



JEWES FOR RACIAL & ECONOMIC JUSTICE

OUR STRATEGIC VISION

JEWES FOR RACIAL & ECONOMIC JUSTICE 2015 STRATEGIC VISION

STATEMENT OF PURPOSE

JFREJ pursues racial and economic justice in New York City by advancing systemic changes that result in concrete improvements in people's everyday lives. We are inspired by Jewish tradition to fight for a sustainable world with an equitable distribution of economic and cultural resources and political power. The movement to dismantle the interdependent systems of racism and economic exploitation will be led by those most directly targeted by oppression. We believe that Jews have a vital role to play in this movement, and the future we hope for depends on Jews forging deep and lasting ties with our partners in struggle.

JFREJ GUIDING PRINCIPLES

Transformative Grassroots Organizing

Fighting to win real change means growing movements and campaigns too strong to be ignored. We believe in building power by building a robust base of members; developing and supporting leaders; forming and supporting coalitions, and waging strategic campaigns to win systemic change in New York City. We believe that powerful movements require organizations that are led and resourced from the grassroots.

Jewish tradition teaches us "great is study for it leads to action," prioritizing learning that changes us, demands something from us, and leads to impact. As we organize in multiple spheres to transform systems of economic and racial injustice, we simultaneously transform the consciousness of the people who participate in organizations and movements, as well as the organizers themselves. We seek to make change that will last beyond any one issue campaign or election and will not sacrifice long-term outcomes for short-term gains.

Partnership, Accountability, and Solidarity

A movement with the power to end injustice will be led by those most directly targeted by it: people of color, and poor and working-class, immigrant, and other oppressed communities. Thus, we work to support the leadership of these constituencies within and outside the Jewish community. We maintain deep and lasting partnerships with Jewish and allied organizations with whom we share common cause. We build enduring trust and relationships of solidarity across identity lines, enabling us to bring a unique and critical Jewish voice to movements for justice. We seek to be accountable to all those directly impacted by systems of oppression, while working to effectively build and accountably deploy our power as a diverse Jewish community.

Leadership Development and Multiplicity of Voices

We strive to create a truly multi-racial, multi-ethnic, multi-class, multi-generational Jewish community working for justice. We do this by centering the leadership and voices of marginalized Jews, while also working together to leverage the race and class privilege that some of our members have. We believe that all of us are needed in this work, and that we all have a role to play.

The essential need for multiplicity of voices is a central Jewish concept. We are committed to creating supportive and transparent pathways to strengthen and build the skills of our members, developing individual and collective leadership through our work. We provide clear leadership structures and roles to ensure intentional and accountable distribution of power, enabling broad participation and making way for a diversity of voices and the emergence of new leaders. We are committed to creating and supporting board, staff, and member-led structures based on values of grassroots leadership at all levels of the organization.

Cultivating Vibrant Jewish Diasporic Culture

Assimilation and systematic erasure have caused many of us to lose connections to the Jewish cultures across the diaspora in which our families and communities are rooted. We also know that every successful social movement has been advanced through embodied critical thought and culture shift that comes from exploring resistance with all of our senses and traditions. We are committed to our diasporic languages, cultural traditions and texts, and to artmaking and joyful celebration that bring us into new ways of relating to one another and allow us to be in dialogue with the past, present, and future. We are committed to teaching each other and studying and creating with our allies. We value the expertise and leadership that artists and cultural workers bring to organizing, and we enable their participation in all of JFREJ's campaigns and programs.

Building Scale with Soul

Movement organizations must grow powerfully and sustainably to create the level of impact needed to make change. We invest in the systems, staff, and infrastructure we need to do our work effectively for the long haul. We support our staff and our growing membership through grassroots fundraising, bringing our organizing to scale without sacrificing soul. We make deliberate, principled decisions about our growth and scale, neither compromising how we work together for the sake of expansion nor constraining our audacious hopes for what JFREJ can be. With this attention to sustainability and belief in shefa (abundance), we invest deeply in individual leadership development, community building, and cultural change through all levels of growth.

