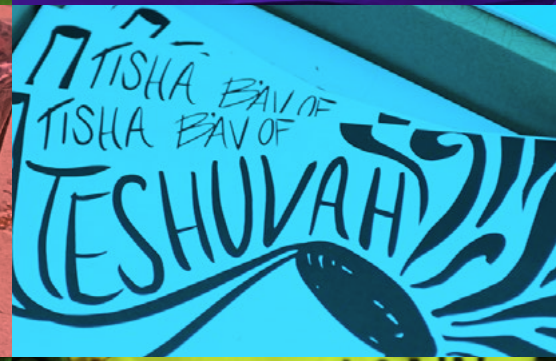
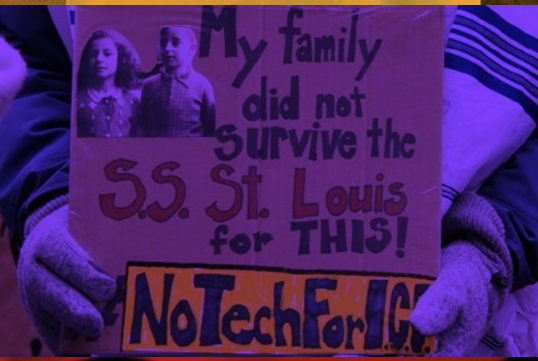
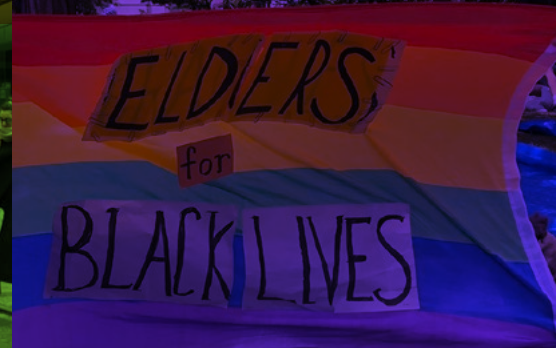
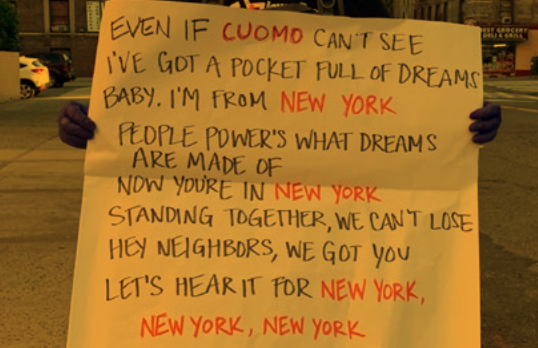


