

PRINCIPAL UNDER SIEGE

by
Beulah Jones

Based on the autobiography,
CONDUCT UNBECOMING: A PRINCIPAL UNDER
SIEGE

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FADE IN:

EXT/INT. FRANKLIN ELEMENTARY SCHOOL - DAY

Wooden horses block traffic at both ends of the empty street. One lone car parked across from the school displays "Official Board of Education Parking Permit Principal" on the front windshield.

Suddenly hundreds of children explode through the front doors of the school, running amok. Two boys hurl stones at the parked car's windshield.

HALLWAY

Children running wild through the halls.

School principal, BEULAH WHYTE, 35, African-American, a statuesque woman with a commanding presence, orders them back into their classrooms.

BEULAH	TEACHERS (O.S)
(frantically)	(shouting)
Stop! Stop! Go back to your rooms.	Strike! Go home! School's out! No school today! Go home!

INT. DINING ROOM - NIGHT

Beulah and two other PRINCIPAL ASPIRANTS, African American males in their thirties, sit at the dining room table studying the questions from prior principal examinations.

BEULAH
What is this? 'Whose signature appears on the fifth line of the Declaration of Independence?' What kind of question is that? More to the point -- who cares?.

PRINCIPAL ASPIRANT #1
Mrs. Whyte! Do you mind? We're trying to concentrate here.

BEULAH
Okay!

Beulah begins tapping on the table with her pencil.

Beulah (CONT'D)

Here we go with another one! 'What year did Thomas Edison discover electricity?' Tell me what this has to do with being a principal. I mean these questions are so stupid!

PRINCIPAL ASPIRANT #2

Mrs. Whyte! If you cannot compose yourself, we are going to ask you to leave.

PRINCIPAL ASPIRANT #1

I really don't think that's too much to ask.

She pushes herself away from the table, and starts doing a soft shoe.

PRINCIPAL ASPIRANT #2

That's it! If you are not willing to conduct yourself appropriately, please leave!

Chastened, she resumes her seat, picks up the pages of questions and begins to study.

INT. HIGH SCHOOL STUDY HALL - DAY

The calm emotionless voice of the proctor penetrates the study hall filled with principal aspirants taking the written portion of the principal's exam.

PROCTOR

Good luck to you all. You may begin.

A chorus of rustling papers peaks and subside into silence. The room is still and quiet except for an occasional cough and the sound of turning pages.

Beulah scans the pages of the test booklet, searching for one of the many questions she had studied. Finally there it is -- a question whose answer she had memorized.

"Who was the author of the novel where Sarah Casey is the heroine?"

BEULAH
 (bellows)
 I know this one!

A roar of laughter engulfs the room.

INT. BOARD OF EDUCATION CONFERENCE ROOM - DAY

Three school superintendents at a long conference table impatiently shuffle papers. Personnel Superintendent DR. OTHMAN ROBINS, early forties, irritated, glances at his watch

ROBINS
 Where is he? Why can't he get
 someplace on time?

Area Superintendent DR. GERALD CONNORS, early fifties, apathetic and unconcerned replies.

CONNORS
 Relax, he'll be here.

DR. JOB BRINKER, middle sixties, quite frail and vulnerable appears to be asleep.

ROBINS.
 (glancing at his watch,
 again)
 It's 10:15 and the candidate is
 waiting.

OUTER OFFICE

Beulah, sitting on the board-commodity vinyl couch glances at her watch -"10:15"

BEULAH
 I don't operate on C.P. time. A ten
 o'clock appointment means ten
 o'clock, not colored people's ten-
 thirty.

District Superintendent HENDRICK SPRINGER, late thirties, tall, bronze and handsome, slightly harried rushes into the outer office.

SPRINGER
 Sorry I'm late. You must be
 Beulah Whyte.

BEULAH
 Yes, I am.

SPRINGER
 I've heard a lot about you. We'll
 be with you in a sec.

Springer dashes into the room and takes a seat at the
 conference table.

SPRINGER (CONT'D)
 Sorry I'm late, fellas.

ROBINS
 (sarcastically)
 I'm glad you could make it. Let's
 get started.
 (to the committee)
 Beulah Whyte is our next candidate.
 She passed the written exam on the
 first attempt.

SPRINGER
 I've heard she's quite brilliant.
 If she passes, I have a place for
 her in my district.

Dr. Robins goes to the door and invites Beulah in.

ROBINS
 Mrs. Whyte, please come in.

Beulah eases herself from the cohesive grip of the vinyl
 couch.

When she ventures into the conference room, Hendrick Springer
 and Gerald Connors rise, but Job Brinker remains seated. Each
 wears an impersonal but pleasant expression.

ROBINS (CONT'D)
 You've met Mr Springer. I'm Dr.
 Robins and this is Dr. Connors and
 Dr. Brinker. Please have a seat.

She takes a chair at the head of the long conference table. The questioning begins.

ROBINS (CONT'D)

Mrs. Whyte, tell us about your teaching experience.

BEULAH

I subbed for two years before I taught fourth grade for one year. After that, I taught math at Duncan High School for seventeen years.

CONNORS

If the cost of a meal in a restaurant is increased 5% should the gratuity also increase going from 10% to 15%?

BEULAH

No. Because a gratuity increase is included in the increase in the cost of the meal.

Dr. Robins, smiles and nods his head in agreement, but Dr. Brinker frowns and grimaces.

SPRINGER

Have you had any administrative experience?

BEULAH

Yes, I was the first Human Relation Coordinator at Duncan High School. I was also a counselor there. Now I am the vice-principal in charge of Scheduling.

Dr. Brinker, indicating his growing unease begins to shake his head in disagreement and blurts out.

BRINKER

Mrs. Whyte...

He stops, grimaces, and draws a breath

BRINKER (CONT'D)

...when you were a vice-principal,
what input did the teachers have
when you made up the class
schedule?

BEULAH

None. In fact I wanted to
discontinue all Basic Shops during
the summer.

This question peaks Dr. Connors interest.

CONNORS

Why did you want to do that?

BEULAH

The shop teachers needed to
upgrade their skills by actually
working in their chosen industry.

BRINKER

You mean to say?...

His words come to an abrupt halt; he grasps his chest and
slumps backward into his chair, eyes bulging and mouth open.

Beulah springs into action.

BEULAH

(ordering Springer)

Call 911!

(pointing to Dr. Robins)

You raise his head so I can loosen
his collar!

(directing Dr. Connors)

Get back, give him some air!

Each one follows her orders without question.

She begins CPR.

After a few seconds she puts her ear to his chest and
listens.

She looks up.

BEULAH (CONT'D)

He's dead.

INT. BEULAH'S BEDROOM - DAY.

An accumulation of clothing is scattered everywhere. Beulah is asleep next to her husband. A cool breeze blows through an open window and she snuggles underneath the layers of coverings on the bed.

The telephone on the nightstand rings. She slowly reaches for it.

BEULAH

(drowsily)

Hello.

ROBINS (V.O.)

Mrs. Whyte, this is Othman Robins.

She bolts into a sitting position and listens intently.

ROBINS (V.O.)

Congratulations, you have been assigned to the Franklin Elementary School. You're to report Monday morning.

The brief call ends her desire to sleep. She nudges her husband.

BEULAH

Bill, I've been assigned to be the principal of a new school in your old stomping grounds. Get up, let's go see it now.

BILL WHYTE, African-American, mid-thirties, a tall, strong impressive individual, slides out of bed and goes into the bathroom.

Beulah hurries from the bed, grabs her clothes from a chair, dresses quickly and waits impatiently for Bill.

As they leave the bedroom she notices the bedding and the accumulations of clothing strewn everywhere.

She stops momentarily.

BILL

Aren't you going to pick that stuff up?

BEULAH

Not now. I've waited six months and I finally got a school.

As they leave she shuts the bedroom door behind her.

EXT. STREET - DAY

Beulah and Bill drive through the streets of the inner-city. Shells of buildings draped with blackness of smoke, vacant lots, and schools with broken windows covered with graffiti line the streets.

BEULAH

Look at this neighborhood. It looks like a war zone.

BILL

Yeah. When I lived here it wasn't this bad.

BEULAH

What happened?

BILL

After King's assassination, riots broke out and many buildings and stores were set on fire.

BEULAH

But what happened to the schools? Windows are all broken out and the buildings are covered with graffiti.

BILL

Yeah, that hasn't changed.

Bill maneuvers the car to a stop in full view of a new school. A beautiful edifice, unmarred by graffiti or broken windows stands in striking contrast to the older homes and buildings surrounding it.

BEULAH
 (excitedly)
 Oh look, it's really good looking.
 Let's take a look at the
 playground.

Bill drives around to the back of the school. There is no
 playground.

BEULAH (CONT'D)
 (bewildered)
 Where's the playground? Did the
 Board of Education forget that
 children need someplace to play?

BILL
 No, they probably thought the
 little niggahs could play in the
 street.

BEULAH
 Playground or no playground this is
 still going to be the best school
 in the nation.

INT. FRANKLIN SCHOOL - BEULAH'S PRIVATE OFFICE - DAY

Boxes filled with books line the walls; her desk overflows
 with crumbled paper balls, loosely laid stacks of paper and
 half empty coffee cups. Among this clutter is a package of
 cigarettes and an ashtray filled with half-smoked cigarette
 butts.

A board-commodity vinyl couch is placed in front of her desk.

NINA HENDERS, African-American, middle thirties, a childhood
 friend, a loyal colleague, efficient and serious has just
 completed a tour of the building.

BEULAH
 Here, the clerk brought you a cup
 of coffee.

She hands Nina a cup of coffee.

BEULAH (CONT'D)
 Well, what do you think?

NINA

Oh, it's beautiful. Just wondering how long it'll stay that way.

BEULAH

I know what you mean, but...I was hoping you'd join me.

NINA

I'd love to be the counselor.

BEULAH

Oh, that's wonderful. But if we're going to have a school where black children will be taught, we'll need some good teachers.

NINA

Yeah, that'll be the challenge.

BEULAH

Fourteen FTB's are coming with their students from the school down the street that's closing.

NINA

FTB's...full-time-basis substitutes?

BEULAH

Yeah, but most of the teachers I know don't want to work in this neighborhood.

NINA

I know about this neighborhood thing.

BEULAH

What's that?

NINA

The schools and children are pretty bad.

BEULAH

Well, the Board of Education will send the others.

NINA

Do you have a head teacher?

BEULAH

Shira Manus.

NINA

You mean that high-yella gal that
flirted with all the boys when we
were in high school?

BEULAH

She called yesterday and said she
was interested in transferring
here.

NINA

(doubtfully)

She wants to come here in this
neighborhood?

BEULAH

She wants to get out of the
classroom.

Nina raises her eyebrows in disbelief.

BEULAH (CONT'D)

She said she wanted to help make
this school the best in the city.

NINA

(skeptically)

Yeah, right.

BEULAH

She knows someone else who wants to
get out the classroom.

NINA

(dubiously)

Yeah, who?

BEULAH

Walter Murdock.

NINA

Do you know anything about him?

BEULAH

No, but she say's he's excellent with children...and we do need someone to handle the discipline.

NINA

Well, it looks like we have a staff.

BEULAH

Lets hope we get some teachers who want to teach.

They smile. Beulah comes from behind her desk holding the lit cigarette, to give Nina a grateful hug.

NINA

(laughing)

Hey, be careful with that cigarette.

LATER

Beulah is working at her desk when the intercom buzzes.

SCHOOL CLERK(V.O.)

There's some people from the community here to speak to you.

She steps to the door to receive her visitors.

Three members of the neighborhood street gang, enter her office. MOON, the spokesman, early twenties, is the oldest. His smooth dark skin imparts an added attraction to his muscular body; CHICO, 18, has fair skin and his name hints of Hispanic origins; HEAVY, 16, the youngest is an awesome combination of fat and muscle. His menacing expression makes Beulah wonder if she should speak or not.

MOON.

You the principal?

BEULAH

Yes. Won't you please have a seat?

Moon and Chico take a seat on the vinyl couch, while Heavy remains standing motionless by the door.

MOON

We got some business to discuss.

BEULAH

I'm glad you came, because I need your help in keeping Franklin's windows from being broken and the graffiti off the building.

MOON

Ain't no problem. Nobody gonna mess with this building, but we want us a room here, so we can have our meetin's.

She shakes her head no, as she reaches for her cigarettes and lights one.

BEULAH

Sorry fellas, this school is here for your brothers and sisters to learn to read and write.

Denying their request sparks their anger. Chico tears himself from the cohesive grip of the vinyl couch. He jumps to his feet and slams his chair against the wall.

CHICO

(yelling)

See, I told y'all this bitch ain't about shit. Let's get the fuck out of here!

He beckons to his companions and the three angry young men prepare to leave.

Suddenly they come to an abrupt halt and stand stunned, staring at Bill in the doorway,

BILL

Hey babe, you ready to go to lunch?

MOON

Hey man, we didn't know she was yo' lady, man. We gonna be takin' care of the school for her.

CHICO AND HEAVY
 (simultaneously)
 Yeah man. We gonna help her keep
 Franklin beautiful.

SUPER: "SIXTEEN MONTHS LATER"

INT. SCHOOL BOARD CHAMBERS - GRIEVANCE HEARING - DAY
 The BOARD PRESIDENT, at a slightly elevated judge's bench is
 flanked on each side by two board members at desks.
 On the left, African Americans, MADGE WILDER, middle
 thirties, and WARNER BEACON, early forties, and on the right
 Caucasians JERRY SABARRO, early thirties, and LOIS MATHER,
 early forties.

A stenographer is typing the record.

BOARD PRESIDENT

It is our understanding Mrs. Whyte,
 was removed as principal, from the
 Franklin School because she failed
 to perform as a principal in
 accordance with accepted standards
 of conduct in the administration of
 a total school program and
 interpersonal relations.