Counteracting Internalized Oppression

We must understand and transform the internalized oppression that undermines our ability to fight for and win struggles for justice. Given that oppression is internalized on a collective level, so must our understanding and transformation of it be supported on a collective level. Together, we must confront the ways many Jews have internalized both “oppressed” and “oppressor” ideas and behaviors. For the sake of our own liberation and the liberation of all people, we hold a commitment to unlearning the lessons and patterns that stem from antisemitism, racism, and Christian hegemony.

The New Grassroots Internationalism

Since its founding in 1990, JFREJ has been grounded in the Bundist tradition of doikayt (“hereness”). Doikayt is the idea that Jews should root our struggles in the places where we live, working for liberation and justice alongside our neighbors. It stands in opposition to assimilation, and to both the idea that Jewish liberation is not worthy of struggle, and that Jews can find a separate justice for ourselves. Making this deep commitment to the communities we inhabit is a powerful act. It contradicts our own sense of “otherness,” and is a revolutionary act of solidarity with our neighbors-in-struggle, and a powerful promise to future generations.

As we look toward the future of our movement, we see a critical need to build a 21st century “grassroots internationalist” vision for a just world. This means tying domestic issues to their international causes and effects, starting with the local and linking it to the global. This requires mutual solidarity, forged over time between “front line” communities around the world who are suffering from the effects of oppressive global systems.

Within JFREJ, this means centering the vision of Jews who are ourselves on the local and global “front lines” of resistance to racism, colonization, displacement, and erasure, namely Jews of Color and Mizrahi and Sephardic Jews.

While our organizing and the bulk of our resources are focused on New York, we are connected to other struggles around the world. We oppose oppression, colonialism, occupation, and displacement everywhere. We are committed to strategic solidarity in New York in ways that support struggles for liberation beyond our city, including in Israel/Palestine, recognizing the webs of power and resistance that weave together the local and global.

We strive to resist white supremacy, capitalism and other forms of structural oppression within our own work, our movements, and our Jewish communities, as well as in the world around us. We believe that this will lay crucial groundwork for the re-emergence of a strong Jewish Left, rooted in our diasporic histories, aligned with our allies, and defiantly hopeful for the future.

JFREJ KEY STRATEGIES

Engaging in Transformative Movement building

Through these four key strategies, we are laying the groundwork for Jewish communities to play an impactful role in a powerful movement for justice and liberation.

1. Win Campaigns and Deepen Partnerships to Challenge Injustice and Build Power

We continue to develop and win campaigns and programs in enduring partnership with other grassroots organizations led by people of color, poor and working-class, immigrant, and other oppressed communities in New York City.

2. Launch New Models for Base-building and Leadership Development in Jewish communities

A movement with the transformative power to end injustice will be led by those at the “front lines” of struggle. Thus JFREJ must center the leadership of Jews most directly targeted by injustice. We will continue to invest deeply in new base-building and leadership development models within JFREJ to empower directly targeted communities for the sake of our broader struggles for justice. We strive to do this at all levels of the organization, and to develop programs and campaigns rooted specifically in the vision and material conditions of the following constituencies:

- Jewish elders
- Jews of Color
- Mizrahi and Sephardic Jews
- Poor and working-class Jews
- Jewish youth (teens)

We will continue JFREJ’s strong legacy of supporting the vibrant leadership of Jewish women, and of queer, trans and gender non-conforming Jews in our community.

3. Support the Resilience and Resistance of Jewish Community Fighting for Justice

Oppression and the efforts to end it have profound psychological and social effects on all people; they impact both the quality of our lives and our effectiveness as organizers. We are developing new strategies for resilience so that Jewish organizers and activists can be our most powerful, accountable, sustainable, and healthy selves. We are growing these strategies from our diasporic Jewish roots and alongside our allies, using cultural exploration, expression, and celebration to counter isolation, re-establish connection, and garner courage.

4. Build our Capacity and Scale

JFREJ needs to continue to grow powerfully and sustainably to create the impact we seek. To that end, we are investing in the systems, staff, and infrastructure we need to do our work effectively and for the long haul. We are engaging in the promotion, teaching and modeling of transformative grassroots organizing through increased communications and educational media. We are building our financial resources, supporting our staff, growing our active membership, and increasing our impact through grassroots organizing and grassroots fundraising, bringing our organizing to scale without sacrificing our relationships or principles.