



CFJ UPDATE

APRIL 2004

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.

Cuts Closing Door to College

"Thanks to Puente I'm one step further towards college compared to other students," says Hector Vega, a sophomore at James Lick High School in San Jose and a CFJ member. "They help us experience college in person with field trips and guest speakers. They constantly encourage me to achieve higher education."

College access programs such as Puente, which help thousands of students each year prepare for and succeed in college, are now in danger of being eliminated. Governor Schwarzenegger's proposed budget cuts are

threatening to severely limit or eliminate UC/CSU (University of California and California State University) outreach programs that help open doors to educational opportunity for students in low income communities of color. The threatened budget cuts would also bring enrollment caps, tuition hikes, and a plan to divert UC and CSU students into the community colleges.

For students in low income communities of color, it is already hard enough to achieve a college education. Many of them already attend schools with the worst educational conditions—overcrowded classrooms, not enough textbooks, and lower numbers of highly qualified teachers. Proposition

209, which passed in 1996, eliminated important affirmative action programs that sought to end racial discrimination in college admissions. Finally, the California college system is terribly unprepared for the current population surge of high school graduates (see sidebar "Tidal Wave Two" on back page). Hundreds of thousands of college-eligible students will be denied access to college in the next decade because of lack of space.

But students are not ready to let the door to their future be shut in their face. High school and college students are challenging the cuts. Exciting student collaborations are forming to maintain

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Long Beach students tell the governor to "Clean up his act" on education



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Education Budget Cuts

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college access and to expand the possibilities for students of color, low income, and immigrant students.

The Fight Against the Cuts

On taking office, Governor Schwarzenegger caused a budget shortfall by lowering the vehicle licensing fee (“car tax”). He attempted to compensate by making mid-year cuts to education, health and other services. The education budget was slashed by more than \$100 million, and \$24 million was cut from UC/CSU outreach programs.

In January 2004, CFJ joined together with the University of California Student Association, the Equal Justice Society, and individual students to petition the California Supreme Court to halt Schwarzenegger’s cuts to education. The lawsuit declared that the governor violated state law by lowering the Vehicle License Fee at a time when there was not enough money in the state budget to offset the decrease in funds. The budget cuts that followed violated the state constitution because the governor disregarded the legislature’s power to decide how public money is spent.

On January 29, students, parents



CFJ members joined hundreds of college and high school students in Sacramento on April 14 to protest budget cuts and lack of access to higher education.

and community members from the Campaign for Quality Education put a spotlight on the governor’s illegal cuts to education with protests across the state. Protesters in San Diego, Long Beach, Fresno, San Jose, and Oakland declared their outrage with the new governor’s lack of concern for education. Broom-wielding protesters called on Governor Schwarzenegger to “clean

up his act.” The protests received print, television and radio coverage around the state.

Though the California Supreme Court sent the lawsuit against the governor’s budget cuts to a lower court, the Governor’s office backed down. Schwarzenegger announced that instead of unilaterally making the planned education cuts, he would forward them to the legislature. Though we didn’t win in court, we won crucial changes: the cuts are halted, and the legislature will decide. With some allies in the legislature, we are hopeful that college access programs can be saved.

Through our organizing this spring we continue to put a spotlight on school conditions and the threats to California’s public universities. Programs such as Puenete, AVID, and EAOP provide academic preparation and college information to students whose schools lack basic resources such as teachers, textbooks, and classroom space. As we fight to improve schools, we are working to maintain the programs that open the door for students struggling in unequal schools. Without these programs, fewer students of color can be prepared for college, and diversity in higher education is lost.

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What do access programs accomplish?

Outreach programs make a significant impact at a small cost. Participants in the programs prepare for college at significantly higher rates than their peers at the same schools:

- They complete the A-G requirements (college preparatory classes) at higher rates (40% compared to 10%).
- They take the SAT at higher rates (67% compared to 40%), and, they enroll in California public colleges at higher rates (51% to 26%).
- Participants are generally better prepared to succeed once in college—after 3 years 80% are still enrolled in the university.

Access programs run by the UC system have reached hundreds of thousands of students in California:

- Since 1998, 80,000 students per year have received support through UC Saturday Academies, after school programs, university research opportunities, SAT and ACT test preparation courses, financial aid counseling, parent counseling, and one-on-one mentoring.
- 170,000 students in UC’s 256 partner schools have received the benefits of improved educational process and a “college-going” school atmosphere.
- 100,000 teachers have participated in the UC professional development programs, and more than 6,000 counselors have been trained in college access or in developing a college going culture in their schools.

Source: UC ACCORD



Photo by Scott Braley

Leadership Retreat and New Board Members!

