

May 13, 2014

Eric Holder  
Attorney General  
U.S. Department of Justice  
950 Pennsylvania Avenue NW  
Educational Opportunities Section, PHB  
Washington, D.C. 20530

Arne Duncan  
Secretary of Education  
U.S. Department of Education  
400 Maryland Ave SW  
Washington, DC 20202

Dear Attorney General Eric Holder and Secretary Arne Duncan:

During this week that marks the 60<sup>th</sup> anniversary of *Brown v. Board of Education*, community organizations in Chicago, Newark, and New Orleans, all members of the national Journey for Justice Alliance, file three complaints under Title IV and Title VI of the Civil Rights of 1964 with the Education Opportunities Section of the Department of Justice's Civil Rights Division ("DOJ") and the Department of Education's Office for Civil Rights ("OCR").

As we commemorate the landmark civil rights victory that struck down the "separate but equal" doctrine and the system of codified racism in our public schools, we respectfully request that you open an investigation of the racially discriminatory school closings that are the subject of these complaints.

Journey for Justice is a coalition of grassroots organizations in twenty-one cities across the country. The coalition has come together because, across our communities, education "reformers" and privatizers are targeting neighborhood schools filled with children of color, and leaving behind devastation. By stealth, seizure, and sabotage, these corporate profiteers are closing and privatizing our schools, keeping public education for children of color, not only separate, not only unequal, but increasingly not public at all.

Adding insult to injury, the perpetrators of this injustice have cloaked themselves in the language of the Civil Rights Movement. But too many of the charter and privately-managed schools that have multiplied as replacements for our beloved neighborhood schools are test prep mills that promote prison-like environments, and seem to be geared at keeping young people of color controlled, undereducated, and dehumanized. Children of color are not collateral damage. Our communities are not collateral damage.

Thus, we stand in solidarity, Kenwood Oakland Community Organization in Chicago, Coalition for Community Schools, Conscious Concerned Citizens Controlling Community Changes, and Vietnamese American Young Leaders of New Orleans in New Orleans, New Jersey's Parents Unified for Local School Education in Newark, and Journey for Justice member organizations across the country, to shed light on the racial injustice of school closings. Neighborhood schools are the hearts of our communities, and the harm caused by just one school closure is deep and devastating. This is death by a thousand cuts.

We wait with hopefulness for DOJ and OCR to investigate our civil rights complaints so that we can begin the work of rebuilding our communities and using sustainable and community accountable school transformation models to build schools that meet all children's needs.

Respectfully,

Kenwood Oakland Community Organization (*Chicago, IL*), Coalition for Community Schools (*New Orleans, LA*), Conscious Concerned Citizens Controlling Community Changes (*New Orleans, LA*), Vietnamese American Young Leaders of New Orleans (*New Orleans, LA*), New Jersey Parents Unified for Local School Education (*Newark, NJ*), and the national Journey for Justice Alliance