

COORDINATING COMMITTEE:

National

Alliance for Education Justice

Washington, DC

Empower DC

Chicago, IL

Kenwood Oakland Community Organization

Baltimore, MD

Baltimore Algebra Project

Detroit, MI

*Keep the Vote, No Takeover
Black Parents for Quality Education*

Newark, NJ

Parents Unified for Local School Education

New York, NY

*Alliance for Quality Education
NYC Coalition for Educational Justice
Urban Youth Collaborative*

Philadelphia, PA

Philadelphia Student Union

MEMBERS:

National

Leadership Center for the Common Good

Oakland, CA

Oakland Public Education Network

Los Angeles, CA

Labor Community Strategy Center

Hartford, CT

Parent Power

Atlanta, GA

Project South

Miami, FL

Power U

Chicago, IL

Action Now

Wichita, KS

Kansas Justice Advocate

New Orleans, LA

*Concerned Conscious Citizens Controlling
Community Changes
Coalition for Community Schools*

Boston, MA

*Boston Youth Organizing Project
Boston Parent Organizing Network*

Detroit, MI

Detroit LIFE Coalition

Minneapolis, MN

Neighborhoods Organizing for Change

Eupora, MS

Fannie Lou Hamer Center for Change

Camden, NJ

*Camden Comeback
Camden Education Association*

Englewood, NJ

Citizens for Public Education

Jersey City, NJ

*Parent Advocates for Children's Education
Concerned Citizens Coalition*

Paterson, NJ

Paterson Education Organizing Council

Philadelphia, PA

*Action United
Youth United for Change*

ALLIED ORGANIZATIONS

Chicago, IL

Teacher's for Social Justice

Journey for Justice

"A National Grassroots Education Alliance"

FOR MORE INFORMATION:

Laurie R. Glenn

Phone: 773.704.7246

E-mail: lrglenn@thinkincstrategy.com

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PRESS RELEASE

**BOYCOTT OF CHICAGO PUBLIC SCHOOLS KICKS OFF NATIONAL CAMPAIGN CALLING FOR
MORATORIUM ON SCHOOL CLOSINGS**

Chicago Joins 25-City Alliance Demanding Stop To School Deserts

CHICAGO – In light of school closings throughout the country targeting low-income communities of color and have led to **school deserts**, **Chicago** joins a national 25-city coalition to call for a moratorium on school closings, turnarounds, phase outs and charter expansions. As the nation marks the 50th anniversary of the **March On Washington**, which served as a compelling force for civil rights progress, **Journey for Justice Alliance** members have come together with an agenda very similar to the one fifty years ago: racial justice and equal opportunity for all children – no matter their color, class or community – to a quality and safe education.

Chicago students, parents and advocates congregated today for "**Education is a Human Right**", a **one-day boycott of Chicago Public Schools** and **rally in front of the Chicago Board of Education** followed by a **march to City Hall** to demand a stop to school closings that destabilize entire communities, create no right of access to public schools for at-risk students; and do not deliver improved academic performance of displaced low-income students of color.

"A clear pattern of documented racial and economic discrimination has demonstrated that while there have been advances in the nation, as shown by the election of the nation's first black president, the federal administration's policies have embodied education strategies that continue to perpetuate racial and class bias in the access to quality education," said **Jitu Brown**, **education coordinator, Kenwood Oakland Community Organization**. "We stand here fifty years after a landmark movement set civil rights legislation in motion, dismayed at the unchecked and discriminatory actions that blatantly violate the human right to a quality education and are wreaking havoc, not only on our most vulnerable youth, but also on entire communities."

CHICAGO SCHOOL DESERTS RESULT OF FEDERAL POLICY

Students, parents, community members and advocates participated in the boycott and rally, that while commemorating the work of Martin Luther King, Jr. and civil rights activists, brought to light the deterioration of years of progress in race relations and human rights when it comes to national education policy and reform.

Rally participants demanded a stop to school closings as a reform strategy because it has:

- **Disproportionately targeted low-income communities of color as illustrated by a documented pattern of discrimination in Chicago's school actions;**
- **Created school deserts – no right of access to public schools in communities serving the most vulnerable students;**
- **Failed to improve learning conditions or academic performance of displaced low-income students of color once transferred to their receiving school;**
- **Violated the human right for parental voice in decisions about their children's education; and,**
- **Destabilized entire communities already at risk due to volatile housing markets, gentrification, high mobility, poverty, violence, racism, and unemployment.**

"The current federal **Race To The Top** policy has had a discriminatory and disproportionate affect on low-income students of color and calls into question the very nature of public education which is supposed to provide equal educational opportunity for all children and ensure equity for those most at risk," said **Analia Rodriguez**, **parent organizer with ENLACE Chicago**. "This injustice is a clear violation of human and civil rights and policymakers need to recognize the destabilizing impact, divestment and injustice that the current policies have brought about and take immediate steps to put a moratorium on closings and turnarounds."