**JFREJ  
MEMBER  
HANDBOOK  
WINTER 2021**





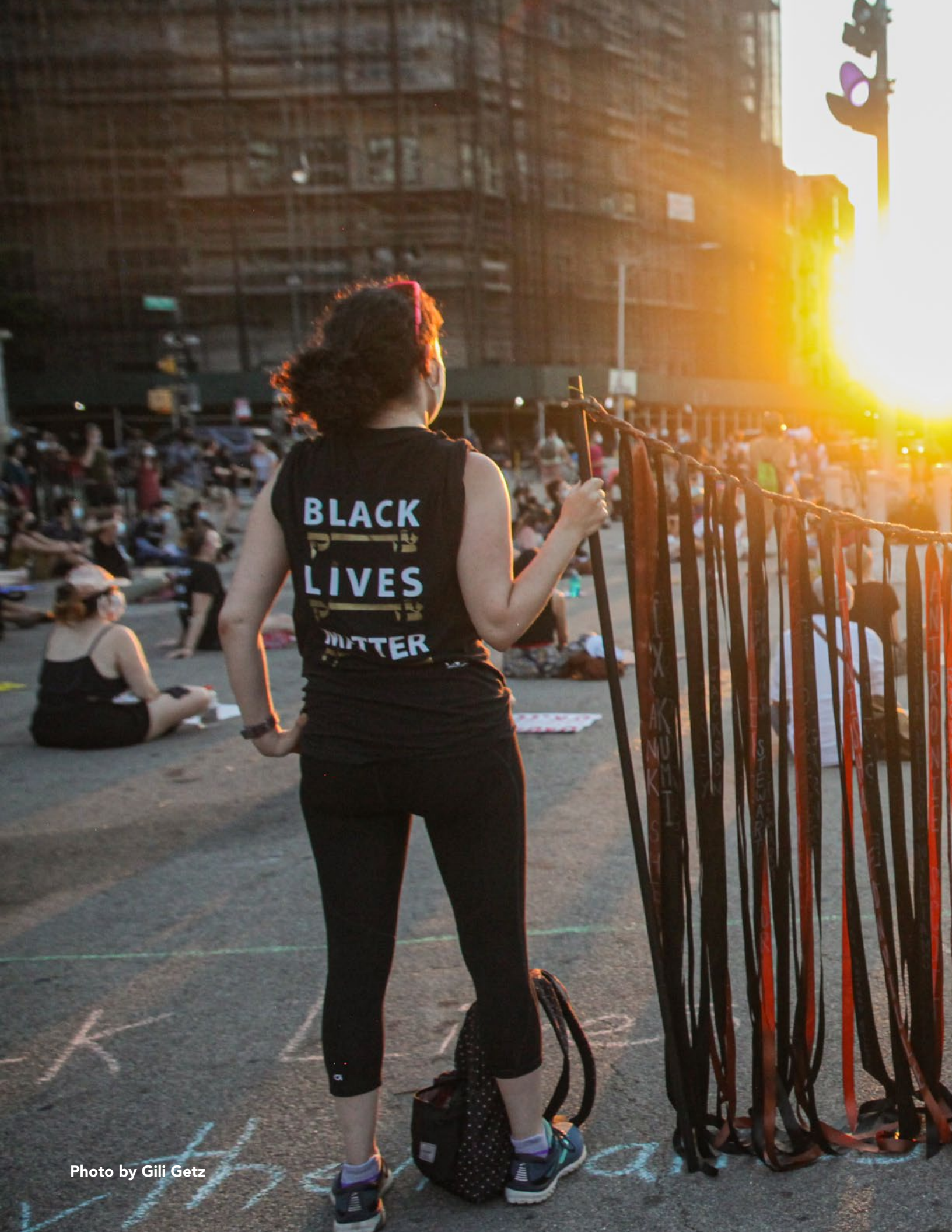


Photo by Gili Getz



# CONTENTS

<b>1.</b>	<b>INTRODUCTION</b>	<b>4</b>
	Our Core Principles	4
<b>2.</b>	<b>WE ARE JFREJ: A LONGER INTRODUCTION</b>	<b>4</b>
	JFREJ's History	6
<b>3.</b>	<b>WHY WE ORGANIZE AT JFREJ</b>	<b>7</b>
<b>4.</b>	<b>OUR STRATEGIES</b>	<b>8</b>
<b>5.</b>	<b>OUR PRIORITIES FOR THE NEXT 5 YEARS</b>	<b>10</b>
	Our Ten Year Goals	10
<b>6.</b>	<b>OUR NEW 501C4 STATUS</b>	<b>12</b>
<b>7.</b>	<b>HOW WE ORGANIZE AT JFREJ</b>	<b>13</b>
	Phases of Organizing	13
	Membership Chart	14
	Sample Member Journeys	16
<b>8.</b>	<b>ROLES &amp; STRUCTURE</b>	<b>19</b>
	Campaigns, Teams, Caucuses	20
	Neighborhood Groups (p20), Role Networks	21
<b>9.</b>	<b>HOW DECISIONS ARE MADE AT JFREJ</b>	<b>22</b>
<b>10.</b>	<b>TEAM TESHUVAH</b>	<b>29</b>
<b>11.</b>	<b>MONEY AT JFREJ</b>	<b>30</b>
	Staff & Board Lists	33

## A SHORT INTRODUCTION

---

**Welcome to JFREJ, the home for New York's Jewish Left. We need you (and we need your friends and your friends' friends!) to find your role and dig into the collective work of organizing for a world where all of us, and all of our neighbors, have the freedom, opportunity, and resources to thrive.**

This handbook is designed to help new and long-time members do just that! Our organizational story, our principles, and our structure can help us to organize powerfully and creatively, develop our skills, engage the massive base of people we need to win the biggest fights of our time, and hopefully glimpse and taste the world we hope for along the way. Though organizing is something we learn through doing, and doing, and doing, and doing, we hope with this guide in your hands (or on your screen), you will have the tools you need to jump in, and the excitement to tell your friends to jump in, too.