Beulah and her attorney, RICK CLAYBORN African-American,
 early forties, are at a table on the right facing the school
 board members.

Hendrick Springer and the BOARD ATTORNEY occupy another table
 to the left facing the Board.

ATTORNEY CLAYBORN

Can you be more specific.

SABARRO

First, Mrs. Whyte called the vice-
 principal "runt" and "shortpants".

BEULAH

(perplexed)
 It was the children...

BEGIN FLASHBACK SEQUENCE

INT. WALTER MURDOCK'S OFFICE - DAY

WALTER MURDOCK, middle thirties, a Napoleonic figure of a man who speaks in precise complete sentences, is in his office, totally ignoring the wall-to-wall children laughing and playing in the adjacent detention room.

DETENTION ROOM

Unruly trouble-maker, ROBERT WATKINS, twelve years old, is pulling the girls' braid extensions and slapping the boys on the head.

GIRL

Stop it!

BOY

Man, I'm gonna tell Shortpants.

ROBERT

That runt, he ain't gonna do a damn thing.

MURDOCK'S OFFICE

Murdocks intercom buzzes.

MURDOCK

(yelling at the children)
Will you people please quiet down!

He picks up the telephone receiver.

MURDOCK (CONT'D)

Yes Mrs. Whyte?...

INT. DETENTION ROOM - SAME

BOY

You better be careful...

GIRL

...yeah, Mrs. Whyte better not hear you call Mr. Murdock runt.

BEULAH'S PRIVATE OFFICE - CONTINUOUS

Beulah at her cluttered desk holds the telephone in one hand and a lit cigarette in the other.

BEULAH
Murdock, the district office called
for the racial spot map. It was due
last week.

INTERCUT - TELEPHONE CONVERSATION

MURDOCK
What is that, Mrs. Whyte?

BEULAH
The report showing the race and
number of children living in each
block.

MURDOCK
I designed a form for the teachers
and they have not returned it yet.

BEULAH
What are you talking about? Every
child in this school is black,
except one. You don't need a form
to see that.

MURDOCK
I'm sorry you're dissatisfied with
my work. I'll have it for you in
the morning.

He slams the receiver down and shuffles through a folder on
his desk, searching for the Spot Map.

INT. FRANKLIN SCHOOL MAIN OFFICE - DAY

A long counter stretches across the main office separating
Beulah's private office and the school clerk's desk from the
entrance. A newspaper clipping and a large poster of a
superhero hangs on Beulah's private office door. The PA
System is on the wall behind the clerk's desk.

The school clerk is at her desk as Beulah and Murdock stand
across the counter from each other.

MURDOCK
Here's the racial spot map, Mrs.
Whyte. I put in eleven hours on
this report last evening.

BEULAH

This report should have taken
thirty minutes at most.

MURDOCK

I have a headache and I can hardly
bend my neck. I'm leaving for a
good day's rest.

As fast as his short legs allow him Murdock storms out of the
office and makes a beeline for the exit.

Beulah hastens to the office door and yells after him.

BEULAH

Murdock, please leave your keys to
the building.

Murdock ignores her and continues out the school.

BEULAH (CONT'D)

(to the school clerk)

Did you see that. He completely
ignored me!

SCHOOL CLERK

You should have called him by the
children's name for him .

BEULAH

What's that?

SCHOOL CLERK

Sometimes they call him Mr.
Shortpants, but mostly, runt.

Murdock returns to bring the school keys.

BEULAH

Gee Murdock, if I had called you
shortpants maybe you would have
answered me.

MURDOCK

Mrs. Whyte, I don't have to answer
you because you're going to leave
this school, and I'm going to be
the principal.

Again, Murdock, seething, rushes out of the office and heads out the school.

EXT/INT. DISTRICT OFFICE - DAY

Walter Murdock hurries up the stairs of the old frame house which was converted into the district office. He pushes open the door and steps into the reception room.

RECEPTION ROOM

MURDOCK

May I see Mr. Springer?

SECRETARY

Do you have an appointment?

MURDOCK

No, I'm Walter Murdock, the Franklin School Vice-Principal.

The Secretary buzzes Mr. Springer on the desk intercom.

SECRETARY

Walter Murdock from Franklin School is here.

SPRINGER

Send him in.

SPRINGER'S PRIVATE OFFICE OFFICE

Murdock strides into Springer's office.

SPRINGER

Murdock, how ya' doin' old man? Have a seat.

MURDOCK

No thank you. I came because of that woman -- she is impossible.

SPRINGER

Who... What women?

MURDOCK

Mrs. Whyte, she yells and screams
and insults the faculty and staff
all the time.

SPRINGER

(incredulously)
What?

MURDOCK

She calls me 'shortpants' in front
of the students.

SPRINGER

I can't believe that.

MURDOCK

Yes, she even called you a
motherfucker.

SPRINGER

Hold on, I'll see what I can do.

Springer picks up his telephone and dials Dr. Robins...

SPRINGER (CONT'D)

Walter Murdock is complaining about
Mrs. Whyte.

ROBINS (V.O.)

What's the problem?

SPRINGER

They don't get along and it seems
the situation is intolerable. He
wants a transfer...

The intercom interrupts Springer's telephone conversation .

SECRETARY (V.O.)

Mrs. Whyte is on line two.

SPRINGER

Robins, hold on, Mrs. Whyte is on
the other line.

Springer places Robins on hold and punches line two.

BEULAH (V.O.)

(irate)

I've had enough! Mr. Murdock is supposed to handle the discipline, but his office is like a kiddies social club.

SPRINGER

What do you mean?

BEULAH (V.O.)

The thing around here is get kicked out of class and go have a ball all day in Murdock's office.

SPRINGER

As a matter of fact, I'm asking Dr. Robins to give him an administrative transfer.

BEULAH (V.O.)

Good riddance to bad rubbish!

END OF FLASHBACK SEQUENCE

INT. BOARD CHAMBERS - GRIEVANCE HEARING - DAY

SABARRO

So you did call him those names.

BEULAH

No, it was the children. They have an uncanny way of choosing accurate descriptions.

SPRINGER

Dr. Robins assigned him as acting principal at another school --

LOIS MATHER

-- and I understand he's doing quite well.

SABARRO

(contemptuously)

It seems Mrs. Whyte didn't get along with anyone.

BEULAH

That's not true, I got along fine
with the people who were doing
their job.

LOIS MATHER

It was reported that you made some
disparaging remarks about an ethnic
group that was part of the faculty?

ATTORNEY CLAYBORN

Like what exactly?

LOIS MATHER

You said you going to get rid of
the Jews on the faculty because
they thought they were smart?

BEULAH

No, their performance was
unsatisfactory...

BEGIN FLASHBACK SEQUENCE

INT. FRANKLIN SCHOOL- HALLWAY - DAY

Beulah is making her morning rounds of the building. She stops in front of Daylan Lieberg's fourth grade classroom door and looks in. The room is dark. All of the children are standing with their hands on top of their head.

LIEBERG'S CLASSROOM

She opens the door and switches on the lights.

BEULAH

Why are you all standing with your
hands on your head?

GIRL

Miss Lieberg always makes us stand
like this when she leaves the room.

Infuriated, with lips pressed tightly together, arms folded over her chest, and one foot tapping impatiently, Beulah waits. Scatterbrained DAYLYN LIEBERG, early twenties finally returns.

BEULAH

Why are the children standing with
their hands on their head?

LIEBERG

They're being punished.

BEULAH

For what? What did they do?

LIEBERG

(Stuttering)

Well, ...uh,... uh.

BEULAH

How would you like it if I made you
stand with your hands on your head?

LIEBERG

In front of the children?

BEULAH

Yes, in front of the children.

Lieberg burst into tears.

Beulah turns abruptly and leaves.

HALLWAY - LATER THAT DAY

Lieberg is in the hall talking to two other teachers.

LIEBERG

...It was so humiliating in front
of the children.

As Beulah approaches, Lieberg's audience quickly disappears
into their rooms.

Beulah grabs Lieberg's arm and ushers her into her classroom.

BEULAH

Get in there, and teach!

Again, Lieberg burst into tears.

INT. STEVENSON CLASSROOM - MORNING

Litter is scattered all over the floor and tattered, outdated material covers the bulletin board. Two boys aimlessly wander around the room.

When Beulah and WYNA RUFUS, early forties African-American, arrive, HARRY STEVENSON, late twenties, unshaven, long haired, hippy, is reading a magazine. The "Metropolitan Achievement Test" is among a pile of ungraded papers on his desk.

BEULAH

Mrs. Rufus and I are here to observe your class. May I have your seating chart and attendance book?

WYNA RUFUS

I'd like to see the lesson plans.

Stevenson, annoyed, begins shuffling through the clutter on his desk and finally uncovers the attendance book and hands it to Beulah.

STEVENSON

Here's my attendance book. I left my lesson plans at home by mistake and there is no seating chart. I know my children, so they can sit anywhere they want.

Beulah and Wyna Rufus take a seat in the back of the room and begin examining the attendance book.

BEULAH

Look Wyna, there is no attendance recorded at all for this week.

WYNA RUFUS

(leafing through the book,
whispers)

Yes, that seems to be the case for several weeks.

Stevenson gives some ditto paper to the boys patrolling the room.

STEVENSON

Here, give one to everybody.

BOY

Should I give one to Miss Whyte?

STEVENSON

No, that won't be necessary.

(to the class)

Draw a circle around the correct answer to the ten questions about the poem that I read to you, yesterday.

Some children begin immediately, while others continue doing nothing. Stevenson remains seated.

The classroom clock shows "10:00" and dissolves into "10:10"

STEVENSON (CONT'D)

Times up.

(to the two boys
patrolling)

Collect the papers.

A loud chorus of complaints comes from the classroom.

BOY #1

What are you talking about? You just gave us the assignment five minutes ago?

GIRL #1

Yeah, how do you expect us to answer all these questions in five minutes?

BOY #2

You haven't even explained what we're supposed to do!

GIRL #2

Yeah, I didn't understand that ole crazy poem anyway, and now you want us to answer questions about it!

Several children refuse to surrender their papers and the boy collecting them, snatches them. A fight erupts.

STEVENSON

Sit Down!

Stevenson leaves his desk, walks up and down aisles and collects the assignment. He glances at the clock.

STEVENSON (CONT'D)

It's time for recess. Line up

There's a mad rush for the door, children pushing and showing trying to be first in-line.

Beulah beckons to Rufus.

BEULAH

I've seen enough. Let's go.

HALLWAY OUTSIDE STEVENSON'S CLASSROOM -CONTINUOUS

BEULAH

That was the worst excuse for a lesson I have ever seen.

WYNA RUFUS

And did you see the Metropolitan Achievement Test on his desk. I've told him time and time again not to teach the test. It appears he's still doing so.

INT. CARTER GREENBURG'S CLASSROOM - DAY

CARTER GREENBURG, middle twenties, is sitting at his desk. Teaching is a means to an end -- he wants to be a lawyer.

GREENBURG

Who is the most famous, Martin Luther King or Carter Greenburg?

The children momentarily look at him, then ignore him, all except one -- a twelve year old girl, KEISHA JONES.

KEISHA

Excuse me Mr. Greenburg, I don't --

GREENBURG

-- Say it's me! Say Carter Greenburg!

Most children continue to ignore him.

Keisha fidgets in her seat.

GREENBURG (CONT'D)

Repeat after me. Carter
Greenburg...

Greenburg looks pointedly at Keisha and stops her next interruption.

GREENBURG (CONT'D)

Repeat after me. Carter Greenburg
is more famous than Martin Luther
King!

CLASS

(droning words
simultaneously)

Carter Greenburg is more famous
than Martin Luther King.

Keisha rises from her seat and Greenburg smiles at his assumption of her respect. She lurches forth as she retches across the floor.

GREENBURG

What on earth! Why did you do that?

Keisha stands there crying and apologizing.

KEISHA

(between sobs)
I'm sorry Mr. Greenburg. I tried to
ask --

GREENBURG

-- Just be quiet please! Go to your
seat.

He points to DAVID BROWN, 12 years old, sitting behind Keisha.

GREENBURG (CONT'D)

You! You come here.

David comes reluctantly.

GREENBURG (CONT'D)
Get those tissues off my desk and
clean up this mess.

DAVID
Why do I have to do it? It stinks.

Greenburg slaps the boy upside of his head.

DAVID (CONT'D)
Ow!

GREENBURG
Because I said so. Now do as you
are told.

David, grimaces in pain as he hurries to Greenburg's desk. A
loud outburst comes Robert Watkins.

ROBERT
(bellowing)
This ain't right!

GREENBURG
(taunting)
It ain't? Hmmm... I'll bet you
think this is ain't right either!

He goes to the blackboard and begins to write: "I-t i-s a-l-m-
o-s-t J-u-n-e a-n-d I-a-m-s-t-i-l-l s-t-u-p-i-d."

GREENBURG (CONT'D)
(muttering to himself)
If they weren't so concentrated on
trouble-makers like Martin Luther
King, maybe they'd learn something!

Greenburg motions to Robert.

GREENBURG (CONT'D)
Get up here boy. In fact all of you
take out some paper and write this
one hundred times.

Robert walks to the front of room, picks up the chalk and
begins to write: "it is almost June and I am"... he pauses,
picks up a book off the teacher's desk, and throws it on the
floor beside Greenburg, Bang.

The sudden loud sound gets the attention of Nina Henders in the hall. She rushes in the room and when she sees what's written she begins erasing the blackboard.

NINA HENDERS

Oh my God! How dare you Mr.
Greenburg!
(to the class)
All of you, tear up those papers
right now!

ROBERT

(defiantly)
You gonna' pay for the things you
doing to us kids!

Greenburg grabs Robert, slaps his head twice, then pulls him out the room. Henders follows.

GREENBURG

You tried to hit me with that book!

ROBERT

No I didn't! I wasn't going...

GREENBURG

You were! You're under arrest!
You're the one who's going to pay!

