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- PRESS RELEASE -

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Florida Civil Rights Association Plans To Sue Citrus County School District For Racial Discrimination, False Imprisonment, and Defamation

“School Administrators Falsely Accused Two Black Students of Cheating on the TABE test”

ORLANDO – The Florida Civil Rights Association announced today that it is considering a federal lawsuit against the CITRUS COUNTY SCHOOL DISTRICT for **maintaining a racial discriminatory policy in its TABE tests, or Test of Adult Basic Education** at the Withlacoochee Technical Institute in Inverness.

Citrus County School District recklessly violated federal law by **falsely accusing two African American students of cheating simply due to a higher test score than students of the non-African American race**, said Florida Civil Rights Association President J. Willie David, III. We believe the School District **takes pride in a history of racial discrimination in the TABE testing process gear towards widen the achievement gap for African Americans.**

The Florida Civil Rights Association is demanding the School District to end its illegal practice that mirror the Jim Crow error or face a federal lawsuit. **Earlier this year, a Notice of Intent to Sue was filed with the School District as required by State law prior to the filing of a lawsuit, said Betty Joseph, Florida Civil Rights Association Cooperating Attorney.**

On April 20, 2010, Ms. Lelia Jackson-Burch and another student, both African Americans took an entrance test for nursing at the Withlacoochee Technical Institute (**credit card receipts from two book stores show that these students spent \$200 on math, English, and nursing school exam refresher books before taking the BATE test).**

Once these students completed the TABE exam and left the examination room, they were immediately **accused by school officials of cheating because they scored “too high” on the exam.** The accusations of cheating were made by school officials without any supporting evidence. A Citrus County School Official told Ms. Jackson-Burch, **“you people”** (meaning African Americans) **don’t score that high.** Not only did the racially charged the statement certainly offend Ms. Jackson-Burch, the manner in which it was stated reveals a level of comfort with racism and bigotry that is usually reserved for private embrace.

School officials demanded Ms. Jackson-Burch take another exam, at no charge and remit the exam scores previously provided to her. She refused to retake the two hour exam **because of the “you people” racial comment.**

Shortly after the verbal exchange, Ms. Jackson-Burch attempted to leave the facility. However, Citrus County School **Officials falsely imprisoned her by blocking her efforts to leave.** No Citrus County School Official had any right or legal authority to detain her for any reason, David stated. In fear that she would be assaulted by the officials she secured the vehicle’s doors until a Citrus County Sheriff’s deputies arrive.

In retaliation for Ms. Jackson-Burch’s refusal return the scores and retake the exam, school officials called (911) and summoned the Citrus County Sheriff’s Office to the facility to investigate their accusations of Ms. Jackson-Burch cheating and her attempt to leave the property with the test scores. Three deputies (3) arrived to investigate. School officials asked the deputies to retrieve the test scores and any information of cheating from Ms. Jackson-Burch.

In fear of being arrested, Ms. Jackson-Burch allowed the deputies to conduct a **warrantless search of her iphone and supporting paperwork.** The deputy ultimately wrote in his police report that he did not locate any evidence of cheating by Ms. Jackson-Burch. **The police also included a statement that Ms. Jackson-Burch felt the School Administrators’ actions were racially motivated** (police report attached).

The nightmare for Ms. Jackson-Burch did not end with the Sheriff’s Office. Citrus County School **Officials then furthered their racism by contacting the college Ms. Jackson-Burch attended for three years and the Florida Department of Education** to report their false and unfounded allegations that she was caught cheating on the TABE test.

For over eight months School officials refused to validate her scores, which resulted in her missing out on a planned Nursing class at Orange County Public Schools in Orlando.

The school district went too far in spreading their false accusations of cheating against Ms. Jackson-Burch and another student. They acted reckless and mean spirited because of their prejudices against African Americans, David said.

The Florida Civil Rights Association believes that there is sufficient evidence that the District treated these students differently based on their race when School administrators made the decision to require them to return their test scores and retake the TABE test.

The Florida Civil Rights Association is also filing a PUBLIC RECORDS REQUEST with the District to determine how widespread these discriminatory practices are involving the TABE testing process.

The Florida Civil Rights Association is demanding the school district to take action to ensure that this type of discrimination does not occur in the future.

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MEDIA INTERVIEWS

ORLANDO | *Client Ms. Lelia Jackson-Burch and Attorneys for the Florida Civil Rights Association are available for an on-camera or phone interview. (911 recording of District Officials preventing our client from leaving is available on request) (Sheriff's Office Report Attached)*

ABOUT THE FCRA

The Florida Civil Rights Association is a non-profit, non-partisan, statewide organization with members and supporters nationwide dedicated to protecting and expanding the civil rights and civil liberties guaranteed by the Constitutions and civil rights laws of the United States and the State of Florida. Visit FCRA website for more information at www.fcranews.com

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