## WE ARE JFREJ: A LONGER INTRODUCTION

---

**Jews For Racial & Economic Justice is the home for Jewish New Yorkers to organize alongside our neighbors and allies to fight for a New York where every community has the freedom, opportunity, and resources to thrive.** Drawing from our Jewish values, our diverse histories, our skills, and with a lot of hard work, we'll halt our city's transformation into a playground for the wealthy and build a real democracy that works for all of us. Together we will dismantle the systems and institutions that perpetuate racism, inequity,

## OUR CORE PRINCIPLES

---

What are principles? *Principles are the basic guidelines that everyone in JFREJ agrees to. They hold our organization together, and guide our people through action.*

- 1. We affirm that all the Jews... are Jewish!** At JFREJ, we draw meaning and power from a plurality of relationships to Judaism, and most of us find the juiciest inspiration at the intersections of several: historical, cultural, religious, political, familial.
- 2. We are the home for Jewish New Yorkers** to organize with our neighbors and allies for a New York where everyone has the freedom and opportunity to thrive.
- 3. We show up for others and for ourselves.** We understand that antisemitism, racism, and other forms of oppression uphold one another, and that our safety lies in solidarity. When we fight for ourselves as Jews and our neighbors across New York, we recognize that we are all in this together.
- 4. We take care of ourselves and each other.** Our community aspires to move at a collective pace and in the rhythms of our ancestors and traditions. Shabbat requires us to regularly rest and nourish ourselves and each other, and we bring the

wisdom of interdependence, sharing and valuing care, into the everyday.

**5. We recognize everyone has experience and skills to contribute to our movement.**

We need people to organize, to plan, to hold us together, and to simply show up. We welcome all Jews and allies, of all ages, abilities, and backgrounds. Together, we are working towards building an open, accessible, participatory, and leaderful organization.

**6. We create the world we want through how we act right now.**

We are committed to being and building a community that is blessedly human; we aim first to prevent harm; we welcome healthy conflict and disagreement; we approach honest mistakes with curiosity and generosity. When harm happens, we commit to *teshuvah* (repentance) as a roadmap toward accountability and repair. We center and believe survivors.

**7. We build vibrant Jewish diasporic culture.** We are committed to our diasporic languages and our cultural traditions and texts, to study and ongoing learning, and to artmaking, ritual, 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.

and injustice, and grow something new and beautiful in their place.

New Yorkers are facing multiple crises: a pandemic, unconscionable inequality, sky-high rents, failing mass transit, unaffordable healthcare, a dehumanizing and discriminatory policing and incarceration system, disappearing small businesses, segregated schools, and the looming threat of climate change. While the poor and working class, elders, people with disabilities, and communities of color are most impacted, all of us call this city home, and we all deserve better.

JFREJ is rooted in our home, New York City, because we believe that cities like New York can be centers of radical progress. But we'll never live in a New York that meets our needs and reflects our values as long as everyday people have to compete with the massive corporations, powerful real estate tycoons, and corrupt political machines that are shaping the future of our city. So we'll work to elect progressive candidates that share our bold vision and are committed to supporting the leadership of the diverse communities that call New York home. JFREJ exists to fight tooth and nail to demolish this status quo. We work side by side with other communities to contest for the power to govern ourselves and end the injustices and violence that serve the interests of the 1% and hurt everyone else.

We come together as Jews out of a deep commitment to seek a more just society. In every borough, we are your congregants, your friends, your neighbors, your bubbes and habibis. We are Ashkenazi, Sephardi, and Mizrahi, Black, Brown, white and Arab, Latinx and Asian, immigrant and US-born.



We are old and young, rich and poor, teachers and students, parents and children, righteous rabbis and secular socialists.

Our diverse, multiracial, multi-ethnic, intergenerational community builds solidarity and trust by listening to each other and to our partners and allies, and by showing up, doing the work, taking risks and making mistakes together. We know that capitalism, antisemitism, xenophobia, racism, and Islamophobia are interconnected and that we can't address one of them without addressing all of them.

Our collective experience has taught us that Jews have never found real safety anywhere in the world by ignoring, excusing, or perpetrating state violence. Organizing with others to dismantle violent and oppressive systems is the only way to confront this broken world and bring about the world we imagine. We organize in New York City as inheritors of the Bundist philosophy of “doykait”/hereness that reminds us that where we live is our home—and our home is where we seek kinship and fight for justice. **We are the New York Jewish Left.**

**Wherever you are from and whatever being Jewish means to you, if you share our values, you are welcome here.**

## JFREJ'S HISTORY

In 1990, co-founders Donna Nevel and Marilyn Kleinberg Neimark convened the first meeting of JFREJ Community (known then simply as “JFREJ”). According to Donna and Marilyn, JFREJ was founded because:

*“...the absence of a strong alternative to the self-appointed conservative spokespeople for New York City's Jews was distorting political life in New York.... We formed JFREJ to reject apathy and quiescence, to demand the city address the desperate needs of the vulnerable and the oppressed, to build on and expand alliances with other progressive communities, to keep focused on the long-term goal of building a more just society, to offer a place where Jewish identity and commitment to social justice are not at odds. We formed JFREJ to disturb the peace.”*

In the thirty years that followed that first living room meeting, JFREJ has changed the landscape of the Jewish community, led a reinvigorated Jewish left into the 21st Century, and with our many movement partners, made a powerful impact on the lives of all New Yorkers.

