

PROTEST RETALIATION AGAINST HIGH SCHOOL STUDENTS IN THE L.A. AREA FOR NOVEMBER 2ND WALK OUTS

URGENT UPDATE: Belmont High School student Geovany Serrano has just been notified by Belmont High School authorities that he will not be allowed to return to Belmont High and will be transferred to another school. Geovany remains under house arrest and is facing criminal charges for passing out flyers calling for the November 2nd walkout. Call Superintendent Romer's office to protest this outrageous act of retaliation. Further protests are being planned. Call School Principal Gary Yoshinobu at: EMAIL - gary.yoshinobu@lausd.net, PHONE - (213) 250-0244, FAX - (213) 250-9706.

Further update: As a result of hundreds of outraged calls on Friday, November 4, Reseda High School authorities backed off and informed ninth grader, Sara Escudero, that there would be no punishment at all!

(Read attached Fact Sheet for reports of retaliation in high schools and what you can do.)

FACT SHEET: Harassment and Retaliation Against High School Students

In city after city, high school students walked out in response to a call for No Work! No School! from The World Can't Wait - Drive Out the Bush Regime. Their presence energized protests nationwide, and played a crucial role in launching a movement that will not stop until Bush steps down and takes his whole program with him. In the L.A. area, there were walkouts at dozens of schools in the biggest movement of high school students since the walkouts against the anti-immigrant Proposition 187 in 1994.

But as the Call for this movement stated, "If we speak the truth, they will try to silence us. If we act, they will try to stop us." The exact number of students facing suspension, fines, expulsion, transfer or other measures is unknown. But The World Can't Wait has received reports indicating retaliation against many students at schools throughout the area.

The policy of the Los Angeles Unified School District (LAUSD) regarding student walkouts was communicated in a memo to "all principals" dated October 26, 2005, and initialed by Dan Isaacs from the Office of the Chief Operating Officer. It stated, "Do not attempt to prevent students from leaving the campus." (A copy of this memo is available on request.)

In the weeks before November 2 there was a pattern of harassment and attempted intimidation at numerous schools. Students were told by administrators and security guards that they could receive truancy tickets and be subjected to hundreds of dollars of

finer. They were forbidden to carry literature and other materials onto campus, such as stickers saying, "Resist or Die," or flyers carrying the Call from The World Can't Wait - Drive Out the Bush Regime. "Resist or Die" T-shirts were banned from campuses.

Young women at **Locke H.S.** in South Central LA were sent to the principal's office for having posters that called William Bennett a Nazi for saying that aborting all Black babies would be a good way to reduce crime. The principal confiscated all their posters and threatened them with being kicked out of school.

At **Fairfax H.S.** students reported that an announcement was made over the P.A. system saying that students would be suspended for walking out. Some teachers threatened to give students failing grades for the day. At Fairfax and other schools, students were told they'd miss the California Exit Exam and wouldn't be able to graduate.

November 1, there were more serious attacks on student organizers. At **Reseda H.S.**, a ninth grader, Sara Escudero, was called into the principal's office. She was threatened with punitive transfer and with arrest for vandalism for having stickers. Then she was suspended for two days and told by the principal that he would begin expulsion procedures against her. (As a result of hundreds of outraged calls on Friday, November 4, Reseda High School authorities backed off and informed Sara that there would be no punishment at all.)

At **Belmont H.S.**, a 16-year-old student, Geovany Serrano, was grabbed by school police, pepper-sprayed and arrested. This student is under house arrest with an ankle bracelet and phone surveillance, and faces criminal charges in addition to suspension.

On and after November 2, numerous principals, in direct contradiction to official policy, ordered the schools locked down: gates chained and padlocked, police stationed at exits, teachers required to close their doors and keep students in their classrooms.

At **Van Nuys H.S.**, the principal issued a memo before November 2 saying the school would be locked down. When students tried to walk out, they were assaulted by deans, including one young woman who was pulled by the hair by one dean. Two women escaped by climbing a fence and later spoke at the rally in Westwood. Students reported that twenty students were given one-day suspensions, and at least two are being kicked out, transferred to another school. Other students were ticketed by police. One student's mother reported that his ticket was for "truancy and protesting against George Bush." Parent conferences to readmit suspended students to school were canceled by administrators.

Reseda H.S. was also locked down on November 2, with a police car parked in front of the main entrance. Students who tried to walk were taken to the office and given

tickets. A Reseda High student reported that two students were arrested, and five were given tickets.

At **Lynwood H.S.** 40 - 50 students gathered on campus, prepared to walk out. Police were blocking some gates, and other gates were chained and locked. They staged a sit-in by the administration office. After a time, when only four students continued the sit-in, all were taken into the office, along with another student who was passing by, and charged with truancy for trying to walk out. They also face suspension. One of the people in the office made a racist comment to the young students: "You Mexicans have to stop climbing over the fence."

Since November 2, the administration at Lynwood has threatened retaliation-including transfers and suspensions-against those they claim are organizers. The administration has also told students that it will find and punish the leader. And a teacher who is against the Iraq War has also been threatened.

Lincoln H.S. in East LA was locked down as 150 students tried to walk out. At the **Orthopedic Medical Magnet H.S.**, up to 70 students are being threatened with suspensions for walking out or not coming to school to attend protest events. At **Locke High School** students report that a large number of students may face suspension for attempting to organize a walkout. At other schools, students were given detention for walking.

The World Can't Wait is investigating all reports that students turn in to us, and there is every indication that what we know now is only a hint of what has happened. These high school students need the support and assistance of everyone who reads this fact sheet. They need lawyers to help mount a legal defense against LAUSD retaliation. They need financial support. And they need political support. **Everyone reading this should write a letter of outrage to the LAUSD and call Superintendent Roy Romer's office demanding that there be no retribution of any sort against the students who organized for and participated in the November 2nd World Can't Wait - Drive Out the Bush Regime walkouts.** Romer's numbers are: PHONE - (213) 241-7000, FAX - (213) 241-8442. Romer can also be emailed at superintendent@lausd.net. And contact the World Can't Wait office in L.A. at (323) 462-4771 / email worldcantwait_la@yahoo.com.

We need legal support from attorneys. If you want to volunteer, please call our office or email us. Please call the ACLU to request that they take up these cases. Send donations to World Can't Wait at our address below, earmarked for high school legal defense support.

World Can't Wait: www.worldcantwait.org, worldcantwait_la@yahoo.com, 323-462-4771; 5507 Santa Monica Blvd., #207, Los Angeles, CA 90028. Press contact: Henry Carson, 323-336-3050.