Proposed bill names national historic site

WASHINGTON

Efforts to designate the Mary McLeod Bethune Council House a national historical site last week received strong support from a number of organizations, including the National Council of Negro Women (NCNW).

Supporting a U.S. Senate bill, S.2436, which proposes to designate the Council House at 1318 Vermont Av., N.W., as a national historical site, the president of the National Council of Negro Women said such a measure would "honor one of America's greatest leaders who has contributed so much to our understanding of the problems of race and sex and who was active in the major movements of our time."

Such a designation would also celebrate the significance of what Mary McLeod Bethune's life meant to all those who fight for freedom, while serving as a basis to understand and appreciate the contributions of organized work of black women, said NCNW president. Dr. Dorothy Height in her testimony before the Senate subcommittee on Public Lands and Reserved Waters.

Mary McLeod Bethune, who died in 1966 after a life-long struggle against racial and sexual discrimination, maintained a permanent resident at 1318 Vermont Avenue which was also the home of the National Council of Negro Women.

"I want this building to be a blessing to you," Bethune said of the NCNW headquarters. She envisioned it to serve as a base from which black women would "promote programs of action to meet the needs of the world," Height said.

The property has been and is of national significance, the NCNW official said. 1318 Vermont Avenue is part of the Logan Circle Historic District which is listed on the National Register of Historic Places. Furthermore, Height said, "the evolving role of Mrs. Bethune and black women leaders is shaping the history of America during this period and the institutionalization of this property, in 1977, as the Mary McLeod Bethune Memorial Library Museum and the National Archives for Black Women's History, all attest to the vision and the success of Mary McLeod Bethune."

Mrs. Sue Braily Thurman, founder and editor of the Aframerican Woman's Journal, said the property is a symbol of the work of black women. " It was from this building that Mrs. Bethune with a half dozen of her Council officers, left to San Francisso to participate in the organization of the United Nations, her voice representing the Council, influenced some of its most important deliberations."

Dovey Roundtree, general counsel for the National Council of Negro Women, also made a strong plea to the members of the Senate subcommittee to support the bill, because, he said, the targeted site embodies the struggles and achievements of black women.

However, the deputy director of the National Park Service opposed the enactment of S.2436 "because a study must be completed by the National Park Service as a prerequisite to further consideration of the Council House as a national historic site." To buttress up his argument, the deputy director, Ira J. Hutchison, also said adequate recognition of Bethune's contribution to the United States was already commemorated in the National Park system.

AFRO Photo by Martin Evans

MEMORIES OF CLASSROOMS PAST — In a flight of fancy, Hollis Posey, a teacher who retired June 30, returned to Rognel Heights Elementary School where he once taught the sixth grade. Posey's 24 years with the school system provides a deep pool of reflections.

A teacher retires, but memories linger

As the teacher sat in the darkened, summer-abandoned classroom, memories from countless school years past flickered inside his head.

The school children are gone for the summer, and the building which during the school year seems perpetually animated, is entombed in an eerie quiet.

Some time in early September, however, a bell will ring, the doors will swing open and the building will be filled with light and sound and the squirming bodies of returning students again, as classrooms have been on autumn mornings in countless years past.

But about 300 retiring Baltimore teachers and administrators will not be back to witness the annual refoliation of the school system. For Hollis Posey and many others, school will open without them for the first time in decades.

"I won't miss it until school opens again in the fall, but I'll miss it then," Posey said, reflectively.

Hollis Posey, who retired from the school system after 24 years as of June 30, returned to Rognel Heights Elementary. The visit brought a flood of memories, and images of his teaching career swept over him like waves on a beach.

One wave washed in an image of a little black boy who struggled with reading almost two decades ago.

"I had a pupil named Elijah Cummings back in 1963 or 1962. I'll never forget Elijah as long as I live. He's an attorney downtown now." Posey said, his face softening as he spoke.

"The biggest thing that impressed me was that I gave him a "C" in reading," Posey said, pausing. "He got upset. It was because he needed more work in comprehension. After that that was it. I would have to tell him to go home. He just wanted to be on top. That was the only "C" I ever gave him. The rest were all "A's."

"After that I went overboard to try to help students who wanted to be helped," Posey said.

Posey has found most teachers are willing to work with good students, but said the biggest challenge of his teaching career was to find ways of motivating problem students.

Chance provided him an opportunity to challenge another of his pupils.

"Leo Damon started to read because of a statement I had made," Posey said, as a reflective grin swept across his face like a wave. "I told the class I'd seen a snake as long as this room, and Leo didn't believe me. So I told him to look up "anaconda." From that point on Leo would read everything about snakes. He went from being a non-reader to a reader."

"The last I heard Leo is a seargent in the army," Posey said, as the image of Leo Damon faded from the room.

Children cannot be convinced of the value of education unless their parents are convinced themselves. For this reason Posey became involved in an adult education project at school No. 121 in south Baltimore which sought to address the concerns of the community's adults.