HALLWAY - CONTINUOUS

Robert struggles to escape.

ROBERT

(shouting)
Let me go!

Wyna Rufus appears.

WYNA RUFUS

Mr. Greenburg, what are you doing?
Release him immediately!

GREENBURG

I will not. He assaulted me and
I'm making a citizen's arrest!

Greenburg pulls Robert by his coat collar toward the main office. Rufus and Henders trail behind.

MAIN OFFICE - CONTINUOUS

<p>GREENBURG (Yelling at the school clerk) Call the police. He's under arrest.</p>	<p>ROBERT Let me go! He has no right to put his hands on me. I'm going home to get my father!</p>
--	---

Beulah steps out of her office.

BEULAH
Mr. Greenburg, let him go! Robert, you go in my office.

Robert stops struggling and begins to cry. Rufus gently takes his arm and leads him into Beulah's private office.

WYNA
Come with me son.

BEULAH
Mr. Greenburg. What in God's name is going on?

GREENBURG
That boy threw a book at me and I'm making a citizen's arrest.

BEULAH
Every time I look around you're having serious problems with the children. Just the other day it was a child that wasn't even in your room.

GREENBURG
It doesn't matter if they're in my class or not. Somebody's got to teach these nig... kids some respect.

BEULAH
Please go to your classroom. I'll handle this.

Greenburg ignores her, goes around the counter and picks up the telephone on the clerk's desk.

BEULAH (CONT'D)

Nina, what happened?

NINA HENDERS

The children said Mr. Greenburg made David clean up behind a sick child. Robert yelled that was wrong, so Greenburg made him and all the other students write "It's almost June and I'm still stupid" one hundred times on the board...

BEULAH

(incredulously)

What?

NINA HENDERS

I erased the board and told the children to tear up those papers. Robert threw a book across the floor at Mr. Greenburg, so Mr. Greenburg hit him.

BEULAH

Oh no! Not again. I have repeatedly told him to keep his hands off the children, but he persists.

BEULAH'S PRIVATE OFFICE - COUNTINUOUS

WYNA RUFUS

Mr. Greenburg hit Robert on his head twice and said Robert wouldn't get away with assaulting him.

BEULAH

Robert, tell me what happened?

ROBERT

Uh... Miss Whyte... Uh... I was sick of the way he's always being mean to somebody. So when he hit David and made him clean up Keisha's slop, I told him so.

BEULAH
Told him what?

ROBERT
That it ain't right.

BEULAH
Go on...

ROBERT
I came up to write them words he
put on the board but something came
over me and I...I picked up a book
off his desk and...

BEULAH
And what?

ROBERT
Well I guess I threw it at him. I
just wanted to scare him... that's
all. I wasn't trying to hit him.

BEULAH
Did you want him to think you were
trying to hit him?

ROBERT
I don't know. I guess.

BEULAH
You guess!

She hands him the phone.

BEULAH (CONT'D)
Here call your mother and tell her
what happened.

Robert punches some numbers on the phone.

ROBERT
Hello, Ma...

MAIN OFFICE - CONTINUOUS

Carter Greenburg, using the telephone on the school clerk's
desk is also making a telephone call.

GREENBURG

Hello, 911? I want to report an assault!

EXT/INT. - OUTSIDE SCHOOL - CONTINUOUS

As two police officers escort Robert from the school, Robert's mother appears.

ROBERT'S MOTHER

(sobbing)

Oh please. He didn't do anything. Please let him go.

POLICE OFFICER #1

I'm sorry lady. The teacher claimed this kid hit him with a book. We have to take him in.

Moon, Chico and Heavy arrive on the scene.

MOON

What's up? Why ya'll got that kid? What'd he do?

POLICE OFFICER #2

I think you'd do better to stay out of this or you'll wind up in jail with him.

Moon, followed by Chico and Heavy, dash into the main office.

MOON

Ms. Whyte, What's goin' on? What'd he do?

BEULAH

One of the teachers, said Robert threw a book at him so he called the police.

MOON

Well, ain't there nothin' you can do?...

END OF FLASHBACK SEQUENCE

INT. BOARD CHAMBERS - GRIEVANCE HEARING - CONTINUOUS

BOARD ATTORNEY

So you gave them Unsatisfactory
Notices.

I had a conference with them...

BEGIN FLASHBACK SEQUENCE

INT. BEULAH'S PRIVATE OFFICE - DAY

Beulah holds a conference with Stevenson.

BEULAH

Mr. Stevenson, I've ask you to meet
me this morning to discuss your
service as a teacher, here at
Franklin.

STEVENSON

Yes, but you know I'm doing the
best I can with what I have to work
with.

BEULAH

Well that's all well and good but
it does not explain your absences
from faculty meetings.

STEVENSON

Your so-called faculty meeting
start a 8:30 and often when I get
to school, it has already started
and I don't want to interrupt.

BEULAH

I don't see any time when you
signed in late.

STEVENSON

Well, I guess the clerk didn't put
it down.

BEULAH

There were three meetings you were
in school and didn't attend at all.

STEVENSON

Like I said -- I didn't want to interrupt.

BEULAH

In the future, if you are in school I expect you to be at all faculty meetings.

She picks up a folder labeled "Free Lunch Forms".

BEULAH (CONT'D)

I see here we don't have your children's free lunch forms...

She opens another folder, "Broken Window Report".

BEULAH (CONT'D)

...nor your broken window report.

STEVENSON

There's so much paper work to do around here I just haven't had time to get around to it.

BEULAH

I would appreciate getting them the first thing tomorrow morning .

STEVENSON

I'll see what I can do.

BEULAH

Thank you. The Metropolitan Achievement Test was on your desk. You've been told you not to teach from the test and --

STEVENSON

(interrupting)

-- In all fairness, Mrs. Whyte, just because there's a copy of the Test on my desk it does not mean I'm using it to teach!

BEULAH

I hope not! It is important that the children learn the concepts and not answers to the questions.

She pauses to gather her thoughts.

BEULAH (CONT'D)

Mrs. Henders says you send your children to her without an anecdotal record.

STEVENSON

That's not true. Mr. Greenburg handles my discipline problems and I don't have to give him any kind of record.

BEULAH

(angrily)

Mrs. Henderson is the disciplinarian, not Mr. Greenburg!

Beulah hands him a sheet of paper.

BEULAH (CONT'D)

Mrs. Rufus has prepared some recommendations for improving your teaching technique and professional performance. I strongly suggest you follow her suggestions.

STEVENSON

Is there anything else you want me to know.

BEULAH

You have fifteen days to improve.

Stevenson snatches the paper from Beulah's hand and storms from her office.

INT. HALLWAY - LATER

Stevenson approaches Wyna Rufus.

STEVENSON
(condescending)
Mrs. Rufus. May I speak to you for
a minute.

WYNA RUFUS
Yes, what is it Mr. Stevenson?

STEVENSON
You are a spy for Mrs. Whyte and
you better stay out of my way.

INT. BEULAH'S PRIVATE OFFICE - DAY

Beulah is discussing Greenburg's performance with him.

BEULAH
You have repeatedly demonstrated
your inability or unwillingness to
accept my recommendations for
improvement.

GREENBURG
Of course, you are aware, I am
doing the best I can with what I
have to deal with here.

BEULAH
You admit that your teaching
methods don't promote independence
in the children.

GREENBURG
They need strict discipline. This
way they can learn who they should
really be looking up to.

BEULAH
You think that's you?

GREENBURG
Better than the people that the
public is concentrating on now!

BEULAH

You have been told repeatedly that Mrs. Henders is the disciplinarian and you are not to discipline children from other rooms.

GREENBURG

The teachers have asked me to discipline their students. Somebody has to take control of these situations.

BEULAH

Inflicting corporal punishments on the children is against Board rules. Then we had this situation with Robert Watkins --

GREENBURG

(shouting)

-- Stop! He threw a book at me. That's assault so I made a citizen's arrest.

BEULAH

Mr. Greenburg, you caused untenable emotional distress to Robert Watkins and his mother.

GREENBURG

Well that's your take on the situation.

INT. TEACHERS LOUNGE

This scene is being rewritten.

Greenburg and Stevenson are discussing ...

The school clerk said Mr. Greenburg told Miss Lieberg and Mr. Stevenson, they don't need a dumb nigger telling them what to do.

END OF FLASHBACK SEQUENCE.

INT. BOARD CHAMBERS - GRIEVANCE HEARING - CONTIUOUS

BOARD ATTORNEY

Did Mr. Greenburg get fifteen days
to improve also?

BEULAH

No, his attitude could not be
changed in fifteen days.

BOARD ATTORNEY

So you asked for his immediate
removal.

BEULAH

That's right, I did.

SABARRO

Because you said you were
supernigger.

BEULAH

I don't understand the question.

SABARRO

After you gave Stevenson an
Unsatisfactory Notice, and asked
for Greenburg's transfer, didn't
you say you were supernigger?

BEULAH

(to Attorney Clayborn)
Do I have to answer that?

ATTORNEY CLAYBORN

Tell them about the first threat
you received...

BEGIN FLASHBACK SEQUENCE

INT. BEULAH'S PRIVATE OFFICE - Day

Beulah, at her desk sorting mail, discovers a "newspaper
clipping of a principal who has been tarred and feathered".
She telephones Bill.

BEULAH

Bill, do you know where that
Supernigger poster is?

BILL (V.O.)
What's a Supernigger poster?

BEULAH
You know, that poster of superman
only he's black. When you were the
leader of that gang they awarded
you with it.

BILL (V.O.)
Yeah, I do remember. I think its in
the basement. What do you want it
for?

BEULAH
I'll tell you when I get home.

She hangs up and resumes sorting mail.

NEXT DAY.

Over the word "Principal" on her office door she is hanging
the "Supernigger Poster" next to the "newspaper clipping of
the tarred and feathered principal".

END OF FLASHBACK SEQUENCE.

INT. BOARD CHAMBERS - GRIEVANCE HEARING - CONTINUOUS

SABARRO
So you did call yourself
Supernigger.

BEULAH
(speaking in Negro
dialect)
Ain't nobody gonna tar and feather
me, I'll git SuperNigger to protect
me.

MATHER and Sabarro laugh but Beacon and Wilder do not
appreciate the humor.

SABARRO
(laughing)
So you did call yourself
Supernigger.

BEACON.
(visibly angry)
How many times does Mrs Whyte have
to deny calling herself
supernigger?

BOARD PRESIDENT
Let's not get into that. Shall we
proceed.

SABARRO
(shaken by Beacon's
outburst)
In that case, I have no more
questions.

ATTORNEY CLAYBORN
My client received two more
threats...

BEGIN FLASH BACK SEQUENCE

INT. BEULAH'S PRIVATE OFFICE - DAY

Beulah is complaining to Springer
about the performance of the teachers.

BEULAH
There's absolutely no teaching
being done...

There is a knock on the Principal's door. Beulah opens the
door.

BEULAH (CONT'D)
Yes, what is it?

The school clerk hands Beulah a small brown envelope.

SCHOOL CLERK
This came in today's mail.

BEULAH
This came in today's mail?

SCHOOL CLERK
(hesitating)
Well...ah...yes, it did.

BEULAH
There's no post-mark.

SCHOOL CLERK
It was stacked up on the counter,
with all the other mail.

Beulah waives dismissal to the clerk and opens the envelope.

INSERT: A SMALL HANDWRITTEN NOTE READS:

"FIRST YOUR CAR, THEN YOUR BLACK ASS"

She hands the note to the District Superintendent.

BEULAH
See how vicious they are?

SPRINGER
Now Beulah, calm down. It's just a
prank. I'll have Derrins look into
it.

INT. BEULAH'S APARTMENT - NIGHT

Beulah shows the note to Bill.

BEULAH
Springer calls this a prank, but
they're gonna get two things that
belong to you ---

BILL
-- and just what is that?

BEULAH
Your car and my ass.

BILL
Not if I have anything to do with
it.

INT. SHERYL RHODES CLASSROOM - NEXT DAY

Beulah and Bill enter Sheryl Rhodes classroom.

RHODES
What can I do for you Mrs. Jones?

BEULAH

I just want to introduce my husband
to the children

(to the class)

Boys and girls, when the black
woman is in trouble the black man
always comes to her rescue. This is
my husband, and he has come to my
rescue.

END OF FLASHBACK SEQUENCE.

INT. BOARD CHAMBERS- GRIEVANCE HEARING - CONTINUOUS

SABARRO

That's when a Mr. Whyte threatened
Mrs. Rhodes?

BEULAH

No, he didn't. Derrins came and
asked him to leave.

SABARRO

Then you called yourself
Supernigger?

BEULAH

No, I didn't. I called the
F.B.I....

BEGIN FLASHBACK SEQUENCE

INT. FRANKLIN GENERAL OFFICE - DAY.

Beulah, at the counter sorting the morning mail, finds a
small envelope with a cancelled postage mark and a return
address. She opens the envelope...

INSERT - THE ENVELOPE & LETTER

"Dear Mrs. Whyte, You will be dead before Memorial Day"

She turns to school clerk.

BEULAH

Please get the F.B.I.

BEULAH'S PRIVATE OFFICE - NEXT DAY

Two F.B.I. agents report the results of their investigation.

F.B.I. AGENT #1
We found the typewriter in the
teachers' lounge.

BEULAH
What about the return address?

F.B.I. AGENT #2
It does not exist.

F.B.I. AGENT #1
We can take the fingerprints off
the typewriter.

BEULAH
No, that won't be necessary.

END OF FLASHBACK SEQUENCE

INT. BOARD CHAMBERS- GRIEVANCE HEARING - CONTINUOUS

BEACON.
Did the threats stop?

BEULAH
Yes, Mr. Derrins gave Mr. Springer
a report on the forces that wanted
to get rid of me.

BEACON
What forces?
ATTORNEY CLAYBOURN
The union...
BEULAH
...and fourteen dissident
teachers.