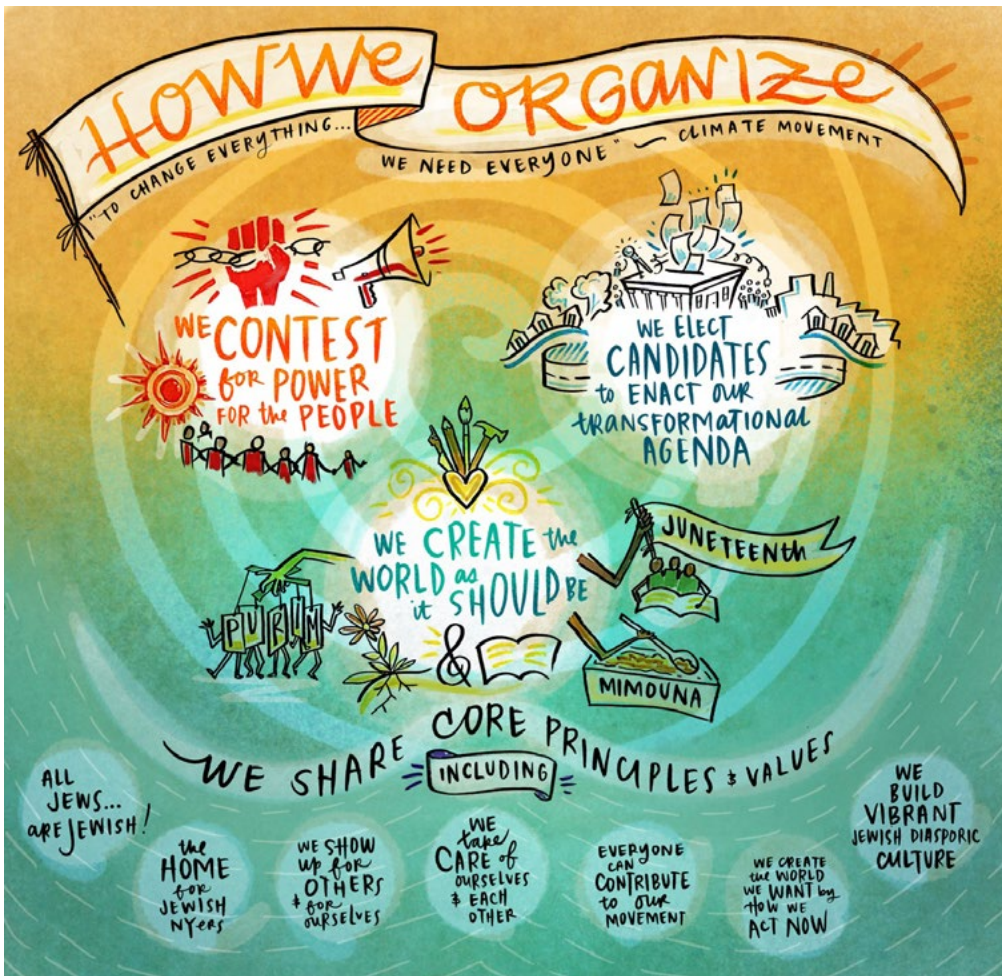
**If you want to learn more about JFREJ Community's 30 years of organizing and action, visit:**

**[jfrej.org/our-history](https://jfrej.org/our-history)**

**If you're unfamiliar with any terms used in this handbook, check out:**

**[jfrej.org/vocab](https://jfrej.org/vocab)**

# WHY WE ORGANIZE AT JFREJ — STRATEGIES, PRIORITIES, AND GOALS



Transforming the New York City of our collective dreams into a reality for the millions of people who live here requires all of us organizing and mobilizing in thoughtful, strategic formations. There is not one singular campaign, leader, or demand that is going to get us there; instead we need an ecosystem of strategies and tactics to make it possible.

In 2019 and 2020, JFREJ Community engaged in a process, *We Are Here*, to better understand the elements of an

effective organizing ecosystem: pushing back against attacks by the state, big business, or the far right (or, as with Amazon's HQ2, a combination of all three); contesting for, and winning state power for the people by electing progressive insurgents, and creating spaces that nourish us as individuals and community while providing alternatives to the state, whether they're spaces for education, spiritual transformation, cultural connection or safety and protection.

