MISSION: The Center for Justice, Tolerance, and Community focuses on issues of social and economic justice, dialogues across diversity, and the building of collaborative communities. Combining cutting-edge research with an emphasis on public dissemination of findings and active engagement with affected communities, the Center aims to make a difference in people’s lives by providing information and analysis for action. http://cjtc.ucsc.edu

CJTC Highlights: 2004-2005

Now completing its sixth year, the Center for Justice, Tolerance, and Community continues to support high quality academic research in collaboration with grassroots movements and neighborhood groups, and to host high quality and well-attended forums on pressing public issues. We have remained committed to building on a solid base of contacts and projects in California even as we work at a national scale and expand our base of funding and other resources. Below, we offer some highlights from the past year:

EDUCATIONAL EQUITY: We are excited about our new three year grant from the Kellogg Foundation to work with Professor Catherine Cooper of the Building Multiple Worlds Alliance in strengthening community partnerships. Our goals are to improve children’s educational outcomes and increase the capacity of neighborhood organizations to actively participate in making regional decisions that affect the lives of their constituencies. Our first event related to this work was a well-attended public forum held in October, Books, Budgets, Buildings: State Fiscal Crisis and Educational Equity in California, in which a panel of planners and strategists from various organizations, as well as the Santa Cruz County Office of Education Superintendent, presented and answered questions on the state fiscal and education crisis.

ENVIRONMENTAL JUSTICE: Environmental justice research continues to be a major research area, and our collaborations with community-based groups has spread to include both Southern California and the Bay Area. Our report, Reading, Writing, and Breathing: Schools, Air Toxics, and Environmental Justice in California, documents student demographics and the negative relationship between pollution exposure and academic performance in California’s schools. The study offers numerous recommendations for action. A report prepared by the Liberty Hill Foundation in Los Angeles, Building a Regional Voice for Environmental Justice, looks at the model we have helped develop that combines philanthropy, community organizing, and university-based research and documents how our efforts to bring together rigorous statistical analysis and popular messages have contributed to improving the policy landscape for environmental equity in the state.

GLOBALIZATION AND LOCAL ENGAGEMENT: In partnership with the Inter-American Forum in Southern Florida, the CJTC helped to document Root Cause, a community-based mobilization in Miami to protest hemispheric trade meetings, and assisted local activists in the Bay Area in preparing for participation in the 2005 World Social Forum in Brazil. We also conducted a series of interviews reviewing popular education strategies to engage low-income constituencies of color in the debate about globalization. Our report, Bringing Globalization Home: Portraits of Popular Education at the Global-Local Junction, covers much of this work and is accompanied by a special website, http://www.globallocalpoped.org, where activists can download the tools we discuss.
DIGITAL DIVIDE: With support from the W.T. Grant Foundation, we have been conducting quantitative and qualitative research on race, youth, and the digital divide. Led by Associate Professor Rob Fairlie and Associate Researcher Rebecca London, we have hosted local and regional workshops, conducted case study analysis of a sample of community technology centers, and made numerous presentations to groups concerned with the continuing disparities in technology access by race and income. Our work has been placed in several high-quality academic journals and attracted attention from those concerned that the new government reports are failing to document remaining problems in the realm of digital equity. As part of the recognition of our emerging research expertise in this arena, we were awarded a grant from the Community Technology Foundation of California to study the particular technology issues facing immigrant communities.

REGIONAL EQUITY: We continue to contribute to the development of a new framework to better link low-income neighborhoods and regions. We are currently leading a project for the Ford Foundation, the Conversation on Regional Equity (CORE), which is bringing together leading thinkers and doers to better define the field and the policy opportunities ahead. We are also bringing together groups interested in other parts of the state and the nation to develop appropriate agendas for social justice at a regional scale. We have pursued these connections in our neighboring region—our report, Community Building, Community Bridging, covers our efforts with three Bay Area neighborhood improvement initiatives. This past year we worked with the Mayfair community in East San Jose and One East Palo Alto in East Palo Alto to develop policy recommendations for better incorporating immigrants into workforce development efforts.

WOMEN AS SOCIAL WARRIORS: For three years, we have organized and co-sponsored a gathering that documents and celebrates the important role of women, particularly Latinas and Latin Americans, in movements for social change. Building on earlier convenings focused on women in the fair trade movement and women in the struggle for lesbian rights in both Mexico and the U.S., in 2004 we highlighted organizing in the labor movement, bringing to campus Iris Munguia, the Secretary of Women for two prominent banana unions in Honduras, as well as local organizers working on gender and economic justice. We are now organizing for the Fourth Annual Women as Warriors event, focused on cross-border HIV and AIDS issues and scheduled for February 2, 2006.

The above examples are just glimpses of the work in which we are engaged, and we encourage you to learn about the many other CJTC research projects and staff endeavors online at http://cjtc.ucsc.edu. Should you have any questions about our work, please feel free to contact us at (831) 459-5743, or e-mail us at cjtc@ucsc.edu.

And if you would like to contribute financially to building the center, we urge you to follow the links on our web site (or go directly to http://cjtc.ucsc.edu/supportCJTC.html). Your support is crucial in allowing us to conduct high-quality research, connect with community-based work, and offer the sort of public education that can make a difference in civic thinking and action for a more just society.