MADGE WILDER
Hendrick, you never told us about
those reports!

Springer lowers his eyes in embarrassment...

BEGIN FLASHBACK SEQUENCE

INT. BEULAH'S PRIVATE OFFICE - DAY

On the morning of his arrival District Human Relations Coordinator THEO DERRINS, early forties, a eminently practical man, devoted to making things work, confers with Beulah.

DERRINS

I'm here to determine the nature of the existing problem.

BEULAH

I feel like I'm running a lunatic asylum instead of a school and all the inmates are out to get me.

DERRINS

I'd like to meet with the teachers who wrote these "issues of dissatisfaction".

BEULAH

(bewildered)

Wait just one minute... what are issues of dissatisfaction?

Dericott hands Beulah three typewritten pages.

BEULAH (CONT'D)

If anyone has some dissatisfaction it's me with their performance!

DERRINS

I must say Mrs. Whyte, I am surprised that you don't know about these "issues of dissatisfaction"

BEULAH

Well, I'm not surprised. Ninety nine per cent of what these imbeciles do around here is done undercover.

DERRINS

(laughing)

Perhaps then, you can explain this situation and we can uncover those things.

Her eyes race across the page.

BEULAH

This is bullshit. You expect me to explain this garbage?

She shoves the typed pages into Derrins's hand and then slumps backward into her chair.

Derrins calmly flattens the sheet's crumbled edge.

DERRINS

It says here, Mrs. Whyte, that you "strip people of their human dignity and harassment".

He pauses and waits for Beulah's response. Hearing none, he continues.

DERRINS (CONT'D)

Do you have any idea what they mean by that?

Beulah stares at Derrins a few seconds longer, eyes the ceiling as to gather her thoughts.

BEULAH

Sure I do. If these so-called teachers are reprimanded, they say they are being stripped of their dignity.

DERRINS

Oh, I see.

BEULAH

Never mind the fact that they have left their classes unattended while they socialize in the hall.

She stops and takes a puff from her cigarette.

BEULAH (CONT'D)

I insist that these teachers do the job they're being paid to do. If that's harassment, then consider them harassed!

DERRINS
 (speechless)
 Okay.. ah..

BEULAH
 Wait, I'm not finished. As far as
 stripping them of their human
 dignity is concerned...

FLASHBACK

INT. FRANKLIN HALLWAY - DAY

Children are screaming and crying as a teacher in a gorilla costume, grunting like an ape, chases them through the hallway.

Beulah shouts at the teacher.

BEULAH
 Miss Lieberg, what are you doing?
 Take that costume off and go to
 your classroom immediately.

END OF FLASHBACK

INT. BEULAH'S PRIVATE OFFICE - CONTINUOUS

DERRINS
 Why did she do that?

BEULAH
 I don't know.
 Was it Halloween?

BEULAH (CONT'D)
 No. Maybe she thought she would put
 that suit on and scare some little
 niggahs. When I made her take off
 that costume, I was stripped her of
 her dignity.

DERRINS
 (puzzled)
 Hmmmmmm..., well there's no need to
 ask about number two. We both know
 that a principal can't dismiss
 anyone.

BEULAH

That's right, if I could, I would have gotten rid of the whole bunch a long time ago.

DERRINS

It states here, "assault of certain individuals".

BEULAH

And who did I allegedly assault?

DERRINS

It doesn't say.

BEULAH

Because it's a lie. That is a figment of someone's imagination, just like the rest of this sh... stuff.

DERRINS

Let's move on to 'basic conflict of roles on your part with the head teacher'.

BEULAH

I don't have any conflict. They didn't have a problem as long as Shira Manus was the head teacher.

DERRINS

Shira Manus, she's not the head teacher?

BEULAH

No.

FLASHBACK

INT. FRANKLIN SCHOOL - BEULAH'S PRIVATE OFFICE - DAY

Beulah is at her desk enjoying her morning coffee and a cigarette when intercom buzzes.

SCHOOL CLERK(V.O.)

Miss Rhodes is on her way into your office.

Before she could extinguish her half smoked cigarette SHERYL RHODES early twenties, the leader of the Professional Problems Committee, who resents authority and has a definite attitude problem, rushes through the door.

SHERYL RHODES

(angrily)

Several teachers are complaining they haven't received any supplies or text books.

BEULAH

What? Supplies and text books have been here for a month. I'll check with Mrs. Manus.

RHODES

Manus says she doesn't have time to distribute the textbooks.

Beulah hurries from her office, down the hall to Shira Manus' office.

SHIRA MANUS' OFFICE - CONTINUOUS

SHIRA MANUS, is at her desk looking in a mirror, applying lipstick. Although in her early forties, she is inappropriately attired for a master teacher -- mini-skirt, tight sweater, and go-go boots.

BEULAH

The teachers are complaining they don't have any supplies and they haven't received their textbooks. What's going on?

SHIRA MANUS

Oh Beulah, I'm so in love.

BEULAH

What's that got to do with the teachers getting their textbooks?

SHIRA MANUS

I've been spending a lot of time with him and...

BEULAH

...Yes, you come to work one day
and take off two.

SHIRA MANUS

I know, I'm sorry, but...

BEULAH

...why don't you take a leave so I
can get someone in your place.

SHIRA MANUS

We're getting married so I'm going
to resign.

END OF FLASHBACK

DERRINS

Oh yes, I remember -- She came to
the district office for Mr.
Springer's signature.

BEULAH

Signature for what?

DERRINS

For an administrative transfer.

BEULAH

So that's what happened.

Beulah stubs out her half-smoked cigarette and lites another
one.

BEULAH (CONT'D)

Wyna Rufus is now the master
teacher and she is the epitome of
professionalism.

DERRINS

How so?

BEULAH

She makes regular classroom visits
and tells me what's going on ... or
should I say what's not going on.

DERRINS

I see.

BEULAH

I am the principal and I delegate whatever responsibilities I choose to the head teacher. I don't have a conflict, they do.

DERRINS

Okay, how about number seven, "documents non-academics situations"?

BEULAH

This is really pissin' me off. When they don't follow schedules or supervise the children during recess I write it up. I guess they consider these activities as non-academic.

Beulah pauses for a sip from her morning coffee and a drag from her cigarette..

BEULAH (CONT'D)

Oh, I'm sorry Mr. Derrins did you care for a cup of coffee or something?

DERRINS

No thank you. I'm fine.

Derrins pauses and directs her attention to the 'issues'.

DERRINS (CONT'D)

If it's all right with you, I'd like to look at number eight on the list --'lack of knowledge concerning policies made by the rest of her administrative staff'.

BEULAH

They 're referring to Mr. Murdock, who was the vice-principal. He and his directives were terrible...

FLASH BACK

FRANKLIN MAIN OFFICE

MURDOCK

(on the PA System)

Attention all teachers. Until further notice, do not -- I repeat-- do not send discipline notes to my office.

END OF FLASHBACK

BEULAH

I didn't tell him to issue that directive. The man was impossible.

Derrins quietly eyes the remaining issues on the list, then continues his inquiry.

DERRINS

What about issue number nine, 'does not support all student functions'?

FLASH BACK

FRANKLIN AUDITORIUM

The auditorium is filled with the children restlessly waiting for the program to begin.

Rhodes goes to the microphone on the stage.

RHODES

Mrs. Whyte is not here so we will begin without her.

END OF FLASHBACK

BEULAH

Oh for God's sake, I missed the first student assembly because I had to attend a meeting at central office.

She stops, lights a another cigarette.

BEULAH (CONT'D)

If that constitutes lack of support, than hell -- I'm guilty.

Beulah takes a drag from her cigarette and stares at Derrins, waiting for the next 'issue'.

DERRINS

What about calling children derogatory names?

BEULAH

Like what, exactly?

DERRINS

They give 'retarded' as an example.

BEULAH

Since when is it derogatory to say that a child is retarded in a professional sense? Hell, the damn retards are the ones who wrote these 'issues'.

DERRINS

(laughing)

I guess that clears up number twelve too."

BEULAH

Why, what's that one?

DERRINS

Ah...'calls teachers derogatory names'.

BEULAH

Hey, I thought I made that one clear from the start.

DERRINS

Okay, you explained number thirteen and fifteen already, how about the next one, 'uses the community group as a threat to teachers'.

BEULAH

(laughing)

I don't know what they mean unless they're talking about Moon, Chico, and Heavy.

DERRINS

Have they threatened any teachers?

BEULAH

No, they've been more like security for the school than anything else.

DERRINS

How so?

BEULAH

They won't let anybody deface the building. If any of those so-called teachers want to engage in a little graffiti, then yes, they have a right to feel threatened.

They both laugh. Beulah glances at her watch.

BEULAH (CONT'D)

Do you actually want to go through the rest of this mess?

DERRINS

There are just a few more. I guess we can skip number seventeen. I think you indicated you have an adequate security force.

BEULAH

Moon, Chico, and Heavy, my three niggahs. Need I say more?

DERRINS

Not about that, but there are some others.

BEULAH

Hey, I can finish all of this in a jiff. Let me see that paper again.

Derrins hands the 'issues of dissatisfaction' to Beulah and she slaps the list face down on her desk and pats them as she speaks.

BEULAH (CONT'D)

I believe that just about says it all.

Derrins gently eases the list from Beulah's desk; removes a pen from the inside pocket of his suit jacket; scribbles a brief statement at the bottom of the page and returns it to her.

DERRINS

Tomorrow, in the meeting with your teachers, you need only repeat this statement.

She reads the short sentence he has written.

BEULAH

Is this all?

DERRINS

Yes, just sit and listen. We don't want to provoke an explosive situation.

BEULAH

No problem. I'll just read what you wrote and I won't say another word... unless I just have to.

DERRINS

I think that just reading the statement will suffice...

END OF FLASHBACK SEQUENCE

INT. BOARD CHAMBERS - CONTINUOUS

MADGE WILDER

And did it?

BEULAH

Did it what?

MADGE WILDER

Suffice...

BEGIN FLASHBACK SEQUENCE

INT. FRANKLIN LUNCHROOM - DAY

Twenty-nine faculty members sit behind the fourteen dissidents assembled together at the front table.

The noisy chatter fades into silence when Beulah and Derrins enter the room.

Beulah makes her way to a vacant table in the rear of the room and Derrins addresses the faculty.

DERRINS

Mr. Springer is aware of the various problems existing here at the school and I have discussed your issues of dissatisfaction with Mrs Whyte.

Derrins directs his attention to Beulah.

DERRINS (CONT'D)

Mrs. Whyte, Would you care to respond?

She stands and looks directly at the fourteen dissidents and recites the note Derrins gave her.

BEULAH

I agree to act in good faith.

She says nothing more and sits down.

DERRINS

Thank you, Mrs. Whyte.

(to the teachers)

You have heard Mrs. Whyte's agreement, regarding your issues. I believe that is a good start towards a solution.

NEXT MORNING

Springer stands before the fourteen dissident teachers united at the front table. The other twenty-nine faculty members are seated behind.

SPRINGER

Good morning, I've come here to solicit your cooperation in the planning of the dedication program.

BEULAH
(whispering to Derrins)
I thought he's here to discuss
their 'issues of dissatisfaction'.

Baffled, Derrins shrugs his shoulders.

GREENBURG
Excuse me Mr. Springer, we are not
here to discuss a dedication. We're
here to discuss our horrible
working situation.

RHODES
And to have a program for the
dedication of this building is
sheer foolishness.

The fourteen dissidents applaud loudly.

SPRINGER
Tell me Mr. Greenburg, what is
stopping you from working together?

RHODES
Mrs. Whyte! The teachers are the
only ones making a sincere effort.

SPRINGER
Exactly what is the problem?

RHODES
She reprimands us in front of the
children.

LIEBERG
Yeah, this is so embarrassing. It
causes the children to be
disrespectful.

RHODES
She screams and yells at us for the
most insignificant things.

The fourteen dissidents shout their agreement.

DISSIDENTS
Yeah, yeah, that's right.

BEULAH
You call a fire alarm,
insignificant?

FLASHBACK

INT. FRANKLIN LUNCHROOM - DAY

Rhodes sits at a table with her class having lunch. The fire alarm sounds and she does not move. They continue eating.

Beulah rushes into the lunchroom shouting.

BEULAH
Don't you hear the fire alarm. Get
your class out of the building.

END OF FLASHBACK

BEULAH (CONT'D)
What was I supposed to do?

RHODES
Mrs. Whyte, you know that was a
false alarm. Why should we be
disturbed during our lunch period
for a false alarm?

BEULAH
How did you know it was s false
alarm -- and even if it was, it is
the school policy to evacuate the
building, regardless.

Beulah pauses, trying to control her anger.

BEULAH (CONT'D)
I will admit that sometimes my
voice tends to be a little loud,
but in the future I will lower it
...unless it becomes necessary, as
it often does, to make myself heard
above the noise.

SPRINGER
As you can see, Mrs. Whyte is being
cooperative.

BEULAH

And rest assured, if you violate any school policy or procedure, I will discuss it with you in the privacy of my office.

DALE LIEBERG

(shrieking)

Oh no I'm afraid to go in her office alone.

Twenty nine teachers break out in laughter. Beulah's anger turns to disgust.

INT. BEULAH'S PRIVATE OFFICE - DAY

After making his morning tour of the building, Derrins returns to Beulah's private office.

DERRINS

I don't think any of them are too happy about me being here...

BEULAH

...Why? What's goin' on?

DERRINS

I was making my rounds and they were visiting each other in the hallway and when they saw me they scurried into their rooms and slammed the doors.

BEULAH

Maybe you're the reason Glen Hambers is coming today.

DERICOTT

Glen Hambers, the union treasurer? Why is he coming?

BEULAH

He said he was coming to explain the grievance procedure to the teachers.

DERRINS

But why the treasurer? I thought his job was counting the union's money.

