CIVIL RIGHTS AND EDUCATION GROUPS COMMEMORATE 60TH ANNIVERSARY OF BROWN v. BOARD OF EDUCATION AND ASK “HOW FAR HAVE WE REALLY COME?”

- Full-Page Ad Placed in Today’s New York Times Print Edition Urges Nation to “Fulfill the Promise” -

- Nine Organizations Sign On to a Joint Communique in Support of Equitable Implementation of the Common Core State Standards as Critical in the Continuing Fight for Equity in Education -

May 19, 2014 (New York, NY) – Today, national civil rights and education groups joined together to commemorate the 60th anniversary of the pivotal Brown v. Board of Education Supreme Court decision that ended legal segregation in America’s public schools. Ten groups signed on to a full-page print ad placed in today’s New York Times that poses the question “How Far Have We Really Come?” in achieving educational equity, excellence and empowerment for all children.


In the ad, the organizations issue a call-to-action to the nation to “Fulfill the Promise” of the landmark decision by supporting equitable implementation of the Common Core State Standards and quote former U.S. Supreme Court Chief Justice Earl Warren’s opinion from May 17, 1954:

“Today, education is perhaps the most important function of state and local governments...It is the very foundation of good citizenship. Today it is a principal instrument in awakening the child to cultural values, in preparing him for later professional training, and in helping him to adjust normally to his environment. In these days, it is doubtful that any child may reasonably be expected to succeed in life if he is denied the opportunity of an education...a right which must be made available to all on equal terms.”

A web-based version of the ad was also developed for social media and includes the aforementioned organizations as well as the Mexican American Legal Defense and Educational Fund (MALDEF).

Additionally, nine national civil rights and education organizations to date have signed on to the following joint statement of support for the Common Core State Standards and equitable implementation as a critical step in the continuing fight for equity in education:

- more -
Communiqué (Joint Statement) of Support for the Common Core State Standards and Equitable Implementation from National Civil Rights and Education Groups

As we commemorate and recognize the 60th anniversary of the Brown v. Board of Education U.S. Supreme Court decision, we also acknowledge that an equitable and excellent education for all students has yet to be achieved and is indeed the civil rights issue of our time. While this landmark ruling ended legal segregation in America’s public schools in May 1954, separate and unequal resources and expectations have remained a reality for many students.

Still, we believe that the opportunities for a bright future and a fair chance to achieve their potential are achievable for all children – and the responsible implementation of the Common Core State Standards is a critical piece in the continuing fight for equity.

We, the undersigned, have a resolute commitment to the Common Core State Standards and their equitable implementation. These standards represent an unprecedented opportunity for us to meet our shared goals of better educating and preparing all of our children for the opportunities and jobs that will put them on a path to success – no matter where they live or how much money their parents make. The Common Core is setting us on a path where we cease to routinely have different expectations – and success outcomes – for different students. Now is not the time to turn back.

Further, in unison we assert:

- We stand in support of the 44 states that have currently adopted the Common Core and urge them to remain steadfast in their efforts toward an equitable and high-quality implementation. We believe that turning back from implementation at this stage would exacerbate existing inequities in public education. We also urge the six states that have not adopted the Common Core to do so and ensure high standards and expectations for all children in their states.

- We fully support the Common Core and understand that the standards are not a cure-all for the resource and other challenges facing low-income students, children of color, English Language Learners and Native students or the teachers and schools that serve them. Any questions or constructive criticism we raise or actions we take in support of ensuring equity and excellence in implementation do not undermine our shared and deep commitment to ensuring the success of the Common Core implementation – and the success of all of our children.

- Our collective position on and support of the Common Core are not a result of limited perspectives and engagement. We have been informed by our constituents in thousands of communities across the nation who want all children to have access to high-quality education and the necessary resources to achieve.

- more -
We recognize that the Common Core implementation, including assessments tied to the standards, may further expose inequities in the education system that have a palpable impact on achievement, including issues around differential access to teaching of the highest quality. We hope and believe that this exposure can lead to productive discussions and viable solutions directed toward our shared goal of achieving equitable education opportunity for all.

The Common Core State Standards are only one part of the solution to the inequity, achievement and proficiency challenges within our education system. Nonetheless, they are a key part of the solution and will inject additional quality and equity that will help our nation achieve the leveling of the playing field for which our organizations have long advocated.

Our children are counting on us, and we must get this right – for them, for our shared future and for our nation. In partnership and empowerment, we are,

*Marc H. Morial*
President and CEO
National Urban League

*Rev. Al Sharpton*
Founder and President
National Action Network

*Janet Murguía*
President and CEO
National Council of La Raza

*Wade Henderson*
President and CEO
The Leadership Conference on Civil and Human Rights

*Rufina Hernández*
Executive Director
Campaign for High School Equity

*Bob Wise*
President
Alliance for Excellent Education

*Melanie Campbell*
President and CEO
National Coalition on Black Civic Participation

*Pamela Agoyo*
President
National Indian Education Association

*Thomas A. Saenz*
President and General Counsel
MALDEF
About the National Urban League
The National Urban League (www.nul.org) is a historic civil rights and urban advocacy organization dedicated to economic empowerment in historically underserved urban communities. Founded in 1910 and headquartered in New York City, the National Urban League has improved the lives of tens of millions of people nationwide through direct service programs that are implemented locally by its 95 Urban League affiliates in 36 states and the District of Columbia. The organization also conducts public policy research and advocacy activities from its D.C.-based Washington bureau. The National Urban League, a BBB-accredited organization, has a 4-star rating from Charity Navigator, placing it in the top 10 percent of all U.S. charities for adhering to good governance, fiscal responsibility and other best practices.