

STOP DESTRUCTION OF THE JULIA RICHMAN EDUCATION COMPLEX!

The Julia Richman Education Complex (JREC) *"is the best example in the United States of a multiplex...a group of very effective schools that share a common facility. And it's a group of schools that are showing really outstanding results."*

Tom Vander Ark, Executive Director of Education for the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation

In an astonishing act of betrayal and arrogance, Hunter College and the Department of Education have developed plans to demolish JREC – a beautifully renovated educational structure that is a second home to almost 2000 students, overwhelmingly from minority and immigrant groups.

In secret deals only recently exposed, a plan was laid out to relocate JREC's six small schools at a site that Hunter will abandon. If the DoE and Hunter's plan is realized, they will have destroyed one of NYC's – indeed the nation's – most successful educational communities.

WHAT IS "STATE-OF-THE-ART"?

A school is never simply a physical structure – especially not a constellation of schools that have worked for more than a decade to fuse a cooperative community for children ranging from toddlers to seniors in high school. And students, parents, and staff are not widgets that can be carted off somewhere and expected to operate with success – particularly with the high-level of success that the JREC community has achieved.

This misguided and unethical plan was concocted so that Hunter College can build a high-rise structure on the JREC site. Hunter's desires must not come at the expense of this unique school community. Like the students at Hunter, the students at JREC are talented and ambitious about escaping the poverty of their past education and reaching graduation in a safe "haven."

Shamefully, Hunter's President Jennifer Raab calls this a "win-win" situation and says that the JREC schools will get a new "state-of-the-art" building – even though she has never entered the Julia Richman Complex to see that *a state-of-the art building and flourishing community have already been created* there. Incredibly, President Raab exercises a double standard: in her own community of Fieldston, a private community within the city, she fought to obtain landmarking and argued that "the real issue, the biggest question is demolition." Ironically, she also expressed concern that "people were beginning to make insensitive changes."

JREC schools graduate significantly more students than do comparable NYC schools. The JREC building serves an extremely diverse population of young people, many of whom are low-income students of color who have been underserved by the system. What's more, the schools and students in the Complex are deeply connected to the community. The Ella Baker Elementary School serves the children of parents who work in the community (e.g., at nearby hospitals) and many of the community institutions (such as the Mt. Sinai adolescent health clinic located *within* JREC) provide services that are critical to the development of students in this building.

SOME HISTORY

In 1990, the former Julia Richman High School was identified by the Board of Education as having the worst statistics of student achievement in Manhattan. The 19th Police Precinct referred to this crime-infested large high school – marred by smashed windows and destroyed bathrooms – as "Julia Rikers." Only thirty-seven percent of its enrollees graduated.

Twelve years ago – with tremendous effort and with support from the Board of Education, private foundations, and educational planners – a community came together and created the Julia Richman Education Complex consisting of six highly effective small schools: four high schools, a pre K – 8th grade elementary school, and a junior high school for children with autism. Teachers, parents, and administrators participated in the redesign and renovation to insure that the building functioned well for everyone.

A new library, specialized rooms that serve the needs of each school, a teacher center, and shared spaces such as an art gallery and library were designed and constructed within a solid architectural treasure. What has been created is a valuable, successful, and irreplaceable environment in a quality building that modern construction practices, however well-intentioned, cannot replace.

Since its redesign, 30 million dollars of public money have been spent renovating the Complex. The roof, the windows, the plumbing, the gym floors – all have been replaced along with the construction of a mini theater, infant toddler center, and dance studios. The private sector has also contributed substantial sums for the renovation of the library, construction of the art gallery, and installation of a high-tech sound system in the auditorium.

Educators from modern "state-of-the-art" buildings marvel at how well JREC is served by an 83-year old structure and say, "We'd swap our new facilities for what you have here anytime." Julia Richman is a "state of the art" school, not just "any old building." Its sound structure has been carefully and thoughtfully renovated to meet the needs of its schools.

Hundreds of visitors from all over the nation and abroad come to JREC to learn how a large, older city school building can be effectively redesigned into a safe space that promotes academic excellence. For these visitors, JREC serves as a bright and shining blueprint and a symbol of educational possibility. As one educator who has brought hundreds of visitors to the building put it:

"JREC is not only the jewel in New York City's system, it is the crown jewel of urban secondary education in the United States."

- *How can City officials consider uprooting this nationally recognized educational complex?*
- *How can they consider spending millions of dollars to destroy and replace a building that works so well, especially in a system that claims it needs more school buildings?*
- *How can Hunter College be so unethical as to covet a space that others have created?*
- *How would Hunter College administrators feel about the sudden seizure, without consultation, of its elementary and secondary campus schools?*
- *Are the needs of the JREC population less important?*

HELP STOP THE PROPOSED DESTRUCTION OF JREC!

Download the petition at www.jrec.org

Email:

Chancellor Joel Klein (jklein@schools.nyc.gov)

CUNY Chancellor Matthew Goldstein (yvette.jones@mail.cuny.edu)

Manhattan Borough President Scott Stringer (bp@manhattanbp.org)

Tell them to abandon their plan to demolish JREC

For more information e-mail: SAVEJREC@jrec.org