BEULAH

I did too, but maybe it's because of something that happened when we worked together at Duncan.

DERRINS

Whatever happened doesn't explain why he would come in the place of a field rep.

BEULAH

Well, let's just say we weren't on the best of terms, so maybe he's coming to amend our professional relationship.

DERRINS

What do you mean?

BEULAH

He and the other print teachers had not worked in the industry for ten to fifteen years... they needed to upgrade their skills. I asked the principal for permission not to schedule any basic shop classes during the summer.

DERRINS

So?

BEULAH

So they would have to find work in their field. Hambers complained to the union and the principal didn't allow me to do it.

DERRINS

Oh, I see.

BEULAH

It's a crying shame. When the teachers became unionized, they lost their professionalism.

DERRINS

I agree, one hundred percent.

BEULAH

They are only concerned about getting more money for less work.

DERRINS

(grinning)

It sounds like a grievous situation to me.

INT. TEACHERS LUNCHROOM - DAY

African-American GLEN HAMBERS, early forties, holds a Professional Problems Committee meeting with the fourteen dissidents.

HAMBERS

I understand you have some complaints.

LIEBERG

Yes, when I have to go to her office she uses teacher aides to cover my class. Is she supposed to do that?

HAMBERS

Teacher aides are to be used to relieve teachers for non-professional duties and clerical task. She should not use them to cover classes.

Hambers reaches into his briefcase and takes out several sheets of paper.

HAMBERS (CONT'D)

May I see the hands of those this has happened to?

Several other dissidents raise their hands.

HAMBERS (CONT'D)
Use these forms to write your
grievances.

Hambers passes out the union's form.

HAMBERS (CONT'D)
Are there any other complaints?

STEVENSON
She gave me an unsatisfactory
notice, based on specious half
truths and contrived untruths.

GREENBURG
Because of her blatant need for
help, she brought Mrs. Rufus with
her when she came to observe me
teaching.

DISSIDENT #1
The same thing happened to me.

DISSIDENT #2
Miss Rufus observed me in my class
without her. She sent Mrs. Rufus'
evaluation to Mr. Springer and she
never held a conference with me.

RHODES
She was in error either by design
or because she is outrageously
incompetent.

HAMBERS
The contract states this conference
is private and she should not
include Mrs. Rufus.

RHODES
Yes, I know.

HAMBERS
When you write up your complaints
as a formal grievance be sure to
include all the details of her
observation.

RHODES
Who missed their duty-free
preparation period?

Four dissidents raise hands.

HAMBERS
Each of you should write this up as
a formal complaint and be sure to
include the date it happened.

GREENBURG
If she doesn't answer our
grievances, what should we do?

HAMBERS
Appeal to the District
Superintendent. This one is
important to show the need to hire
more substitutes.

Hambers glances at his watch.

HAMBERS (CONT'D)
It's almost nine o'clock so if
there are no other questions, I
won't keep you any longer.

Thirteen dissidents prepare to leave but Rhodes approaches
Hambers.

RHODES
There's something I need to ask
you. I'll bring my class in, and
then meet you in the lounge.

INT. TEACHERS LOUNGE - LATER

RHODES
Three fourth grade rooms have more
than thirty-three children. Mrs.
Whyte says she does not have to
change them. What should I do?

HAMBERS
Appeal to the District
Superintendent.

INT. BEULAH'S PRIVATE OFFICE - CONTINUOUS

DERRINS

I guess Mr. Hambers said something to the teachers about being in the hallway. Not one of them is outside of the classroom... except Mrs. Rhodes.

BEULAH

Mrs. Rhodes, where is she?

DERRINS

I think I saw her in the teachers' lounge talking to Hambers.

BEULAH

But it's after nine o'clock! Where are her children?

DERRINS

They're sitting in the classroom.

BEULAH

By themselves?

DERRINS

Appears so.

BEULAH

He's violating his own Union Contract by keeping her away from her teaching duties.

INT. BEULAH' PRIVATE OFFICE - DAY

Beulah and Derrins discuss yesterday's events.

BEULAH

Now I know why Hambers was here yesterday.

DERRINS

Why?

BEULAH

The Professional Problems Committee filed a complaint that my staggered lunch period schedule, is in violation of Board Rule. I'm sure they know nothing about any Board Rule. Hambers told them...

END FLASHBACK SEQUENCES

INT. BOARD CHAMBERS - GRIEVANCE HEARING - CONTINUOUS

MADGE WILDER

What Board Rule?

BEULAH

It stipulates that the elementary school morning session shall close at noon and the afternoon session shall commence at one.

LOIS MATHER

And did it?

BEULAH

Yes it did.

MADGE WILDER

So what's the complaint?

BEULAH

I scheduled four staggered lunch periods fifteen minutes apart. It eliminates long lines and a congested lunchroom.

MADGE WILDER

So what's the complaint?

BEULAH

They're complaining because they don't all have lunch and recess at the same time --

BEACON.

--So what?

BEULAH

There's no time they can all meet together to plot against me.

MADGE WILDER

Does Mr. Springer know about your innovation?

BEULAH

Yes, he approved it.

LOIS MATHER

That's the first complaint the union appealed.

BEULAH

Our lunch schedule may not comply with Board rules but it doesn't violate the Union contract.

BEACON

The first? Were there others?

LOIS MATHER

Yes, Dr. Byrd says the teachers filed thirty three complaints in three months...

BEGIN FLASHBACK SEQUENCE

INT. BEULAH'S PRIVATE OFFICE - DAY

BEULAH

Look Theo.

Beulah thrust several more formal grievances into Derrins' hand.

SERIES OF SHOTS

GREENBURG

It is my complaint that you did not notify the police after a student threw a book at me.

DISSIDENT #1

It is my complaint that I did not receive my duty period.

DISSIDENT #2

It is my complaint you will not let me use the mimeograph machine.

BEULAH

Greenburg is right. I didn't call the police -- he did.

DERRINS

I told Mr. Springer about the incident.

BEULAH

Principals don't make up missed periods.

DERRINS

Missed periods? What are you talking about?

BEULAH

Oh, uh...excuse me, no pun intended. I meant preparation periods. It's not my fault no Sub came when the gym teacher was absent.

She pauses and takes a drag from her lit cigarette.

BEULAH (CONT'D)

She and several others missed their preparation period, not to mention the fact the children missed their gym.

DERRINS

Isn't there a duplicating machine in the teacher's lounge for them to use?

BEULAH

Yeah, and they'd be lost without it. They run off material, give it to the children to do and they call that teaching.

DERRINS

What is she complaining about?

BEULAH

She's talking about the duplicating machine in the vault. She's crazy if she thinks I'm going to allow her or any of them access to the vault where we keep money and expensive equipment. That stuff would walk and no one would know what happened to it.

DERRINS

So what are you going to do?

BEULAH

Nothing. They can appeal to Mr. Springer.

SCHOOL CLERK (V.O.)

Mr. Hambers from the Union is here. He wants to meet with the teachers.

BEULAH

What? He didn't notify me. Tell him if he wants a meeting, he'll have to give me twenty-four hour notice.

INT. SPRINGER'S OFFICE - DAY.

SPRINGER

I asked you to come early before Mrs. Rhodes arrives so we can come to some sort of understanding about your staggered lunch periods.

BEULAH

(angrily)

As I recall you approved the staggered lunch schedule, and its working just fine.

SPRINGER

I know, I know, but what about the afternoon recess?

BEULAH

What about it?

SPRINGER

They say there is none.

BEULAH

They're lying. When a teacher aide gives the teacher a ten minute break in the afternoon, the children have an indoor recess.

SPRINGER

I'm going to ask that you discuss schedules and school policies with the Professional Problems Committee before implementing them.

Beulah shakes her head in exaggerated disapproval. Her voice quivers.

BEULAH

Last week Michael Wreath denied their grievance on maximum class size.

SPRINGER

Maximum class-size, what's that?

FLASHBACK

INT. OFFICE OF EMPLOYEE RELATIONS- Day

Beulah and Rhodes discuss the Franklin PPC (Professional Problems Committee) grievances with MICHAEL WREATH, Director of Employee Relations, white male, middle thirties.

MICHAEL WREATH

The Professional Problems Committee is complaining that the fourth grade rooms are above the maximum class size.

RHODES

Yes, that's right, rooms 202, 203 and 205.

BEULAH

When we opened in September all the fourth grade room were between 31 and 33.

WREATH

What happened?

BEULAH

With normal attrition some of the room exceeded the maximum class size, but their teachers were against reorganizing in the middle of the school year.

RHODES

The PPC didn't agree to that.

WREATH

The contract does NOT say the maximum class size must be maintain throughout the school year. Mrs. Whyte does not have to reorganize at this time.

END OF FLASHBACK

BEULAH

She was furious when their complaint was denied.

SPRINGER

I didn't know about that.

BEULAH

That's because they filed the complaint directly to the General Superintendent.

SPRINGER

I thought they should attempt to resolve their complaints orally before they become formalized.

BEULAH

The contract says they should... not they must.

SPRINGER

I am ready at any time to sit down with you and your faculty that will bring about better relations.

BEULAH

The only way to get better relations with some of them is to let them do what they want... and this does not include teaching.

SPRINGER

I don't agree with you, but we'll try anyway.

Springer shuffles through some papers on his desk.

SPRINGER (CONT'D)

I'm also meeting with Carter Greenburg on his grievance this afternoon.

BEULAH

What! You mean he had the audacity to appeal to you about something he provoked?

SPRINGER

I understand from Derrins that it was Mr. Greenburg who called the police.

BEULAH

That is correct. After hitting the boy, he called the police because he said he was making a citizen's arrest. Have you ever heard anything so ridiculous?

Beulah pauses, gathers her thoughts and smiles.

BEULAH (CONT'D)

I'm sure Robert's parents would welcome a chance to confront Greenburg.

SPRINGER

Please try not to let that happen.

BEULAH

When are you going to move him?

SPRINGER

I spoke to Dr. Robins and I'll let you know as soon as I hear from him.

BEULAH

Did Derrins tell you about Glen Hambers.

SPRINGER

He did mention something about a meeting...

BEULAH

...I'm suppose to get a twenty-four hour notice if the union is going to hold a meeting in the building. I refused to let them meet because I didn't get a notice.

SPRINGER

He did mention that.

BEULAH

That's the second time he's violated the contract.

SPRINGER

Second, When was the first?

BEULAH

Last month, he met with Mrs. Rhodes in the teacher's lounge when she was suppose to be in classroom.

She takes several grievances from a folder and hands them to Springer.

BEULAH (CONT'D)

I'm sick of him. Since his visit, I've gotten these... which I a can do nothing about.

MONTAGE

DISSIDENT #1

I missed my duty free preparation period.

DISSIDENT #2

I did not receive my duty free period

DISSIDENT #3

I was deprived of my duty-free preparation period and my class did not have gym.

DISSIDENT #4

I was deprived of my preparation period.

END MONTAGE

SPRINGER

Okay, Okay. I'll send these grievances to Mike Wreath.

BEULAH

What about Hambers?

SPRINGER

And I'll ask him to have the union replace Hambers.

INT. FRANKLIN SCHOOL - DAY

MAIN OFFICE

Beulah is at the counter sorting mail when EDAN POWERS, a slightly built white man with cold serpentine eyes enters.

EDAN POWERS

(contemptuously)

I am Edan Powers a Union field representative. I'm here to see Mrs. Sheryl Rhodes.

Beulah glances at the office clock "eight o'clock" and then at the teachers' "sign-in sheet".

BEULAH

Oh yes, I see that Mrs. Rhodes has signed in. She is in Room 202. Will you please sign our register?

She hands him the school register. Powers signs it and without another word, turns and leaves the office.

INT. BEULAH'S PRIVATE OFFICE - DAY

Beulah picks up her intercom.

CLERK (V.O.)

Mr. Powers from the union just signed in. I think he's meeting in the teachers' lunchroom.

BEULAH

What? Yesterday, he ask for a meeting on Friday, not for today. Please tell Mr. Derrins to meet me at the teachers lunch room.

INT. HALLWAY- CONTINUOUS

Beulah and Derrins arrive outside the teachers lunchroom at the same time.

BEULAH

That sub has no business in there. Tell her to come out here.

INT. INSIDE LUNCHROOM - CONTINUOUS

When Derrins enters the lunchroom, Edan Powers is meeting with several Franklin dissidents and a substitute teacher.

DERRINS

Mrs. Whyte would like for the substitute teacher to step outside.

Edan Powers accompanies the substitute teacher out into the hallway.

HALLWAY

BEULAH

(to the substitute)
What interest do you have in that meeting?

SUBSTITUTE

I just heard there was a union meeting and I was told to come.

BEULAH

Well if that is indeed true, I suggest that you not get involved in the mess going on here.

With that, the substitute leaves the area.

POWERS

(rudely)

Mrs. Whyte, I'm here to conduct a meeting with all the union members at this school. You have no right to prohibit their attendance.

BEULAH

(angrily)

I beg your pardon, Mr. Powers. You seem to forget I am the principal of this school and I have every right in the world to direct the activities of substitute teachers when they are in this building.

Beulah turns to leave but stops abruptly.

BEULAH (CONT'D)

Anyway, you didn't request a meeting for today. I suggest that you get on with your meeting and make sure it's over by the time those teachers have to go on duty.

BEULAH'S PRIVATE OFFICE - LATER

Derrins is standing at the threshold of Beulah's private office.

BEULAH

Is the meeting over already?

DERRINS

Yes, when they saw I was staying and I began to take minutes they decided not to hold it.

Derrins hands Beulah an envelope.

DERRINS (CONT'D)
He left this for you.

BEULAH
I wonder what this is about?

Beulah tears the envelope open and reads its contents.

POWERS (V.O.)
"It is our complaint that you are
engaging in harassment of union
teachers as we attempted to have a
union meeting."

DERRINS
Since when are day-to-day subs
union members?

