

# Journey for Justice

## **"A National Grassroots Education Movement"**

### OVERVIEW

#### **WHO WE ARE:**

Journey for Justice is an emerging alliance currently comprised of grassroots community-based organizations from 18 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.

#### **OUR GOAL:**

The goal of the Journey for Justice 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 21<sup>st</sup> century and to promote sustainable, community-driven school reform for all school districts across the country.

#### **OUR OBJECTIVE:**

Our objective is to have effective and sustainable school transformation that includes community-driven reform with the people directly impacted helping to shape what the change looks like. In order to achieve this, the alliance objective is to influence policy-makers at the federal level to put a stop to the discriminatory actions and institute a national policy where those directly impacted can help facilitate an appropriate and effective transformation.

#### **A GROWING NATIONAL MOVEMENT:**

Journey for Justice initially formed in early 2012 when community-based organizations from eight cities including Baltimore; Boston; Chicago; Detroit; Philadelphia; New York; Washington, D.C.; and Wichita, Kansas; came together to discuss the impact of school privatization and how the individual organizations could work together to address what was unfolding as a national issue.

The alliance was concerned that closing public schools was not an effective strategy for school improvement. Yet, while a large body of research demonstrates that closing public schools does not necessarily improve schools, school districts across the country continue the closings, turnarounds and other negative actions primarily because current federal **Race To The Top** policy incentivized the closings and turnarounds by supporting privatization. This incentive has served to facilitate unchecked actions and opaque processes and allowed for the sabotage of community-driven school improvement efforts that could reverse or prevent negative actions.

By removing the voice of the people in the communities directly impacted, school districts eradicated the role of low-income parents of color in protecting the interests of their children's educational opportunity, demonstrated a divestment in low-income students of color and created a system with no accountability to the public.

The devastating impact of these actions has been tolerated only because of the race and class of the communities affected. The fallout on low-income, communities of color has included:

- **Displacement and destabilization of children and neighborhoods, already in potentially vulnerable situations;**
- **Significant negative impacts to learning;**
- **Increased violence and threats of physical harm as a result of re-assignment; and,**
- **Destabilization at schools receiving the displaced students.**

Currently the alliance is comprised of 18 cities including: **Ambler, Pa.; Atlanta; Baltimore; Boston; Chicago; Cleveland; Detroit; District of Columbia; Eupora, Miss.; Hartford, Conn.; Kansas City, Mo.; Los Angeles; Newark; New Orleans; New York; Oakland, Calif.; Philadelphia; and Wichita, Kan.**

For more information contact Jitu Brown at Kenwood Oakland Community Organization, [www.kocoonline.org](http://www.kocoonline.org), 773.548.7500, or email [Jitubrown@yahoo.com](mailto:Jitubrown@yahoo.com).

## **TIMELINE OF JOURNEY FOR JUSTICE ACTIONS**

**February 2012: Eight Cities Come Together To Form The Journey For Justice Alliance**, including: Baltimore; Boston; Chicago; Detroit; Philadelphia; New York; Washington, D.C.; and Wichita, Kansas

**May 2012: Title VI Civil Rights Complaints Filed:** Students and parents filed a Title VI Civil Rights complaint against the Chicago Public Schools citing the closing of schools and the criteria and methods for administering those actions as discriminatory toward low-income, communities of color. Subsequently, Detroit; Newark; New York; and Washington, D.C.; filed Title VI Civil Rights complaints.

**June 21, 2012: Press Conference To Call For Meeting With U.S. Dept. Of Ed, Office Of Civil Rights:** Journey for Justice alliance held a press conference in Chicago to announce the filing of Title VI Civil Rights complaints and demand a meeting with the U.S. Department of Education Office of Civil Rights and leadership from President Obama's Domestic Policy Council.

**June 2012: New Orleans And Newark Join The Alliance, Growing The Representation To 10 Cities.**

**July 10, 2012: Alliance Meets With U.S. Dept. Of Education:** Requests were made of the leadership from the Dept. of Education, Office of Civil Rights including the Assistant Secretary of Communications Peter Cunningham, President Obama's Education Director for the Domestic Policy Council Roberto Rodriguez, and Domestic Policy Council Representative Steve Robinson:

- **An immediate moratorium on all school closings until a new process can be implemented nationally;**
- **Grassroots impact tours by the Dept. of Education to see the impact of the actions and participate in a community hearing to listen to those directly affected by policies;**
- **Federal hearing on impact of school closings;**
- **Institute sustainable school transformation policy;**
- **Meeting with President Obama so that he may hear directly from his constituents about the devastating impact and civil rights violations.**

**Late 2012: U.S. Dept. Of Ed Agrees To Prioritize Title VI Complaints & Begins Grassroots Impact Tours:** The Office of Civil Rights opened investigations in Newark and New York in late 2012. The Dept. of Ed began grassroots impact tours visiting Chicago, New Orleans, and Detroit.

**December 2012: Journey For Justice Alliance Grew To 15 Cities Adding: Ambler, Pa.; Atlanta; Cleveland; Europa, Miss.; and Oakland, Calif.**

**December 20-21, 2012: First Journey For Justice Federal Hearing Held With U.S. Dept. Of Ed:** The alliance held a rally and march to the hearing which resulted in an agreement by the Dept. of Ed to schedule a public hearing and a commitment to give serious consideration to the alliance's sustainable school transformation proposal.

**January 2013: Los Angeles, Kansas City, and Hartford, Conn. Join The Alliance, Growing The Representation To 18 Cities.**

**January 29, 2013: Journey For Justice Hearing Scheduled With U.S. Dept. Of Ed; 18 Cities Travel To Washington, D.C. and 11 Cities To Testify.**