Journey for Justice

"A National Grassroots Education Alliance"

COALITION DEMANDS MIRROR RIGHTS ESTABLISHED BY UNITED NATIONS

Despite research showing that closing public schools does not improve test scores or graduation rates, and in fact creates documented learning setbacks and destabilization for most displaced students, mass closings have continued to occur in Chicago primarily as a result of federal **Race To The Top** policy. The fall out of these actions has been disproportionately borne by low-income communities of color and violates the [United Nations Universal Declaration of Human Rights of 1948, Article 26](http://www.un.org/en/documents/udhr/index.shtml) (<http://www.un.org/en/documents/udhr/index.shtml>) establishing the inalienable human right of every child to a quality education.

A citywide education coalition which includes: **Action Now, Albany Park Neighborhood Council, Bickerdike Redevelopment Corporation, Brighton Park Neighborhood Council, ENLACE Chicago, Kenwood-Oakland Community Organization, Northside Action for Justice, Parents 4 Teachers, Pilsen Alliance, Southern Christian Leadership Conference and Teachers for Social Justice**, organized **Education is a Human Right Day**. The coalition demanded to stop the destabilization of Chicago communities of color and restore the human and civil right to a quality and safe education for all children.

Calling on the American promise to provide for the right to equal access and opportunity to quality education, the Chicago education coalition demands included:

- **Local legislation to create an elected representative school board in Chicago.**
- **Allocation of Tax Incremental Financing (TIF) funds and a financial transaction tax at the Mercantile Exchange in Chicago to re-open schools.**

Chicago activists also reiterated the **national Journey for Justice Alliance** demands including:

- **Moratorium on school closings, turnarounds, phase-outs, and charter expansions until a new process can be implemented nationally.**
- **Our proposal for Sustainable School Transformation to replace failed, market-driven interventions as support for struggling schools.**
- **U.S. Secretary of Education Arne Duncan to be held accountable for discriminatory, top-down policies that target communities of color and have not improved student outcomes.**

"These measures are necessary to ensure equity and community voice in decisions about the education of our children as well as parity in the allocation of resources to schools that serve as the heart of our communities," said **Rico Gutstein, Teachers for Social Justice**. "Our young people, our parents and our communities are not giving up this battle to keep our schools open, public, safe and equitable."

DENIAL OF PARENT VOICE IN DECISIONS VIOLATES HUMAN RIGHT TO EDUCATION

In the process of closing schools, Chicago Public Schools have implemented an opaque process that has eliminated the voice of the people, ignoring parent and community input and proposals for school improvement while brokering neighborhood schools to private companies.

This elimination of community engagement has eradicated the voice of minority, low-income parents and violates the **Universal Declaration of Human Rights Article 26:3** establishing that parents have a prior right to choose the kind of education that shall be given to their children.

Additionally, the current issues with the elimination of voice and accountability to the public do not improve by turning schools over to private brokers, a trend incentivized by federal policy. A study from the **Center for Research on Education Outcomes (CREDO) at Stanford University** cited that many of the authorizers for charter schools fail to provide accountability for these schools and thus fail to deliver on the original charter promise of accountability for flexibility.

"School officials and public leaders have made it clear that the voice of parents, students and community members do not matter when it comes to education decisions," said **Irene Robinson, parent at recently closed Overton Elementary School**. "Studies have shown that our students are better served when school improvement is a process that engages all of those who are directly impacted. The announcement of new charter school plans in Chicago, made so quickly after the mass closings and layoffs, continues to fuel the fire of citywide frustration with the lack of parent voice in decisions about our children's education."

ABOUT JOURNEY FOR JUSTICE ALLIANCE

Journey for Justice is an emerging alliance of grassroots community-based organizations from cities across the United States representing constituencies of youth, parents, and inter-generational organizations who have been impacted by the closing, turnaround, and charter expansion of schools in communities of color. The goal of the Alliance is to bring the voice of those directly impacted by discriminatory school actions into the debate about the direction for public education in the 21st century and to promote equality in education for all students and sustainable, community-driven school reform for all school districts across the country. **Go to the [Journey 4 Justice Facebook Page](#) to get copies of the J4J Fact Sheet and Proposal for Sustainable School Transformation.**

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