



CFJ UPDATE

SUMMER 2003

Californians for Justice Education Fund is statewide grassroots organization bringing people of color, young people, and poor people together by leading large-scale community education efforts, training a new generation of grassroots civil rights leaders, and mobilizing public support for major public policy change in California.

First Things First: Fix Our Schools, Don't Deny Diplomas

On July 9, the California Board of Education is expected to make a decision that will affect the lives of hundreds of thousands of young people in the state. The board will decide whether the California High School Exit Exam will deny diplomas to high school students beginning with the class of 2004, or whether they should delay the "diploma penalty" until more improvements to schools have been made.

Speaking out at the Los Angeles stop on the Bus Tour

Californians for Justice, together with ally organizations in the Campaign for Quality Education, has led the fight call-



ing on the state board to make the right decision: to fix the real problems in California schools instead of using the Exit Exam to deny diplomas. To raise awareness around the issue, this past May CFJ held many successful events throughout the state.

The California Bus Tour for Quality Education

Traveling across California, the Bus Tour for Quality Education brought the voices of students, parents and community mem-

Please see page 2

CFJ Fresno Office Kicks Off Central Valley Work

Fifty-four percent of Fresno high school students report that their classrooms do not have enough desks, books, or basic supplies, according to a new survey conducted by CFJ members in the new Fresno office.

The survey also revealed that only 23% of students surveyed had heard about the A-G courses required to be eligible for college at Cal State or UC campuses.

CFJ student members in Fresno

conducted this survey of 500 students in the Fresno school district. This was the first major project for these new CFJ leaders who are quickly building a base in the Fresno community. Their research confirms that the Central Valley faces many of the same unequal educational conditions as the rest of California.

The Fresno leaders have held two rallies this Spring highlighting unequal school conditions and the unfair impact of the High School Exit Exam.

Fresno Unified is the fourth largest school district in the state. The school population is mainly Latino, Asian American, and African American.

In preparing for our work in Fresno, CFJ interviewed important local organizations, key allies, and social justice activists. We are excited to work together with these organizations and to continue developing alliances with organizations throughout the Central Valley.

Californians for Justice Education Fund www.caljustice.org

1611 Telegraph Ave., #317
Oakland, CA 94612
(510) 452-2728
Fax (510) 452-3552

1010 Ruff Drive
San Jose, CA 95110
(408) 292-9476
Fax (408) 280-7804

755 Pine Avenue
Long Beach, CA 90813
(562) 951-1015
Fax (562) 951-9444

4265 Fairmount Dr., # 200
San Diego, CA 92105
(619) 641-7750
Fax (619) 516-1734

1922 N. Echo Ave.
Fresno, CA 93704
Phone & Fax
(559) 443-1394



A parent speaks out at the Riverside stop of the Bus Tour.



San Jose students ride the bus to their "Carnival for Quality Education"

Photo by Scott Braley



Jo Behm speaks about how the exit exam will affect students with disabilities at the Oakland Bus Tour stop.

Bus Tour and Speak Outs

Continued from page 1

bers to the state capitol. From May 1 to May 8, the bus tour made stops in twelve cities from San Diego to Sacramento. The tour involved hundreds of community members and was supported by sixty organizations statewide.

The tour got the attention of local and statewide media, and put the State Board of Education on notice that our communities want real improvements in our schools, not fake fixes like the Exit Exam.

The bus tour was highlighted by a variety of creative and energetic activities as well as passionate and heartfelt testimony.

San Diego kicked off the tour with a large rally that included a skit that revealed the unfairness of the Exit Exam. Long Beach students protested the high number of uncredentialed teachers in their schools, while parents and students in River-

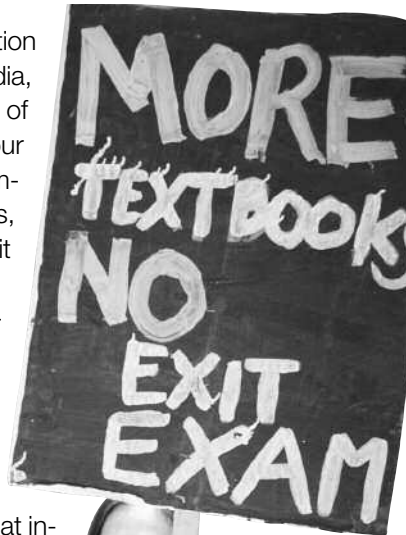
side protested the effect of the exam on English Learner students.

Rallies in Los Angeles put a spotlight on poor school conditions. The Coalition for Educational Justice celebrated their hard-earned success in getting the Los Angeles Unified School District to vote against the Exit Exam.

In Fresno, CFJ members released the results of a survey of 500 students in the district (see story on page 1), and rallied in front of the Fresno School District offices. San Jose students hosted an energetic stop for the bus tour, with a "Carnival for Quality Education,"

where participants played "Slam the Exit Exam," and other games.