POWERS (V.O. CONTD)
"You issued orders for a teacher to
eat lunch in a room other than the
one in which we were having this
meeting and you subjected her to
verbal abuse and humiliation by
calling her a liar."

DERRINS
When did you call her a liar?

BEULAH
I didn't. They're the liars.

POWERS (V.O. CONTD)
"You directed a Mr. Derrins to take
note and report what was said...
violating his human dignity and
denying the union the right to
privacy."

BEULAH
(laughing)
And since when do they have a right
to privacy in a public school?
They're getting more ridiculous
each day.

As Beulah reads the complaint, Derrins breaks into a grin.

BEULAH (CONT'D)
And what, may I ask is so amusing?

DERRINS
You've done it again.

BEULAH
Done what?

DERRINS
(choking with laughter)
You've stripped me of my human
dignity.

END FLASHBACK SEQUENCES

INT. BOARD CHAMBERS - GRIEVANCE HEARING - CONTINUOUS

BEACON.
Mrs. Whyte tell us, what was your
relationship with the Local School
Council?

BEULAH
I worked closely with the
president. He is deeply concerned
that the teachers who participated
in the wild-cat strike are still at
the school.

MADGE WILDER
Wild-cat Strike, what's that?...

BEGIN FLASHBACK SEQUENCE

EXT. STREET - OUTSIDE FRANKLIN SCHOOL - DAY

Substitute teacher LONNIE BAYTON, white male, early twenties,
waits in his car as the children leave the building.

TANYA WILKENS, 12 years old, but looks every bit 16, leaves
the building. Bayton blows the horn and Tanya comes over to
the car and gets in.

INT. BEULAH'S PRIVATE OFFICE - DAY

MRS WILKENS, Tanya's mother, early thirties complains about Mr. Bayton.

MRS. WILKEN

Tanya said the substitute put her
in his car and tried to kiss her.

BEULAH

(incredulously)
What?

TANYA

(tearfully)
Yes mam'am. He ask me if I wanted a
ride home so I got in his car and
he grabbed me and tried to kiss
me.

BEULAH

Well, Mrs. Wilken, you don't have
to worry. He won't be here anymore.

EXT./INT. STREET OUTSIDE FRANKLIN SCHOOL - DAY

Wooden horses block traffic at both ends of the empty street. One lone car parked across from the school displays "Official Board of Education Parking Permit Principal" on the front windshield.

Suddenly an explosion of hundreds of children burst through the front doors, running amok.

Robert Watkins and David Jones hurl stones at the principal's car.

Two GIRLS, both 10 years old running among the children, stop suddenly. One girl points to the lone car parked on the street.

GIRL #1

Look, that Robert Watkins and David
Brown are throwing rocks at Mrs.
Whyte's car.

GIRL #2
They are oddballs and always
instigating some mess.

Suddenly the windshield shatters.

GIRL#1
Oh, Oh! They're really wrong.
That's a nice car.

GIRL #2
Yeah, I'd be really mad if someone
did that to my car. I think that
was a new car are too, you know.

GIRL #1
Mrs. Jones is really nice. I hope
they get in lots of trouble.

Moon, Chico and Heavy arrive on the scene.

MOON
Hey you two, where ya'll goin'?

CHICO
Yeah, get back in there.

GIRL #1
The teachers told us to go home.

GIRL #2
Yeah, they said there's no school
today.

The girls point to the group of teachers congregated on the
corner.

GIRL #1
See, there they are...

GIRL #2
...they just walked out and
told us to go home.

Moon, followed by Chico and Heavy head toward the school
entrance as the girls continue on their way home.

GIRL #1
I can hardly wait to tell my mother
what happened.

GIRL#2

That was really somthin' to see.

INT. FRANKLIN MAIN OFFICE - COUNTINUOUS

The sound of children rushing thru hallways.

TEACHERS VOICES

(shouting)

Go home! Go home! No school today!

Lonnie Bayton and Beulah are standing across the office counter shouting at each other.

LONNIE BAYTON

I will sign this time sheet!

Beulah grasp the teacher's sign in sheet

BEULAH

You will not!

BAYTON

You have no right to keep me from signing in!

BEULAH

I am the principal and you will not sign-in here. Report to Teacher Personnel... now!

Holding the time sheet, Beulah turns and walks into her office.

SIDEWALK IN FRONT OF SCHOOL - CONTINUOUS.

Lonnie Bayton joins Edan Powers and the fourteen dissident teachers congregated on the side-walk in front of the school.

Springer pulls up and jumps out of his car.

SPRINGER

You teachers are violating your contract. Return to you classroom immediately.

The teachers ignore him. Edan Powers places his hand on Bayton's shoulder.

EDAN POWERS

This teacher has a right to sign
in.

GREENBURG

What are you going to do about Mrs.
Whyte ignoring our complaints?

SPRINGER

This is not the way to get
something done.

GREENBURG

We're tired of waiting for
something to be done. Maybe we'll
get some answers now.

SPRINGER

I will review your complaints, but
now you must return to your
classroom...

EDAN POWERS

(to the teachers)
...you have heard the District
Superintendent. You can return to
your classrooms now.

Grumbling their protests, the teachers slowly retreat into
the building.

INT. FRANKLIN SCHOOL - MAIN OFFICE - CONTINUOUS

Moon followed by Chico and Heavy burst into the office.

BEULAH

Hi fellas.

MOON, CHICO AND HEAVY

(in unison)
Hi Miss Whyte.

MOON

What's goin' on up here? Why all
them kids out there 'stead of
bein' in school and why all them
teachers standin' round outside?

Beulah leans her arms across the counter

BEULAH

The teachers just walked out and told the children to go home. They said they were on strike.

MOON

What'd dey mean, 'on strike'?

BEULAH

They said I had no right not to let a substitute sign in, so they just walked out.

MOON

Is that the teacher we saw with the little girl in his car?

BEULAH

Yes, and her mother complained about it.

MOON

You want to get their asses back in here?

BEULAH

No, you guys stay out of this. I don't want you getting into trouble.

MOON

Hey...who? Ain't no trouble.

CHICO

HEAVY

Ain't no trouble.

Yeah, ain't no trouble...

MOON (CONT'D)

This some shit! Where they get off puttin' our kids in the fuckin' streets? You just say the word and we'll run they white asses back in here.

CHICO

Yeah, we'll run they white asses
back where they belong.

BEULAH

All those asses out there ain't
white. Some of them are just as
black as yours and mine.

MOON

We ain't gonna discriminate. All
they asses gonna belong to us.

Moon turns toward Chico and gives a 'high five'. The two grin
broadly and Heavy nods his head in silent approval.

MOON (CONT'D)

When that three o'clock bell rings,
anybody who put them kids out today
got five minutes to get the hell
out this here neighborhood.

EXT. FRANKLIN SCHOOL - CONTINUOUS

SUPER: "Three o'clock."

Streets and sidewalk completely empty -- not an 'ass' in
sight.

EXT./INT. DISTRICT OFFICE - CONTINUOUS

Nina and Wyna climb the stairs of the district office.

WYNA RUFUS

Do you think, he'll listen to us?

NINA HENDERS

I don't know, but we can try.

WYNA RUFUS

This is insane.

RECEPTION AREA.

They enter the reception area.

NINA HENDERS

We would like to see Mr. Springer.

SECRETARY

And you are?

NINA HENDERS

I'm Nina Henders and this is Wyna Rufus.

WYNA RUFUS

We're from Franklin School.

The secretary punches the intercom her desk.

SECRETARY

There's a Mrs. Henders and Mrs. Rufus to see you.

SPRINGER (V.O.)

Send them in.

SPRINGER'S PRIVATE OFFICE.

Nina and Wyna are sitting on the vinyl couch, facing Springer.

NINA HENDERS

We came to tell you the strike was provoked by some dissident teachers...

WYNA RUFUS

...and the union.

NINA HENDERS

They filed thirty-three grievances, which Mrs. Whyte could do nothing about.

WYNA RUFUS

She only wanted to make Franklin a school where teachers would teach and black children could learn.

SPRINGER

I understand and the unsatisfactory substitutes will be transferred.

INT. NEIGHBORHOOD BAR - NIGHT

In the neighborhood 'hole in the wall' bar several couples are on the make-shift dance floor rocking to the D.J.'s rhythmic sounds. In a dark corner out of plain view, Rhodes and Springer, in a booth holding hands discuss the events of the day.

SPRINGER

Oh that was really something... kids and teachers running all over the place. Hah! But sending the children home and walking out, is that really the way to go?

RHODES

It should help get rid of Beulah. Excuse me Mrs. Whyte.

SPRINGER

Hold on babe. She's just trying to help these children get educated.

RHODES

Be that as it may, but if she follows through with those unsatisfactory notices we will lose our full-time basis.

SPRINGER

Yeah, but she is a force to be dealt with.

RHODES

And I expect you will deal with that force -- because if you don't it's gonna be hell to pay the captain.

SPRINGER

What are you talking about?

RHODES

I dunno, but what if Mrs. Springer got an anonymous phone call about me and you.

SPRINGER

Oh, Babe. Don't worry about that, I got you covered.

Rhodes giggles.

RHODES

But I'm glad you and me are on the same page or should I say -- under the same cover.

SPRINGER

You don't have to worry. I'll have to find Mrs. Springer something to do one of these evenings soon.

RHODES

Oh, that is so right Sweetie. Yes you do. We've not been together for a while.

SPRINGER

This Beulah Whyte mess takes a lot of my time.

RHODES

I can believe that. But you need to pay more attention to me.

SPRINGER

Yeah, I do, but you know what's been going on... hell, you are in the middle of all this, Babe.

RHODES

I know this Sweetie. But I do need more attention.

SPRINGER

But hey, if I get free tomorrow night -- I mean I can do it if I've got something to work for. Heh, heh.

RHODES

(giggling)
That'll work for me.\

SPRINGER

Well Babe, I need to know I ain't got nothin' to worry about... you know what I mean?

RHODES

Oh stop, cuz I know it's gonna pay off in the end. It better.

SPRINGER

Okay. Let's go! Don't want us to be seen together, ya know!

RHODES

Yeah I know that's right. Got to watch out for your reputation and all that. We better be careful. Huh, especially you.

INT. BEULAH'S PRIVATE OFFICE - NEXT DAY

SCHOOL CLERK (V.O.)

(on the desk intercom)

Mrs. Whyte, the lunchroom manager wants you come to the lunchroom right away.

BEULAH

(vexed)

Now what?

SCHOOL CLERK (V.O.)

There's a bad argument going on in there!

Beulah rushes from her office and heads toward the lunchroom.

INT. SCHOOL LUNCHROOM - CONTINUOUS

BEULAH

(angrily)

What is it now?

RHODES

(bellowing her irritation)

This is none of your business, Mrs. Whyte.

BEULAH

Everything that goes on in this school is my business, Mrs. Rhodes.

RHODES

(yelling)

My lunch and my money don't concern you one bit. This is my business, not yours!

BEULAH

And this is my school, not yours. If your business interferes with any aspect of this school, then it becomes my business.

(to the lunchroom manager)

Now what's going on here?

LUNCHROOM MANAGER

I gave her the correct change, and she is not getting another penny from me. She tries to pull this all the time.

Another shouting match ensues.

BEULAH

I can't believe all this ruckus is being made over a measly twenty-four cents. This shows how petty you really are, Mrs. Rhodes.

Screaming, Rhodes heads out of the lunchroom. Beulah follows and reaches into her suit pocket, pulls out several coins and drops them on Rhodes's tray.

BEULAH (CONT'D)

Here, take the damn twenty-four cents.

Rhodes turns, flings the tray and hits Beulah's knee. Cringing in pain Beulah falls to floor.

Rhodes stops, stares at Beulah for a few seconds then flees toward her classroom.

BEULAH (CONT'D)

(screaming)

This is battery. I'm having her arrested. Let's see how she likes having her butt dragged to jail.

(to the lunchroom manager)

You saw everything that happened.

LUNCHROOM MANAGER

Ah... I guess.

BEULAH

I want you to put what you saw in writing. She's gone too far this time.

LUNCHROOM MANAGER

Well ah... I... ah ...I just saw you throw some money on her tray and then ah... the tray left her hand and hit your knee.

INT. DISTRICT OFFICE - LATER

Beulah laboriously climbs the stairs of the district office. She pushed the door open and limps into the reception area.

SECRETARY

You can go right in Mrs. Whyte. Mr. Springer is expecting you.

With exaggerated steps Beulah goes into Springer's private office.

SPRINGER'S PRIVATE OFFICE

Springer motions to her to have a seat on the vinyl couch. She hesitates, but reluctantly takes a seat.

SPRINGER

How's your leg?

BEULAH

(grimacing)

It was my knee that was hurt in Mrs. Rhodes's vicious attack. It hurts like hell.

SPRINGER

I knew we had a tense situation there.

BEULAH

Ha! To say the least!

SPRINGER

Well it's obviously a situation that must be addressed immediately.

Springer holds up one sheet of paper .

SPRINGER (CONT'D)

I have Derrins's report and everything will be smoothed out shortly. Don't worry about a thing.

BEULAH

When they ignored your order to return to their classrooms, it's blatant insubordination

SPRINGER

I'm going to take care of it. Believe me, something is going to be done. Now let's see...

Springer searches through the papers on his desk and separates a few out.

SPRINGER (CONT'D)

Okay, I see I have the unsatisfactory notices you gave Greenburg and Stevenson. They will not be assigned to you in September.

BEULAH

Fine, I'm going to file a battery charge against Mrs. Rhodes.

SPRINGER

Ah... I tell you what, why don't you hold off? I'm going to work with Dr. Robins. Just leave everything up to me. Okay?

BEULAH

All right, I'll let you take care of it, but I hope they're gone in September.

SPRINGER

Trust me.

She attempts to stand but the couch's grip is too powerful. Springer comes from behind his desk and helps her stand.

