College next September.

"I'm not against the boycott. I think they're doing it for the right reason. But I'm in my 8th term and I don't want to do anything to jeopardize my graduation," said Ralph who lives at 18 E. 117th St.

Evelyn Harvin, a 16-year-old 6th term of 2081 Second Ave., said "I feel I should go to school to get my program card but I'm definitely for the boycott. Richard Brussarde, 17, of 765 Cortland Ave., a senior working as a lab technician, opposed the boycott because "New York has always been a free city."

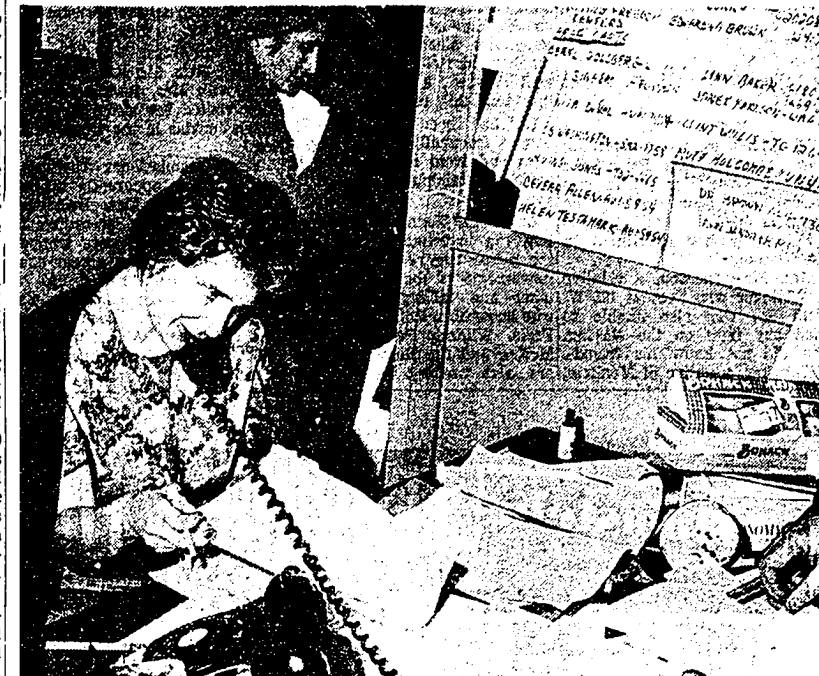
Among the multitude of stay-aways who helped mount a very spirited picket line and apply last minute finishing touches or repairs to wind-tossed placards were a youthfully gay crowd of boys and girls in Shep's Pizza, a tiny, cozy and jam-packed haven across Pleasant Ave.

Gilbert James, Jr., a 19-year-old '63 graduate of Franklin who now works in the Post Office,



CHANTING VOICES, MARCHING FEET — Policeman (back ground) keeps an eye on youthful picketers (they numbered 55) padding in front of the High School of Music and Art at Convent Ave. and 135th St.

(Gilbert Photo)



TIRED VOLUNTEER — Mrs. Ellen Lurie begins to smile through her weariness as she

tabulates the results of the boycott in Upper Manhattan area stayed away from school. Boycott headquarters. Over 90

per cent of the children in this area stayed away from school. (Gilbert Photo)

said he picketed because "it might have some effect on the Board of Education, open their eyes and make them get on the ball a little bit more. How much more would it take? After all, Franklin is a pretty good school, the building is holding up."

Generally echoing him was Eugene Ward, 17, of 2501 8th Ave., a senior; (equal education is an urgent need and the board has got to realize the public is not going to stand for second rate segregated education any longer).

Other teenage boycotters, who were soon to melt away in cars and aboard subways to join the marches on City Hall and the Board headquarters, included James Winsett, 19-year-old senior of 5836 Lexington Ave.; Verna Williams, 17, a sophomore; Johannes (Joe) Prescott, 19, a senior of 409 W. 129th St.; Theresa Hamilton, 17-year-old senior of 60 E. 135th St. and Robert Spivey, a 17-year-old senior and team basketball player of 134 W. 143rd St.

Also Phyllis Wilson, 16½, of

431 E. 116th St., a 6th term, Patrick Smith, a senior and member of the basketball squad who lives at 134 W. 112th St.; Stanley Rhem, 17, of 541 Lenox Ave., a member of the school's jazz and concert band; Joyce Jordan, 17, of 3170 Broadway, Jaqueline Reece, 16, of 200 W. 145th St.

## At JHS 45

Back at JHS 45, Seymour Levy, its principal since September, reported that attendance of his 1,650 pupils had been "very low" but declined as had officials at Machine and Metals Trade, to be quoted on any figures, preferring that they come through the district offices or the board itself.

"Just say we're looking forward to tomorrow to try to pro-

vide a quality education in our school."

## Freedom School

A centrally located Freedom School in the Franklin-JHS 45-Machine Trades area, was the Jefferson Park Parish Methodist Church at 407 E. 114th St. under the church pastor, Rev. John Collins.

The school accommodated between 60 and 70 elementary school children supervised and instructed by 17 adults and students from Union Theological Seminary under a guidance teacher in a program of Negro-Puerto Rican history studies and explanation of the meaning of their new-found holiday. High School and junior high school students acted as monitors.