The Californians for Justice annual Leadership Retreat took place February 14-16 at St. Nicholas Ranch outside Fresno. Over 90 youth and adult members got to meet other CFJ organizers and activists from San Diego, Long Beach, San Jose, Oakland, and, of course, Fresno.

Members helped develop and facilitate a number of creative sessions to increase our knowledge on issues such as school funding and school desegregation. There was a particular

focus on the history of the *Brown v. Board of Education* ruling and the upcoming 50th anniversary of that decision. Leaders from across California were able to meet others working to for quality education in their communities.

One of the most important activities of the retreat was the annual election of new members of the board of directors. CFJ members met the candidates for the available board seats, and weighed many important considerations in making their decision. CFJ strives to have a board that represents our racial and ethnic diversity, our gender diversity, and the different cities we work in. There was a strong group of candidates this year, and the decision was difficult. In the end, CFJ members elected Lu'cas Coiner-Porter from Fresno and Marisol Melendrez from Oakland.

The board of directors oversees CFJ, helping to plan the direction the organization is moving in, and evaluating the work that is being done. Being on the board is a big responsibility, but it is also fun and a great learning experience.

The Leadership Retreat is open to active members of CFJ. We look forward to seeing you at next year's retreat!



Photo by Scott Braley

Newly elected members of the CFJ board of directors joined some of the continuing members for a photo. From left to right: (first row) Marlene Regis, Yvonne Tran, Ana Aparicio, and Marisol Melendrez; (second row) Josh Norris, Lu'cas Coiner-Porter, and Reggie Taylor.

Save the Date: May 17, 2004—Statewide Protests

On the 50th Anniversary of Brown v. Board of Education

In 5 cities:

San Diego
(619) 641-7750

Los Angeles
(562) 951-1015

Fresno
(559) 443-1394

San Jose
(408) 272-0236

Richmond
(510) 452-2728



**Put
the
state
on
Trial**

Still Separate, Still Unequal Schools

Join students, parents, and community members in five cities across the state in putting the state “on trial” for schools that are still separate and still unequal. Demand an **opportunity to learn** for all students in California.

Budget Cuts

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Outreach and Access

Too many students in California attend schools that don't provide them a decent opportunity to learn. These schools have the fewest qualified teachers, the fewest academically challenging courses, and a lack of textbooks, desks and other basic resources. Students who attend these schools don't have a strong chance of attending college after they graduate.

Cuts to education are only making this situation worse. Taken together with cuts to UC/CSU outreach programs, the end of affirmative action programs, and the inadequate capacity of the California higher education system, the opportunity to attend college is being taken away for vast numbers of students of color and low income students who want to overcome the conditions in their schools.

Access and outreach programs give vital encouragement and support to the students who need it most. For students in underresourced schools with poor educational conditions, these access programs provide concrete support and a sense that college is actually possible despite the barriers they face.

These programs provide students with direct contact to UC and CSU students, staff, and faculty. For students who participate in the UC/CSU out-

reach programs, these relationships with college professors and students make college tangible and help students believe that they can achieve higher education.

Despite the importance of outreach programs, the real issue is equal access to higher education for all. Supporters of outreach programs know that they can't make up for all the educational inequalities that so many students of color and low income students face. Groups such as the Access for All Coalition are not only fighting to maintain the important outreach programs, they are calling for an end to the poor school conditions faced by many students in California.

One of the best opportunities to ensure that all students receive the resources they need for a quality education is the Opportunity for Teaching and Learning Index (SB1419), a bill sponsored by Senator John Vasconcellos. This bill would mandate the state to publish more than just test results. It would publish data showing whether the schools were providing the basics of a quality education. Throughout this spring, members of the Campaign for Quality Education and CFJ will testify in support of the bill and talk to legislators about why they should support it.

CFJ will continue to fight for a quality education for all students in California. Only when all students receive an equal education will all students have equal access to college.

“Tidal Wave Two”

California has begun to experience a surge in the college age population, often referred to as “Tidal Wave Two” (the first being a similar surge in the 1950s and 60s). Although this population surge has long been anticipated, the state college system is terribly unprepared for it. Already, the California State University is likely to turn away 20,000 qualified students in 2004-2005 alone.

If the state does not take action to increase the capacity of our higher education system, the impacts will be drastic:

- In the next 10 years it is projected that 1,800,000 students will be turned away from California public community colleges and universities.
- Of that number, approximately 1,350,000 would be unable to enroll in academic and vocational programs in community colleges; 350,000 qualified students would be denied access to CSU; and 80,000 would be denied access to UC.
- The majority of those who will be denied a the opportunity to go to college will be students of color and from low-income families.

Source: Campaign for College Opportunity