BEULAH

(groaning)
Ohhh... this knee is killing me.

SPRINGER

Here, let me help you up.

BEULAH

Thank you, I get mad every time I think about 'em.

Beulah limps out of the office in exaggerated pain.

BEULAH (CONT'D)

I can barely walk. This mess is ridiculous.

END OF FLASHBACK SEQUENCES.

INT. BOARD CHAMBERS - GRIEVANCE HEARING - CONTINUOUS

MADGE WILDER

Are they still there?

SPRINGER

Who?

MADGE WILDER

Rhodes, Greenberg and Stevenson

SPRINGER

I don't know if Dr. Robins has moved them yet.

LOIS MATHER
Wasn't there a group of parents who
demanded your removal...

BEGIN FLASHBACK SEQUENCE

INT. DISTRICT OFFICE - CONFERENCE ROOM - DAY

When Walter Murdock and several alleged parents and community people crowd into the conference room Theo Derrins is waiting for them.

LEADER
Where is Mr. Springer? We're here
to discuss the deplorable situation
at the Franklin School.

The other people voice their agreement.

WOMAN
Yeah! Where is he?

MAN
We want to talk to him.

DERRINS
Mr. Springer was called away
unexpectedly, so he asked me to
meet with you in his place.

PARENT LEADER
We're sick and tired of Beulah
Whyte lording herself over our
children and teachers and parents.

DERRINS
What do you mean?

WOMAN
She berates the teacher in front of
the children and parents.

MURDOCK
It causes both the students and
their parents to disrespect the
teacher.

MAN
Yeah, why should teachers and
children be subjected to her
tyranny?

WOMAN

And her language is offensive. Our children have heard winos and streetwalkers use fewer four letter words.

DERRINS

Mrs. Whyte agreed to talk to the teachers in private and also to lower her voice when she is speaking to them.

MURDOCK

She told the president of the Local School Council she was not going to let some dumb niggahs tell her what to do.

LEADER

Yesterday, our children were turned out into the street in the morning and nothing was done about it.

DERRINS

Mr. Springer is investigating it now with the Deputy Superintendent.

The parent leader hands Derrins a sheaf of papers.

LEADER

Here is our petition with almost two hundred signatures. If nothing is done to get rid of that Gestapo Lady, we will boycott and send our children back to their old School.

INT. BEULAH'S PRIVATE OFFICE - DAY

Beulah and Derrins are comparing the signatures on the petition with the names of parents on the student roster.

BEULAH

Look, seventy signatures are from people who have no children at this school.

DERRINS

Our fourteen dissidents must have influenced them.

BEULAH

The other ninety-eight is less than fifteen percent of the total enrollment.

DERRINS

Did the president of the Local School Council sign that petition?

BEULAH

No, was he at the meeting last night?

DERRINS

No, and I suspect none of those people who were at the meeting are council members.

INT. BEULAH'S BEDROOM - DAY

Beulah in bed next to Bill, is awakened by the doorbell. She slips into her robe and hurries to the front door. Her brisk movement causes the silken material to glide in graceful flight. The bell sounds again.

BEULAH

Yes, who is it?

POSTMAN

Postman, I have a registered letter for Beulah Whyte. I'll need a signature.

She pulls the sides of the robe together and ties herself into a neat presentable package. She opens the door, accepts the outstretched pen, scribbles her name across the registration card and exchanges it for an envelope.

The return address in the left hand corner reveals the sender: "BOARD OF EDUCATION".

INT. AREA OFFICE - DAY

Beulah approaches a long counter behind which a SECRETARY is at a desk, typing.

BEULAH
 Good Morning, I have an appointment
 to see Dr. Connors.

SECRETARY
 Just have a seat, someone will be
 with you.

Beulah takes a seat on a board-commodity vinyl couch and glances at the clock, "8:30".

The only sound is the tapping of the clerk's typewriter.

The hands of the clock move swiftly to "12:30" and she is still sitting.

She peels herself from the cohesive grip of the vinyl couch. She heads toward the door.

BEULAH
 (to the secretary)
 I can be reached at Franklin.

INT. BEULAH'S PRIVATE OFFICE - CONTINUOUS

Beulah is working on the mounds of accumulated paper on her desk. She is interrupted by the intercom.

SCHOOL CLERK (V.O.)
 Mrs. Whyte, the Deputy
 Superintendent is on the line.

BEULAH
 (picks up the receiver
 apprehensively)
 Mrs. Whyte speaking.

DEPUTY SUPERINTENDENT (V.O.)
 (angrily)
 Didn't your District Superintendent
 tell you to get out of that
 school?

BEULAH
 No sir, I'll read you the letter I
 received from Mr. Springer.

Beulah reads:

"Dear Mrs. Whyte, Report to the Area Office Monday morning to
 be assigned duties as designated by Superintendent Dr. Gerald
 Connors."

BEULAH (CONT'D)
 The letter is unsigned, so after I
 waited four hours for Dr. Connors,
 I assumed it was fraudulent.

The Deputy Superintendent's anger erupts over the phone.

DEPUTY SUPERINTENDENT
 You get out of that school
 immediately. You are relieved of
 your duties there!

Beulah hangs up the phones and glances at the Supernigger
 posted on her door.

BEULAH
 (murmurs to herself)
 I guess I'll need your protection
 more than ever now.

INT. AREA OFFICE - CONTINUOUS

Beulah, sitting on the familiar vinyl couch, is greeted by
 Dr. Connors, who shows little sympathy for her.

CONNORS
 I was called away from my office
 unexpectedly this morning. Come
 with me, I'll show you where
 you'll be working.

She follows him to a small office, completely bare except for
 a desk and telephone.

CONNORS (CONT'D)
 I would like for you to do a
 critical evaluation for a
 community mental health grant...

I understand you are very good at this sort of thing.

BEULAH

I don't understand. There are only three days left in this school year how is all the closing paper work going to get done?

CONNORS

All I know is that you are assigned to this office for the rest of this week.

BEULAH

But what happens to me after Friday? What about summer school?

CONNORS

I'm not discussing what will happen after Friday? I suggest you contact Dr. Robins.

Beulah returns to her temporary office and dials Franklin School.

SCHOOL CLERK

Franklin School.

BEULAH

Connect me to Nina.

The school clerk punches the desk intercom.

NINA HENDERS

This is Nina Henders.

BEULAH

I've been assigned to the Area Office for the rest of the week. .

NINA HENDERS

What are you talking about? Mr. Springer said he was going to transfer the troublemakers.

BEULAH

Well, it appears I'm the only one
he transferred.

INT. BOARD CHAMBERS - BOARD MEETING - DAY

General Superintendent JONAS REDDIS, white male, early
fifties is at a table facing the five Board members.

Deputy Superintendent, MAYNARD BURTON, African American male,
early forties, literally and figuratively a large dark
figure, sits next to him.

The BOARD PRESIDENT at a slightly elevated judge's bench is
flanked on each side by two board members at large desks
reserved for them.

A low wooden rail separates the spectators from the
superintendents and the board members.

When Beulah strolls in, a spectator calls to her.

SPECTATOR #1

Beulah, here we are, over here.

Beulah makes her way and sits with a group of white ladies
with whom she has one thing in common... they both are
against school bussing.

BEULAH

Have I missed anything?

SPECTATOR #2

They've just started. The bussing
issue hasn't come up yet.

Spectator #1 hands Beulah a copy of the Board agenda.

SPECTATOR #1

I think your summer assignment is
the first item.

BOARD PRESIDENT

Will the Secretary please call the
first item on the agenda?

SECRETARY

Six seventy five, Omnibus --

Board member, Warner Beacon interrupts.

BEACON.

-- I have a question. Six seventy five says no additional cost to the Board.

REDISS

Yes, that is correct.

BEACON

Does this mean that the person who is not going to serve at the Franklin school is donating her services to the Board.

REDISS

I don't understand your question.

BEACON

In the position which she is presently occupied, is she donating her services?

The question annoys the General Superintendent.

REDISS

She is working in another place already provided for.

A mumbled chatter rose from the spectators.

BEACON.

So you have added to your costs because if it is not vacant, you are paying for it -- is that right?

REDISS

(angrily)

If we had not assigned this person, another person would have been assigned to this job, so it is not additional cost.

Confused, Madge Wilder ask for clarification.

MADGE WILDER
Has there always been an Assistant
in this job?

BURTON
In what job?

MADGE WILDER
(exasperated)
Mrs Whyte's job -- Beulah Whyte.

When Beulah hears her name she scoots to the edge of her seat so as not to miss a single word.

MADGE WILDER (CONT'D)
Now listen -- she's an assistant
to someone in the Area Office. Has
that job always been in our budget?

BURTON
It is not a permanent position.
It's a summer position.

BEACON
Would it have been filled --

BURTON
-- Depending on the programs in
operation for the summer, the
positions are created and --

BEACON.
-- Created! So it did cost us
something.

MADGE WILDER
I'm not complaining that Miss Whyte
is working. I think it was a
terrible thing to assign as a
principal, her knock her out, then
leave her hanging.

BEACON
Didn't we just approve this
individual for this position at our
last meeting?

BURTON

That is right, and developments since then made us determine that she should not be principal of the summer school.

MR. BEACON

May I say in explanation of my question, here we have a person assigned as a principal of a school one meeting. We come back to the next meeting, boom, she is not assigned as a principal. The next thing we know she is not good enough to be principal of a school. Boom, she is out, but she's good enough to be working in the Area office at the same rate of pay as a principal... at a large sum of money I might add.

LOIS MATHER

Well, in answer to what you are saying, a person might not be suited to working with children, but would be --

MR. BEACON.

-- I will give you there are certain people not suited to anything and we shouldn't be paying them.

Beulah and the other spectators listen intently as the heated controversy continues.

LOIS MATHER

That is correct. There are some people who might not be any good at all working around children, but who can perform quite adequately in another kind of situation.

Spectators loudly voice their agreement.

SPECTATORS

Yeah!

Beulah cringes with embarrassment.

MADGE WILDER

This woman has been working around children for the past seventeen years.

BEACON

The staff must have thought she was fine when they assigned her..

LOIS MATHER

As I understood it, -- who was it you Dr. Burton I talked to about this?

BURTON

Yes, some of the problems arose after the initial decision had been made to appoint this particular person to that job.

MADGE WILDER

But she's good enough to be getting a good rate of pay working in the Area office.

LOIS MATHER

It was not just a case of a community coming in saying, 'we don't want this particular person'...

BURTON

...It was a question of us realizing that a mistake had been made, and it would be detrimental to the children to continue this.

The Board President recognizes the illegality of the discussion.

BOARD PRESIDENT

I am going to suggest that these matters that deal with the change in the principal be discussed in executive session.

LOIS MATHER

But these questions have to be answered out here.

BOARD PRESIDENT

They can be answered out here, if we decide... after executive session.

LOIS MATHER

They will be answered out here, Mr. President.

MADGE WILDER

I think the Chair makes rulings on these matters, Lois.

Mather is determined to have the last word.

LOIS MATHER

I think the Board will decide this one, Madge.

BEACON

Ladies, may, we go on?

BOARD PRESIDENT

(sarcastically)
Yes, proceed onward Christian soldiers.

SECRETARY

Seventy one six seventy six, Omnibus...

INT. BEULAH'S BEDROOM. - DAY

Door bell awakens Beulah and Bill asleep in bed.

BEULAH

I'll get it. Go back to sleep.

Beulah goes to answer the doorbell.

POSTMAN

Registered letter for Beulah Whyte.

Beulah hesitates, draws a deep breath to collect herself, opens the door, takes letter and signs the receipt.

She tears open the envelope and reads. With clenched fist, she strikes the wall.

BEULAH

Damn idiots!

Beulah rushes back to her bedroom and awakens Bill.

BILL

Honey what's wrong, what's the matter?

BEULAH

Listen to this.

She reads the letter out loud.

BEULAH (CONT'D)

Dear Mrs. Whyte: In accordance with the Rules of the Board of Education You are hereby directed to report to the Medical Examiner of the Board of Education for a health examination.

BILL

Why?

BEULAH

The General Superintendent of schools has authority to require a health examination of any employee whenever, there seems to exist a disability which might impair the efficiency of such employee.

BILL

What does this mean?

BEULAH

The General Superintendent is implying I'm crazy!

BILL

Well honey, I have to agree with him.

BEULAH

Bill, this is no joke. I pose a 'problem' to the administration, I have to see a shrink to see if I am mentally stable.

BILL

Okay, okay. I don't understand the entire situation.

BEULAH

This is just so they can give me a proper and permanent 'paper burial' and I will go away.

BILL

Honey, if you want to fight this, I want you to know I'm behind you one hundred percent.

INT. MEDICAL EXAMINERS OFFICE - DAY

Sitting across from each other Beulah and the MEDICAL EXAMINER, size each other up.

A long, pensive period of time passes.

MEDICAL EXAMINER

Mrs. Whyte, I understand you've been suffering from some emotional problems.

BEULAH

Really?

MEDICAL EXAMINER

Yes, you've been using a great deal of profanity.

She rifles through her folder and extracts some papers and lays them on the medical examiner's desk.

BEULAH

Well sir, let me ask you something.
If you were a principal, what would
you do if the teachers in your
school sent you these?

SERIES OF SHOTS:

- photo of tarred and feathered principal
- first your car and then your black ass note
- letter threatening her life.

BEULAH (CONT'D)

And instead of teaching, they spend
their time complaining and writing
these grievances.

SERIES OF SHOTS:

DISSIDENT #5

You put ten children from another
classroom into my room.

DISSIDENT #6

I was required to keep students
from another room because their
teacher was absent.

DISSIDENT #7

You disrupted my class by yelling
at a teacher while standing in the
hall, near my classroom door.

BEULAH

Fourteen malcontents file these and
twenty-three other ludicrous
grievances in a three months.

The medical examiner leafs through the complaints.