This section of the handbook explains how we're thinking about JFREJ's strategies and ecosystem, building on our insights from *We Are Here*. Our 2021 re-organized structure is

## Members in an Ecosystem

As individuals we can also use this ecosystem to reflect on our own activism and leadership. You might periodically ask, "where do I tend to find myself within the JFREJ ecosystem and is that a choice ('I love direct action!') or is it shaped by positional privilege ('My life has not required me to take risks before. I'm afraid to do so')?" The ecosystem approach can help us consider whether it's time to take on a new role (which could mean stepping into new areas of discomfort and leadership) or letting others take on more work so you can step back and avoid burnout.

our best effort to ensure that our strategies and tactics are always advancing our vision, and that we have the resources to achieve our goals. It also means we are better positioned to move our organizing energy or material resources into different parts of the ecosystem as political circumstances change or new realities emerge.

## OUR STRATEGIES

---

### 1. We Contest for Power for the People

At the ballot box and in the streets, we fight to empower communities that face state violence, economic inequity, and structural oppression to govern the resources and systems that affect their lives.

The city — and world — we are fighting for will require abolishing some existing institutions, transforming others, and building new structures and systems that actually meet our needs. Along the way we will make strategic decisions about when to push for incremental improvements and stopgap measures (accountable to, and in dialogue with, our grassroots partners) but we will always keep our eyes on the larger prize. To realize this kind of radical vision we will need to grow our people power, and develop a new level of rigor, resources, fortitude, and focus.

In New York and in concert with our allies across the country, we will help to build the progressive movement that is fighting for the transformational policies that will realize our far-reaching vision: building a caring feminist economy and a future with Medicare for All, an end to mass incarceration and racist policing, a universal Homes Guarantee, a Green New Deal, publicly funded elections, and fair wages and dignified conditions for all workers. We will expand our democracy, redistribute wealth, and beat back the rising tide of authoritarianism and white nationalism.



Photo Illustration by Rafael Shimunov



## 2. We Contest for State Power by Electing the Candidates We Need to Enact Our Transformational Agenda



We work to elect progressive candidates who share our values, are committed to co-governance in partnership with grassroots organizations and coalitions, and support our vision for multiracial social democracy.

We will wrest control of our electoral and governing institutions from corporations, the wealthy, ineffective politicians, and opaque, moribund political machines so that our democracy is responsive and accountable to the people of New York. Through The Jewish Vote, JFREJ will be at the forefront of efforts to hold accountable both the Democratic Party and the Jewish establishment, who too often serve the interests of the donor class at the expense of the rest of us.

## 3. We Create the World as it Should Be

JFREJ will continue to grow the New York Jewish Left by creating a welcoming, vibrant home for our city's multiracial, multi-ethnic, intergenerational, progressive Jewish community. We will be the home for Jewish art, culture, and ritual with all our diasporic languages, cultural traditions and texts. We will invest in education, artmaking, ritual, and joyful celebrations that bring us into new ways of relating to one another and allow us to be in dialogue



Photo by Lucas Jackson/Reuters

with the past, present, and future. We work at the intersection of identity and progressive politics. We center the voices and follow the leadership of those who have faced state violence and structural oppression, and who share our values and vision for collective liberation. Drawing from the Bundist principle of *doykait* (hereness), we will continue to fight for Jewish safety and thriving — inextricably linked with the safety and thriving of our neighbors — rooted and blooming here in our home: New York City.

## OUR PRIORITIES FOR THE NEXT 5 YEARS:

---

**A. We increase progressive power in city hall and albany, and grow the movement we need to win on election day: The Jewish Vote**

JFREJ will continue to strengthen our electoral organizing infrastructure and engage with our partners to build a more powerful and more unified progressive electoral ecosystem in New York. In 2021, we will play a central role in choosing the next Mayor and electing the most progressive City Council in history.

**B. We organize to defund, dismantle, and transform the criminal legal systems that harm New Yorkers: Freedom to Thrive**

JFREJ is organizing to abolish the NYPD and other institutions that do not keep us safe, are incapable of nurturing the communities they claim to serve, and are too rife with racism and violence to reflect the values and needs of New Yorkers. We will work with our partners to build new systems of transformative justice, and realize a vision of public safety that is based on providing communities with the resources and freedom they need to thrive. Jews have a direct stake in fighting for this vision. We know that true safety comes through solidarity with our neighbors in the fight for housing, healthcare, education, a living wage, and all the things we need to take care of ourselves and each other. And we know that the police unions and politicians defending the status quo are aligned with the Trumpian right. We believe that Jews

## OUR TEN YEAR GOALS

---

If we win, the following will be true by the year 2030:

**1. The Jewish Vote: we will elect the candidates we need to enact our transformational agenda**

We will have built a power base in key districts throughout the city and elected a major voting block in the City Council and state legislature that is enthusiastically co-governing and actively working to pass transformational policies.