Practical adult instruction was offered on such topics as reading and math, as well as low cost meal preparation, and negotiating with housing officials. School was presented as a usefull tool, and parents became more willing to insist their children make use of it, Posey said.

Although Posey frequently challenged teachers to look for more ways of solving the basic educational problem - helping children to learn - he acknowledged school budget limitations have had a deleterious effect.

"You are going to have larger classes and it's going to be really taxing to that good teacher that wants to do a good job," he warned. "A lot of children just won't be reached."

But Posey added budget problems made it even more important for teachers to motivate their pupils to make the most of the remaining resources.

"Somehow a teacher has to find a way of motivating those children," he said.

As a teacher grapples with the minds of a roomful of children he is never sure what the outcome of his efforts will be, Posey observed.

"When you are teaching you never know what the product will turn out to be. When you are working on a machine you know what the product is as soon as it is finished. But a student may turn out to be a judge or may wind up in jail. You never know," Posey said.

But at his retirement, Posey is convinced he has made at least a few positive marks.

And he recounted with pride an incident in which a former pupil who was walking with her mother recognized Posey after 13 years and lavished him with praise.

"I told her I am retired and she said I'd cheated her children out of having me for a teacher As she was walking away she was still talking to her mother about me," Posey said.

"You don't know what that does to you," Posey said, his eyes bright, his smile chasing the shadows from the darkened room in which he spoke.

A magical smile of memory played on his face. For a moment one could almost hear the school bell ring again, could almost feel the presence of squirming youngsters from school years past fill the room.

Against World Airways

Flight attendant charges job bias

WASHINGTON

A black World Airways flight attendant, who was demoted from her senior position last month, has filed a complaint with the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (EEOC), charging discrimination against the airline company.

The attendant, Charron Osborne, charges she was downgraded from senior flight attendant, a position she held since January 1979, to flight attendant because "she is black."

In a May 7 letter of notification regarding her new status, the company's flight attendant director, Ronald L. Mangini, said the downgrading was "due to non - compliance with World Airways senior and flight attendant procedures." The official did not specify what the violations were.

However, Osborne, who has been with World Airways since May 27, 1973, said the non - compliance Mangini referred to in his letter was nothing more than an excuse to change her seniority status to what amounts to an entry level position.

The procedural violations, as was explained to the complainant by her immediate supervisor, Sherri Eager, four days after the May 7 dated letter, had to do with her failing to fill out two trip report forms properly. In an April trip report after a flight from BWI, her home base, to West Germany, Frankfurt, London and back, she put down "Germany" instead of "Frankfurt" for one of the stopovers.

"That was my first crime," she said with a smile.

"The other charge was as frivolous as the first she added. "It was for not giving them the breakdown of the different drinks (consumed) in one of the flights."

As a senior flight attendant, during the last three and a half years, she said, she submitted over 300 — about two a week — such routine trip report forms, with no complaints from her supervisor whatsoever.

CHARRON OSBORNE, flight attendant with World Airways, this week, charged the airline with discrimination in a complaint to the EEOC.

It is very easy to see that the charge of non - compliance was just a smokescreen to change her status, which also means a cut of over $400 a month in salary, Osborne stated.

In fact, she added, the action was taken four days before she was called in by her supervisor to ask her about the procedural errors.

The young attendant also alleged that her case was not an isolated case. Two other black senior flight attendants downgraded themselves "because they were tired of the hassle," and another was demoted by the company for "minor violations," she claimed.

Explaining the reasons behind their dissatisfaction, Osborne said, it is the attitude of the company's flight attendant director towards blacks. "It is common knowledge that Ron Mangini, the director of flight attendants, Line, does not like the black attendants," she said in her letter to the EEOC. "All of the black flight attendants have had problems with him."

School official wants to rewrite 'Huckleberry Finn'

WASHINGTON (UPI) — A black former administrator at the Mark Twain Intermediate School in suburban Virginia failed to have the Twain classic "The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn" banned so now he intends to rewrite it without "racist references."

"I think the book is great and ought to be enjoyed by all children," John H. Wallace said. "I think black children will enjoy it more if it is rewritten.

"The book uses the term 'nigger' more than 200 times. And there are several references to blacks not being human."

Wallace tried to have "Huckleberry Finn" banned from Fairfax County classrooms because he said it was racist. He convinced the school's principal to remove the book from required curriculum in the spring but the decision was later overturned by school officials.

Wallace said he has since been reassigned to another school.

"Guess why?" he said without explaining.

FREE Subscription Gift!

This handy Pocket Calculator can be yours when you subscribe to

Baltimore Afro-American

6 months at the regular subscription Price of $20.00

Please include check, money order, VISA-Master Card

CONTINENTAL UNITED STATES ONLY

Name_____

Address_____

City_____ State_____ Zip_____

Card No._____ Expiration Date_____

Send to:

The Baltimore AFRO-AMERICAN

P.O. Box 1857 Baltimore, Md. 21203