



## New Orleans Title VI Complaint Summary

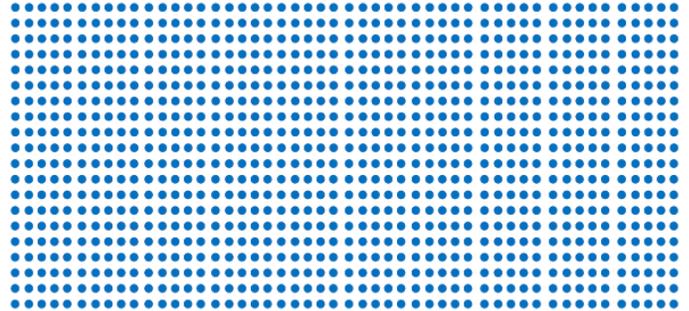
In August 2005, Hurricane Katrina and the broken levees devastated New Orleans and the entire Gulf Coast. Three months later, Louisiana passed Act 35, which allowed the state-run Recovery School District (RSD) to take over 107 “below average” New Orleans public schools. The legislative purpose of Act 35 was to “meet the educational needs of all students”; however, as RSD began to shutter school after school, it became clear that privatization was the actual purpose. The results of this plan are clear: ten years after Hurricane Katrina, the Recovery School District is the first all-charter school district in the country.

Since Hurricane Katrina, RSD has repeatedly closed<sup>1</sup> schools, the majority of which were in low-income African-American neighborhoods. Many public schools were closed even though they had made consistent strides in academic outcomes. In contrast, underperforming charter schools with higher percentages of White students in New Orleans have often been granted exemptions and have lower levels of oversight and accountability.

In 2013, RSD closed three schools, allegedly to improve the quality of education students were receiving. However, the school closures disproportionately affected African-American students. To add insult to injury, after the displaced students filled out the application process to enroll at a new school, 77% of them were forced to attend other under-resourced and under-performing school.

In May 2014, RSD announced the final blow to the public education system in New Orleans. RSD planned to close the last five public schools in the district. These five school closures impacted approximately 1,000 African-American students and only 5 White students. In

### 2013-14 Recovery School District



**In the Recovery School District, of the last five public schools that were closed, approximately 1,000 Black students were affected, but only 5 White students were affected.**

response, two grassroots organizations—the Coalition for Community Schools (CCS) and Conscious Concerned Citizens Controlling Community Changes (C-6)—in partnership with the Journey for Justice Alliance, filed a civil rights complaint with the U.S. Department of Education’s Office for Civil Rights and the U.S. Department of Justice’s Civil Rights Division.

The complaint, which was filed against the Recovery School District, Louisiana Department of Education, and Louisiana State Board of Elementary and Secondary Education, alleged that their actions violated Title IV and VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 because they constituted different treatment and would have an unjustified disparate impact on African-American students. The complaint challenged both the State of Louisiana’s practice of closing New Orleans public schools as a form of discrimination against African-American students and the State’s failure to provide adequate educational alternatives after schools were closed. The complaint was opened and is currently being investigated by the Department of Education’s Office for Civil Rights.

<sup>1</sup> “Closed” schools include schools that have been permanently closed, resited, phased-out, or converted to charter schools. A resiting occurs when a neighborhood school facility is closed and students are required to attend a different facility with the same or similar name.