**2. Freedom to Thrive: we will organize to defund, dismantle, and transform the criminal legal systems that harm New Yorkers**

The NYPD will no longer exist or will play a very narrow role. Public safety will be guaranteed by new institutions created by and accountable to communities of color. Alternatives to policing will be fully resourced, and NYC's criminal legal system will be fully non-punitive.



### 3. **Caring Majority: we will organize to ensure every New Yorker has the care they need to live full, healthy lives, and to ensure that all care workers to be highly valued and well-paid**

As part of a movement-driven People's Agenda for New York, a feminist caring economy agenda will be implemented, including single-payer healthcare & and a Green New Deal investment in the caring economy.

have a critical role to play in dismantling the systems that track, hunt, cage and deport our beloved neighbors, and that winning the battle against antisemitism requires a smarter, more effective approach that focuses on prevention, education, *teshuvah* (repentance), and repair.

#### C. **We win a New York in which everyone has the care they need, when and where they need it: The Caring Majority**

JFREJ is organizing seniors, people with disabilities, family caregivers and home care workers to build a more caring — more feminist — economy: one with healthcare for all, universal long-term care, and dignity for caregivers. We know that the care sector and care work are an essential part of recreating our economy in a way that protects and supports all of us. With our ambitious, feminist approach, we can strengthen our society's resilience in the face of both climate change and the pandemic. Together, we will create good jobs and ensure dignity for all our loved ones. We will create a world in which all of us have the care and support we need to live full, healthy lives in our communities. In our vision, the work of providing care will be a respected and recognized contribution to our communities and our society. It will be a dignified and well-paid job within a fast-growing and flourishing sector of a sustainable, humane economy; an economy based on caring for the Earth and one another.



## JFREJ'S NEW 501C4 STATUS

---

2021 introduces an exciting new strategy for JFREJ! We've created a new 501c4 that will allow us to call JFREJ home for all the organizing that our members are eager to plug into. We will continue doing the powerful issue-based organizing, political education, and arts and ritual that we've done for the past 30 years, *and* we can now also incorporate the hugely impactful electoral organizing and issue advocacy that our sister organization, The Jewish Vote, has pioneered since 2018 — all in one place.

**JFREJ Action (aka JFREJ), this new 501c4, will be the homebase for all our organizing moving forward, whether we're building Neighborhood Groups, advancing our issue-based campaigns, organizing ritual and cultural events, or participating in elections.**

The Jewish Vote will become a campaign of JFREJ Action — alongside our Freedom to Thrive campaign, our Caring Majority campaign, and all of our other work. This way, as members, you can get involved in any or all of our campaigns, all under one banner without compartmentalizing yourself or your passions. JFREJ Community will be the new name of the organization we founded 30 years ago, which will continue to exist as a 501c3 alongside JFREJ Action, with the same mission as always — to build the Jewish left in New York. Many of our movement partners are structured in this way to allow for the most flexibility and power in how we organize.

