



# Washington Teachers' Union

## **RESOLUTION HONORING FORMER WTU PRESIDENT WILLIAM "BILL" SIMONS**

WHEREAS, William H. Simons was a decorated member of the U.S. Army during World War II, reaching the rank of Sergeant Major and receiving the Bronze Star;

WHEREAS, Bill Simons started his teaching career in the District of Columbia in 1947 as a social studies teacher at Benjamin Banneker Junior High School;

WHEREAS, Bill Simons joined the Black Teachers Union (DC), local 27, AFT, in 1952 and helped lead the merger of the city's Black and White teachers unions to form the AFT Teachers' Union of Washington, DC, local 6, AFT;

WHEREAS, Bill Simons served as a building representative, parliamentarian and financial secretary of the renamed Washington Teachers' Union, and was elected president of the WTU in 1964;

WHEREAS, in 1967, Bill Simons was the lead negotiator for the first-ever contract for teachers in Washington, DC;

WHEREAS, under the leadership of Bill Simons the union negotiated for teachers' salary increases to be attached to the pay raises of police officers and firefighters; bargained for DCPS teachers to receive salaries over the summer; negotiated a change in pay periods from monthly to every two weeks; fought for the opening of personnel files; and secured other significant gains;

WHEREAS, the WTU conducted two successful strikes—1972 and 1977—under the leadership of Bill Simons;

WHEREAS, Bill Simons was elected an AFT vice president and member of the AFT executive council in 1965, a position he used to advocate for the rights of students and educators across the country, especially those of color;

WHEREAS, Bill Simons presided over a 1968 march on the Capitol by District teachers to demand a pay raise from Congress, which set teacher salaries in DC at the time;

WHEREAS, Bill Simons spearheaded the establishment of the Washington Teachers' Union Scholarship Fund, which provides scholarships for DCPS students who pursue a degree in education and return to the District as a teacher;



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WHEREAS, Bill Simons brought a lawsuit to end the differential in per-pupil expenditures for teachers' salaries and benefits that existed between schools east and west of Rock Creek Park, and fought to end the racially-based "Track System" that existed in DC in the 1960s;

WHEREAS, under Simons' leadership, one of the nation's first federally funded Teachers Center was established in Washington, DC in 1977. It has since been institutionalized as the WTU's Professional Development Center.

WHEREAS, Bill Simons is a founding member of the Coalition of Black Trade Unionists, a national organization dedicated to empowering black workers and strengthening the black community;

WHEREAS, Bill Simons was an active member of the retiree chapter of the WTU;

WHEREAS, Washington, DC teachers, students and their families continue to benefit today because of Bill Simons' commitment to strengthening communities and his advocacy for our schools and workers;

WHEREAS, Bill Simons passed away on December 8, 2016 at the age of 92.

THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED, that the WTU—and its active and retired members—pay tribute to William H. Simons for his outstanding contributions to educators, the labor movement and the District of Columbia;

THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED, that the WTU take immediate and concrete steps to permanently recognize the contributions of Bill Simons;

THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED, that the WTU, its leaders and its membership strive to live up to the high standard Bill Simons set as an educator, labor leader and community activist.

THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED, that the WTU and its members seek to educate the public, especially DCPS students, about the significant role that Bill Simons played in improving public education in the District of Columbia—and the lives of its residents.

**Respectfully submitted by Elizabeth A. Davis, President, Washington Teachers' Union, December 14, 2016.**