BEULAH (CONT'D)

They are protected by a union that
encourages them to write these
ridiculous complaints.

MEDICAL EXAMINER

I see.

BEULAH

You tell me, if you were in my position, would you be using profanity?

Corners of the medical examiner's mouth turn into a slight smile, then he bursts into laughter.

MEDICAL EXAMINER

Well, Mrs. Whyte, it seems as though they've got a tiger by the tail this time.

BEULAH

Damn right.

INT. DEPUTY SUPERINTENDENT'S OFFICE - DAY

Maynard Burton, beckons Beulah to the vinyl coach directly in front of the large executive desk behind which he is sitting in a large executive chair.

BURTON

Mrs. Whyte, this is an administrative hearing to discuss your performance as principal of Franklin Elementary School.

Perched next Burton, Springer, wearing a pained expression, fidgets with his tie as if it were too tight;

While Othman Robins, sitting next to Beulah, compulsively cleaning his glasses, appears distressed;

Gerald Connors, wearing an expression of concerned unconcern, sits apart from the others so as not to be a part of the carnage.

Beulah takes a pad and pen from her purse to record everything that is said.

BURTON (CONT'D)

You are accused of not working harmoniously with you faculty and the community. Before we begin, do you have anything to say?

She struggles to release herself from the cohesive vinyl couch. She stands to address the Board.

BEULAH

In all fairness, I agreed to act in good faith.

She sits down.

BURTON

You scream and yell at the teachers and reprimand them in the presence of parents, students and their peers.

Again she struggles to release herself from the cohesive grip of the vinyl couch and stands.

BEULAH

I apologized to the teachers who were insulted when I raised my voice -- as I take it they were. As for reprimanding them in front of parents and children I deserve some recognition for that.

She sits down.

BURTON

Excuse me. Recognition for what?

Again she struggles to escape the cohesive grip of the couch and stands.

BEULAH

I agreed to reprimand them in the privacy of my office.

Springer, Robins, and Connors laughed, but Burton did not see the humor.

BURTON

You demeaned Mr. Murdock,, by calling him 'Mr. Shortpants', and 'runt'.

BEULAH

It was God, not me, who made Mr. Murdock a little napoleon figure of a man, and it was the children, not me, who gave him those names.

BURTON

You have repeatedly used profane language, even calling Mr. Springer a 'little black M.F.

BEULAH

If I had indeed called Mr. Springer a motherfucker, I would not have nullified the insult with little and black to one as big and bronze as he.

She glances at Henry Springer, who acknowledges the complement with a smile.

BURTON

Reportedly, you stated you don't give a damn about the community.

Pursing her lips in disgust, she did not attempt to hide her annoyance.

BEULAH

I've spent numerous hours after school in the community, and for someone who doesn't give a damn, I sure had a damn funny way of showing it.

BURTON

Nevertheless, I find your conduct unbecoming a principal and I am recommending your principal certificate be revoked.

INT. BEULAH'S HOME OFFICE - DAY

Beulah is at her desk reading the accumulated mail when the doorbell rings. She goes to answer.

POSTMAN

Registered letter for Beulah Whyte.

She hesitates, draws in breath to collect herself, opens the door, takes the letter and signs the receipt. She tears open the envelope.

"Due to failure to perform your duties as a principal, you are relieved of your duties at the Franklin Elementary school and reassigned as a teacher.

Signed: Jonas Reddis, General Superintendent of Schools"

END OF FLASHBACK SEQUENCE.

INT. BOARD CHAMBERS - GRIEVANCE HEARING - CONTINUOUS

BEULAH

(sarcastically)

At least he didn't take my
principal certificate away.

ATTORNEY CLAYBORN

I immediately, filed a petition to
stop this demotion....

BEGIN FLASHBACK SEQUENCE

The Deputy Superintendent gave the fourteen Franklin dissidents a day off. They sit with Walter Murdock and a handful of parents in several rows of court benches behind the wooden rail separating them from the Judge.

Beulah and Attorney Clayborn walk through the low swinging gate and take a seat at the counsel table next to Deputy Superintendent Burton and the BOARD ATTORNEY.

Court arguments ensue.

BOARD ATTORNEY

Your honor, the parents staged a boycott to rid themselves of this principal they called 'The Gestapo Lady'.

ATTORNEY CLAYBORN

Your honor, my client has been denied "due process".

BEULAH

I was not faced with my accusers and no witnesses were present in my behalf.

ATTORNEY CLAYBORN

At a so called administrative hearing she was read the particulars, dismissed and denied the right of appeal.

BOARD ATTORNEY

The teachers filed complaint after complaint stating that working conditions at school were intolerable.

JUDGE

I will not rule on the credibility or the validity of the charges against Mrs. Whyte. However, I can find no violation of the school code.

END OF FLASHBACK SEQUENCE

INT. BOARD CHAMBERS - GRIEVANCE HEARING - CONTINUOUS

ATTORNEY CLAYBORN

The temporary injunction was dissolved and the demotion prevailed.

MADGE

Just like I said -- she has no school, no job and no money.

BOARD ATTORNEY

She was granted a sabbatical
leave...

BEULAH

...on my teacher's certificate.

BOARD ATTORNEY

Other than a reduction in salary
rate, it is immaterial whether your
title is teacher or principal.

ATTORNEY CLAYBORN

That's not quite true. The
embarrassment she's suffered is
irreparable.

(to the Board Attorney)

Now I understand, you think if she
is placated with a sabbatical leave
in ten months all will be
forgotten.

BEULAH

What can I do?

ATTORNEY CLAYBORN

Your only recourse is to get the
Principal Association to file a
grievance for you.

INTERCUT - TELEPHONE CONVERSATION

BEULAH

When are you going to file a
grievance for me?

ASSOCIATION PRESIDENT(V.O.)

The General Superintendent refuses
to hear any grievances until we get
a contract with the Board.

Beulah slams the receiver down and dials Madge Wilder.

INTERCUT - TELEPHONE CONVERSATION

BEULAH

I've been demoted to a teacher, but
I don't know why.

MADGE WILDER

What do you mean you don't know why?

BEULAH

The Deputy Superintendent recommended my dismissal based on what Springer told him. That is all I know.

MADGE WILDER

Why doesn't your Association file a grievance.

BEULAH

The Association president said the Board no longer recognizes our Memorandum of Understanding.

MADGE WILDER

That's not true. We just had a hearing for a principal. Hold on...

She puts Beulah on hold and dials the General Superintendent.

INTERCUT TELEPHONE CONVERSATION

MADGE WILDER (CONT'D)

Beulah Whyte says she's been denied a grievance hearing. What's going on?

(nodding her head)

Well schedule it as soon as possible.

The General Superintendent appoints Michael Wreath, to hold Beulah's Grievance Hearing.

INT. OFFICE OF EMPLOYEE RELATIONS - DAY

MICHAEL WREATH

Dr. Redmond read your complaint and I'm to communicate to him anything additional you may care to add.

BEULAH

Does he know about the wildcat strike?

MICHAEL WREATH

Your complaint does not mention a wildcat strike.

BEULAH

At about nine o'clock in the morning, the dissident teachers dismissed their children and walked out of their classrooms. Nothing was done about that.

MICHAEL WREATH

I don't know whether this was ever reported to him.

BEULAH

The Union Treasurer coached them on how to file grievances against me and I was bombarded with thirty-four all of which are without merit!

Michael Wreath shakes his head in disbelief.

INT. BEULAH'S BEDROOM - DAY

The telephone awakens Beulah from a fretful sleep.

BEULAH

(drowsily)

Hello.

ASSOCIATION PRESIDENT (V.O.)

The General Superintendent is asking for additional time.

BEULAH

It's already been two weeks. Bill has become ill and I am the sole supporter of my child.

She begins to sob.

BEULAH (CONT'D)

What am I suppose to do? It's not fair.

INTERCUT TELEPHONE CONVERSATION

BEULAH

It's been over a month and the General Superintendent has not answered. What do we do now?

ASSOCIATION PRESIDENT (V.O.)

I'll request a Board Review..

The request for a Board Review prompted an immediate response from Reddis.

REDDIS (V.O.)

After careful consideration of the facts in this case we find that our reactions were consistent with the provisions of Section 3-34 of the School Code. Accordingly this grievance is denied.

Two days later the BOARD PRESIDENT replies.

BOARD PRESIDENT (V.O.)

It is my understanding that a decision has been rendered by the General Superintendent. I am unable to grant your request for a Board Review.

BEULAH

Goddammit, Reddis didn't answer until we ask for a Board Review.

ASSOCIATION PRESIDENT (V.O.)

Calm down, Beulah. I know you're upset. I've already appealed.

BEULAH

How long will it take for them to schedule a hearing?

ASSOCIATION PRESIDENT (V.O.)

About two weeks.

INTERCUT TELEPHONE CONVERSATION

ASSOCIATION PRESIDENT (V.O.)

The Board President is asking for
more time.

BEULAH

Dammit, this is just another
stalling tactic.

Beulah slams the phone down and begins to sob. She dials her
attorney.

BEULAH (CONT'D)

(sobbing)

The Principal Association president
is granting the Board additional
time again.

ATTORNEY CLAYBORN

Is he is part of a conspiracy?

INTERCUT - TELEPHONE CONVERSATION

BEULAH

It's been four months, have you
heard anything?

ATTORNEY CLAYBORN

At long last our Board Hearing is
scheduled for next week. Did you
get the charges?

BEULAH

No.

ATTORNEY CLAYBORN

We'll just have to wait to see what
they have in mind.

BEULAH

Okay. Maybe now I'll find out what
tyranny I imposed on the children.

END OF FLASHBACK SEQUENCE

INT. BOARD CHAMBERS - GRIEVANCE HEARING - DAY

MADGE WILDER

Well, I guess we should hear what Mrs. Whyte has to say about the charges.

BEULAH

What charges? I never received any charges.

MADGE WILDER

Hendrick, you mean since Mrs. Whyte was removed from Franklin, sixteen months ago, she doesn't know why?

All three board members look quizzically at Hendrick Springer.

He quickly reaches into his briefcase, and hands Beulah three typed pages.

SPRINGER

(sheepishly)

I thought the General Superintendent sent them to her.

ATTORNEY CLAYBORN

As you can see, this is the first time my client has seen these charges...

SABARRO

...she should have no trouble responding to the charges here and now.

ATTORNEY CLAYBORN

I respectfully request that she be given time to prepare answers to them.

BEACON

It is only common courtesy to allow her time to prepare answers to them.

MADGE WILDER

I 'm in total agreement with that.

Sabarro is unable to hide his disgust.

(abruptly)

My calendar is full for the rest of
this month. I don't know when I
will be able to meet again.

LOIS MATHER

I'm faced with the same
problem --

BEACON.

-- but this matter deserve
our immediate attention.

MADGE WILDER (CONT'D)

I suggest we agree to reconvene at
the earliest possible date.

BOARD PRESIDENT

Then it's settled. This hearing is
recessed until further notice.

INT. ATTORNEY CLAYBORN'S OFFICE - LATER THAT DAY

Beulah and Clayborn are reviewing the charges.

BEULAH

Have you ever heard anything so
outrageous? Listen to this first
one.

She reads out loud.

BEULAH (CONT'D)

At a general faculty meeting, the
principal swaggered back and forth
before the teachers and stated, I
had four abortions and my mother
paid for all of them."

INT. BOARD CHAMBERS - DAY

BOARD PRESIDENT

Mrs. Whyte, it has been several
weeks, are you prepared to respond
to the charges against you now?

BEULAH

Before I do, I'd like to know who
made these ridiculous charges?

Quiet engulfs the room.

Madge Wilder breaks the silence.

MADGE WILDER

Well Hendrick -- answer her!

SPRINGER

(stammering)

Uh...Uh...I am not at liberty to
divulge the source of my
information.

The committee members are stunned.

BOARD PRESIDENT

Mrs. Whyte, will you step outside
while I speak to the committee and
your attorney?

Beulah leaves the board chambers and waits in the adjacent
hallway.

HALLWAY - CONTINUOUS

After a few minutes, Attorney Clayborn joins her.

ATTORNEY CLAYBORN

Beulah, if you drop all charges,
they'll reinstate you as principal
and repay your full back salary.

BEULAH

But what about the legal fees I owe
you?

ATTORNEY CLAYBORN

I'm sure you'll have enough money
to pay me out of your back salary.

INT: BEULAH'S BEDROOM - DAY

Beulah is in bed asleep next to her husband.

An accumulation of clothing is scattered everywhere. A cool breeze blows through an open window and Beulah snuggles underneath the layers of coverings on her bed.

Telephone rings and she slowly reaches for it on the night stand.

INTERCUT - TELEPHONE CONVERSATION

BEULAH

Hello.

DR. ROBINS

Mrs. Whyte, this is Othman Robins.

Beulah bolts into a sitting position and listens intently.

DR. ROBINS (CONT'D)

Congratulations, you have been assigned to be the principal of the Wendell Elementary School. You're to report Monday morning.

The brief call ends her desire to sleep. She nudges Bill.

BEULAH

Bill, wake up. I've been assigned to be the principal of Wendell Elementary. Let's go see it.

She hurries from the bed, leaving a trail of discarded bedding; dresses quickly and waits impatiently for her husband.

As they leave the bedroom she notices the bedding and accumulations of clothing scattered everywhere.

She stops momentarily.

BILL

Aren't you going to pick that stuff up?

BEULAH

I've waited sixteen months and I finally got another school.

As they leaves, she shuts the bedroom door behind her.

EXT. STREET DAY

Bill maneuvers the car to a stop in front of an eight-foot fence surrounding a construction site.

A huge excavator moves back and forth dumping debris into nearby trucks; several contractors, wearing protective hard hats are pushing wheel barrows filled with tools and rubbish.

On the fence a sign:

"FUTURE HOME OF WENDELL ELEMENTARY SCHOOL. KEEP OUT."

END