In Oakland the Bus tour stop featured a mock funeral for the hopes and dreams that the exit exam would kill, followed by students and parents speaking out about school conditions on the steps of Mission High School in San Francisco.



Cathy Medrano from San Diego Youth Organizing Communities rallies at the San Diego kick off to the Bus Tour

Students on Pro High School Ex

Community Speak Outs in Southern and Northern California

The next week, the campaign continued to build momentum with large community Speak Outs in southern and northern California. The events took place on the 49th anniversary of the historic Brown v. Board of Education decision of the Supreme Court that ended legalized segregation in public schools. Students, parents, community members and education advocates were joined by California Assemblymember Jackie Goldberg, and representatives of Senator John Vasconcellos and Assemblymembers Loni Hancock and Manny Diaz.

The speak outs included testimonies,



Mai Dia Yang addresses the media at the press conference in front of the Fresno School District offices.

spoken word performance, skits, audience participation, and short rallies at the end of the events.

Students and parents testified about the school conditions in communities of color and low income

Protest Tour Say Exit Test Is Unfair

communities in California. Students described math classes without textbooks, being taught by successions of substitute teachers, dilapidated school buildings, and a lack of college prep classes.

The Speak Outs also announced the release of a comprehensive new report, "First Things First," that reveals the impact of the Exit Exam and clearly calls for the state to address the unequal resources provided to students of color, low income students, and English learner students in California schools.

Emily Hobson, the author of the report, said,

"The state needs to put first things first and ensure that all students have the fundamental resources they need to succeed, instead of punishing students with the exit exam."

Keeping the Pressure on the Board

The successful events of the Campaign for Quality Education have received media attention and put pressure on the Board of Education

to face the real problems in California schools. The Campaign is keeping up the pressure with a letter writing campaign and phone call-in days to the Board and State Superintendent, Jack O'Connell. For information about the big *Summer Jam to Stop the Exit Scam* in Sacramento on July 9, see the back page of this newsletter.

Send a Letter to the State Board!

The State Board of Education needs to hear from

YOU! Send a letter to the State Board calling on them to delay the Exit Exam until all students receive a quality education and they provide alternative assessments. Please see the CFJ web site at www.caljustice.org for more information and a sample letter.

At the



Photo by Marty Lipton

First Things First Report Released

Comprehensive Report Highlights Lack of Opportunity to Learn for Students of Color, Low Income, and English Learner Students

First Things First, the new Californians for Justice report, was released on May 17. The report goes beyond the HUMRRO report on the Exit Exam that was commissioned by the State Board of Education because it examines inequalities in resources and conditions provided to students in

California schools. The conclusions of the First Things First report are:

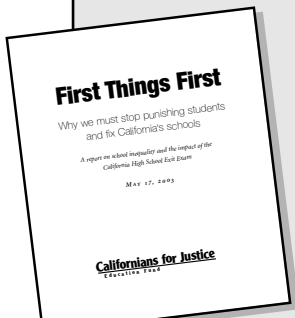
- The High School Exit Exam punishes students for the state's own failure to provide an equitable, high quality education.
- The Exit Exam fails to meet its own policy and administrative goals.
- The Exit Exam violates federal civil rights guidelines and professional educational standards for assessment.

The report also examined a number of critical indicators of educational opportunity, including:

- safe facilities
- credentialed teachers
- books and instructional materials
- access to rigorous curriculum

One surprising finding of the report was that during the same period that the Exit Exam has been implemented, the number of schools with large numbers of uncredentialed teachers has actually increased.

For a copy of the report, please visit the Californians for Justice web site at www.caljustice.org, or call your nearest CFJ office.



1611 Telegraph Ave., #317
Oakland, CA 94612
Californians for Justice



Save the Date! July 9, in Sacramento

On July 9, the California State Board of Education will meet to decide whether to use the High School Exit Exam to deny diplomas to students starting with the class of 2004. We need to tell them that they must **delay the diploma penalty** until all students receive the fundamental resources they need to have a fair opportunity to learn, and until there are **alternative assessments** to measure student success.

Join hundreds of students, parents, community members, teachers, education advocates, and policy-makers from all over California to demand that the the State Board stop the "Exit Scam." The Exit Exam does not improve our schools; the Board needs to

**SUMMER
jam!**
**TO STOP THE
EXIT SCAM!**

address the real problems that students of color, low income students and immigrant students face every day in their schools.

The Summer Jam to End the Exit Scam will include a full day of exciting activities. The morning will start off with a 10am rally and press conference in front of the Board of Education building. Teams of participants will visit with state legislators, and at noon there will be performers, music, games and informa-

tion booths on the capitol lawn. The Summer Jam will end with an afternoon rally in front of the State Board of Education meeting to respond to their decision whether or not to delay the Exit Exam. Don't miss this chance to make

your voice heard and meet others fighting for educational justice around the state! For information call your local CFJ office.

