



CFJ UPDATE

FALL 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.

Campaign Wins Exit Exam Delay

On July 9, several hundred youth, parents, and advocates from all across California converged on Sacramento to protest unequal school conditions and the High School Exit Exam. As youth and parents rallied outside in the sweltering summer heat, we packed the State Board of Education meeting to tell them that all students deserve a quality education.

Members of the Campaign for Quality Education testified about the poor conditions in their schools, the experience of English learners and students with disabilities, and the impact of the Exit Exam on students who are not receiving a quality education. State Board members were visibly moved by the testimony, with the President of the State Board saying it was the most powerful he had heard in his years serving on the board.

What the Delay Means

By voting to delay the Exit Exam for two years, the State Board now sets the class of 2006 as the first to be denied diplomas because of the test. While Campaign members held signs in the meeting stating "Two Years Is Not Enough," the two-year delay is a significant victory because with it state officials have admitted the unequal conditions in our schools. It also gives us



Photo by Scott Braley

Hundreds of students, parents, community members and education advocates rallied outside of the State Board of Education meeting on July 9.

time to organize for concrete changes to improve schools. A motion by new board member Luis Rodriguez to delay the Exit Exam for 3 years narrowly lost by a vote of 5-4, showing the progress that we have made since the beginning of the Exit Exam campaign.

Youth and Parents Hold State Officials Accountable

State board meetings are usually packed with lobbyists for testing com-

panies, textbook makers and other corporate interests, not by youth and parents from poor communities and communities of color. Our first victory of the day was simply getting into the room as officials tried to block our access. With help from our legal allies, we filled the room with youth and parents from all over the state, and left the lobbyists waiting in the lobby! State Board members couldn't hide from the people af-

continues...

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
(559) 443-1394
Fax (559) 443-1343



Exit Exam Victory

Continued from page 1

acted by their decisions. They listened to our testimonies, and ultimately had to answer to the community for their actions.

A Spirited Day

Outside of the meeting, youth, parents, and advocates from the Campaign for Quality Education held spirited rallies, pickets, and press conferences to put pressure on the State Board. Assembly members Loni Hancock and Jackie Goldberg spoke at the morning press conference. A special lunchtime "Summer Jam" concert organized by Books Not Bars brought culture and celebration to the day.

In the afternoon, delegations of youth, parents, and advocates met with over 30 state legislators to develop next steps to ensure all students have an opportunity to learn. By day's end, Campaign members loaded onto buses back to San Diego, Los Angeles, Fresno, San Jose, and Oakland having exercised their power for educational justice in California.

Building Our Momentum, Changing the Debate

The Campaign for Quality Education has made great strides in building our power. Youth and parents who suffer from the worst school conditions have taken a powerful position in state education debates. Building that power

Campaign members raise signs inside the State Board of Education meeting.

and fighting institutional racism will continue to be the central work of the Campaign for Quality Education.

The campaign has publicized the fact that thousands of students lack an "opportunity to learn" in California schools. We have been successful in making this a major focus of the news coverage about the Exit Exam. State education officials have recognized Opportunity to Learn as a major concern in the education debate.

Every major newspaper and television in the state covered the state board's decision on the Exit Exam. Almost all of them included the voices of students and parents at the board meeting and our concerns about the lack of opportunity to learn.

The Campaign is researching potential next steps on the Exit Exam, policies to ensure an Opportunity to Learn, and other key issues for educational justice.

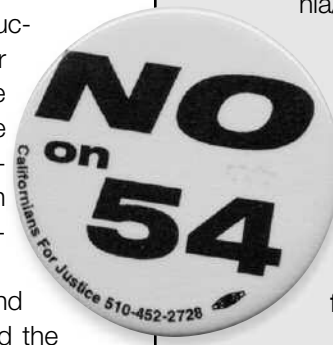
CFJ Kicks Off No on 54 Campaign

On Labor Day, Californians for Justice kicks off a major outreach campaign to defeat Ward Connerly's Proposition 54, the Race Information Ban, which will threaten our schools, our health, and our civil rights.

CFJ volunteers are going to high schools, supermarkets, community colleges, churches, and community groups to inform people about the dangers of Prop 54. We are running big Get Out The Vote efforts for the October 7th election. To volunteer, contact your local CFJ office!

CFJ is also a founder of the Coalition for an Informed California/No on 54. The Coalition

is planning a major media campaign in ethnic media and mainstream TV. To learn about the statewide campaign, visit www.informedcalifornia.org.



Youth, parents, and ally groups in the Campaign will be involved in planning the next steps.

CFJ member Samantha Knox called on the State Board to delay the Exit Exam and improve our schools.