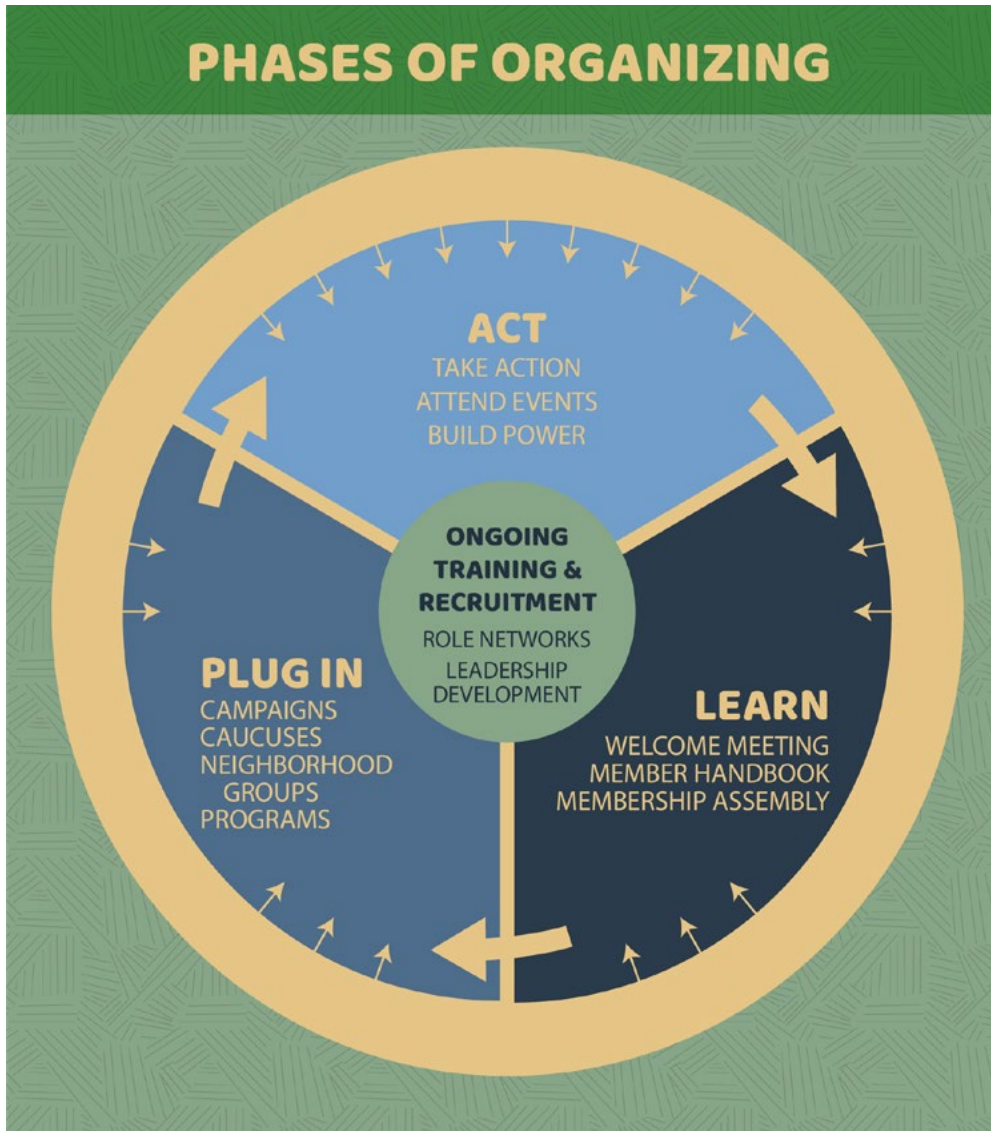
The bottom line is that in this new formation you'll get to keep working on all the campaigns and projects you've been engaged with, and you'll also have the opportunity to build progressive power by electing candidates and advocating for our issues in new and powerful ways.

**For more information, visit [jfrej.org/c4faq](https://jfrej.org/c4faq)**



# HOW WE ORGANIZE AT JFREJ

## What does it mean to be a member?



Guided by our seven core principles, JFREJ members organize according to, and toward our organizational goals. We participate at various levels of time and capacity; some of us share social media posts and spread the word by inviting our friends to support the organization, others fundraise or take action once or twice a year, and others are involved in multiple teams and campaigns for many hours a week. These are all great ways to participate and all of us will by necessity vary our participation over the years. If we are going to tackle the hardest problems we face, we all need to give what we can when we can, which requires creating a

highly accessible organization with a steady flow of people in and out of roles, tapping in and out as we need.

By the end of 2021, every member will be invited to join a (re)orientation to JFREJ. If you live in NYC, you will also have the option of joining a JFREJ “home base” — a **neighborhood group** and/or an identity-based **caucus** — to build relationships through learning and being part of a community with other members, to hear regular organizational updates, and to hear about opportunities to join a **role network** and/or campaign. In addition, JFREJ members receive regular email updates about

how to get involved in organizing with campaigns, teams, and other opportunities for action.

From your home base, at a quarterly membership assembly, or via email, you will receive regular opportunities to increase your participation and build your skills through the role networks and campaigns. As a member of a **role network** (to launch by the end of 2021), you can participate in essential roles across the organization with the training and support you need, at the capacity you have. Within a campaign, you can participate in furthering the goals of that campaign at multiple levels.

## Membership Chart

Members move through this chart based on their own desire, capacity, and training, with the exception of **coaches** (who apply for their positions and are approved by the leaders and staff they work with) and **co-chairs/co-coordinators** (who will be recruited by staff in 2021, until we can build our capacity for a more participatory process in 2022.)

