



# CFJ UPDATE

## NOVEMBER 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.



Photo by Scott Braley

The October 7 defeat of Prop. 54—the Race Information Ban—was a historic victory for everyone that cares about racial justice in California. The hard work of the statewide **Coalition for An Informed California** and youth and adults across the state paid off with a landslide 64% “no” vote.

### How We Won, Why We Won

There are two reasons why we defeated Prop. 54: First, the hard work of thousands of volunteers from many grassroots organizations across Califor-

### Volunteers in Oakland prepare to distribute doorhangers against Prop. 54

nia who worked to get out the vote; and second, the strong statewide coalition that led the media campaign against the initiative.

Californians for Justice played a big role in the statewide campaign. In San Diego, Long Beach, Fresno, San Jose, and Oakland, hundreds of CFJ volunteers worked to get out the vote in our communities. We contacted over twenty thousand voters by phone and distributed 100,000 doorhangers with in-

formation about the dangers of Proposition 54.

CFJ reached out to new voters and new volunteers at community events, grocery stores, and high school and college campuses. With over 300 outreach events and presentations to community groups, college classes, churches, and health care clinics, we informed the community and recruited volunteers to the campaign. The on-the-ground outreach and work of vol-

**continues...**

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## Prop. 54 Defeated

Continued from page 1

unteers played a crucial role in defeating this initiative.

But, we would not have won this fight without a broad statewide coalition working together to inform voters. Two years ago CFJ joined with other key organizations across California in recognizing that conservative activist Ward Connerly was planning another harmful ballot initiative. These groups formed the Coalition for An Informed California to fight Connerly's initiative. At the end of the campaign the coalition had grown to include 400 organizations across California and the nation. Coalition members included healthcare organizations, civil rights groups, community groups, unions, and more. This

coalition raised over 4 million dollars for television and radio advertising against Prop. 54, which was a vital part of informing the public about the dangers of the initiative. The ads featured C. Everett Koop, Danny Glover, Jesse Jackson, and Tony Cardenas.

### What This Victory Means

In the world of electoral politics, defeating an initiative by 64% to 36% is a landslide victory. In the past 10 years initiatives attacking the rights of immigrants and people of color have won more often than not. Given that history, the defeat of Prop. 54 was a huge victory for the people and organizations who are fighting for racial justice in California.

The odds are usually against us. This victory means that when we build a broad statewide coalition, develop an effective message, and work in our communities to inform people and get them out to vote, we can win!

But, the big win doesn't mean the end of initiatives from extremist conservatives. Our lesson from this election is that it takes all of us coming together to win. In order to defeat racist and right-wing initiatives in the future, we need to maintain and strengthen the



powerful coalition of organizations that came together for this fight. We need to continue our organizing work across the state to mobilize ordinary people to have a voice and a vote in California. And, that's exactly what we plan to do.

### Prop. 54 Vote by County

| County                               | No Vote    |
|--------------------------------------|------------|
| Los Angeles<br>(includes Long Beach) | <b>71%</b> |
| Alameda (includes Oakland)           | <b>76%</b> |
| Fresno                               | <b>58%</b> |
| San Diego                            | <b>61%</b> |
| Santa Clara (includes San Jose)      | <b>69%</b> |

### Racially Divisive Initiatives In the Past 10 Years

| Initiative  | No Vote    | Yes Vote   |
|---|------------|------------|
| Prop. 187<br>Anti-immigrant initiative                          | <b>41%</b> | <b>59%</b> |
| Prop. 209<br>Initiative to end affirmative action in California | <b>45%</b> | <b>55%</b> |
| Prop. 21<br>Initiative that criminalized youth of color         | <b>38%</b> | <b>62%</b> |
| Prop. 54<br>Racial information ban                              | <b>64%</b> | <b>36%</b> |