At every step, I find a role and I bring in new people!				
I'm currently a:	What do I do?	How can I develop my skills?	Decisions I participate in	Average Participation
<b>Member</b>	<b>ATTEND</b> I show up occasionally when I can! It could be to a membership meeting or to an action. I may join a caucus or a NG. I may or may not pay membership dues each year, which are recommended but not required for participation.	I can hold a time-bound role to help out at a meeting, action, or group like note-taking, holding a banner, or helping with sign-in.	I may participate in membership-wide surveys or assemblies, I might weigh in at a meeting, action, or group.	3-4x/year
<b>Active Participant</b>	<b>PARTICIPATE</b> I regularly join my NG, caucus, campaign, or Role Network. I occasionally participate in local direct action or electoral work.	I attend role-specific trainings through my Role Network, so that I can hold a regular role in my NG, caucus, or campaign	I participate in decisions in my NG, caucus, campaign or within my role network.	1-10 hrs/mth



<b>Role Network Co-Coordinator</b>  <b>(6 month time commitment)</b>	<b>COORDINATE</b> I coordinate my Role Network to ensure our list is up to date and everyone gets updates on opportunities for training and participation. I recruit for and plan RN trainings (I'm not necessarily a trainer). I attend monthly calls with campaign leadership teams to finalize priorities for skills training, and have monthly 1-1 calls with staff and/or coaches.	I go through all required trainings on the skills corresponding to my Role Network. I get support from staff and/or coaches.	I decide the training plan and priorities for my role network, in consultation with campaign leadership teams.	8-10 hrs/mth
<b>Leadership Team Member</b>  <b>(6 month time commitment)</b>	<b>LEAD</b> I'm part of the Leadership Team for my NG, caucus, or campaign. I take on the responsibility of developing other members to eventually hold my role. I attend monthly LT meetings.	I go through required Leadership Development and Advanced Campaign Strategy trainings. I get support from my co-chairs.	I make decisions about the way we implement the strategy and vision of my NG, caucus, or campaign. I participate in interviews/decisions for endorsement and relevant campaign, group, or role network	10-15 hrs/mth
<b>Leadership Team Co-Chair</b>  <b>(6 month time commitment)</b>	<b>DIRECT</b> I lead the leadership team within a campaign, NG, caucus, or role network. I directly develop the members on my leadership team. I facilitate monthly co-chair calls, LT meetings, and 1-1 calls with staff and/or coaches.	I go through required Leadership Development and Advanced Campaign Strategy trainings. I get one-on-one support from staff and/or coaches.	I decide endorsement criteria and develop proposals for group decisions about campaign strategy. I help set direction and initiate projects with approval from my team and partners.	10-15 hrs/mth
<b>Coaches</b>  <b>(6 month time commitment)</b>	<b>ADVISE</b> I apply to become a coach in order to support member leaders in co-chair positions. I may also train and mentor staff members.	I have at least 5 years of organizing experience, may organize or work in other progressive organizations, and/or I'm a movement elder.	I support staff and co-chairs to create clear decision-making processes and consult on key strategic decisions.	Monthly participation varies, usually 3 hrs/month when active

## Leadership development and leadership teams

Developing the skills and analysis of members is a core part of community organizing everywhere. For many years JFREJ's staff have invested in a small number of member-leaders each year, one-on-one and through a yearly fellowship program. This approach to leadership development focused more on *depth* rather than *breadth*. This was the organizing tradition we inherited and it worked well for a long time; it matched our capacity and it enabled us to strive for more equity among leaders, investing more time and training in Jews of Color and other underrepresented groups.

But JFREJ's membership has grown rapidly (yay!) and we think we can do better. We want to *add* breadth to depth and offer something more distributed, transparent, and accessible to all of our members. **We need many more people participating in many more roles in order to win, and we believe that every person who wants to contribute to our fight should have access to a role.** A key change we're working on is building structures that not only maximize participation, but also expand the opportunities for skill-building and organizing training, create pathways to development over time, and build in consistent layers of support on a scale we've never had. We hope these changes strike a balance between wider participation and deep and equitable training and mentorship for members who seek it. The details of this improved structure and a more specific breakdown of roles and leadership positions across our campaigns, teams, and caucuses aren't totally fleshed out yet, so stay tuned!

## MEMBER JOURNEYS

**"I care about social justice, but I just don't have any time or capacity to give right now."**

In order to secure the transformative change we need to win the difficult battles ahead, we need everyone. (Sorry — it's literally our job to nudge you about this!) But we also know that we all have moments in our lives where we can't offer anything else, and that's real. If you pay your membership dues at whatever sliding scale you can afford, from \$1 a month, to \$1000 a month, you're doing your part. If you can tell your friends about JFREJ, and like and re-share the occasional Facebook post, tweet, or Instagram story, even better!

**"Ok, consider me nudged — I can make a little more time for this work. What do I do?"**

Amazing! Thank you. If you're the kind of person who likes to dive deep and appreciates a deadline, recruit your friends and family for the Mazals Host Committee each fall, pledge to sign up 5 new JFREJ members during our year-end membership drive, or plan on time off in February and March each year to go on a couple of 1-day bus trip to Albany, where you'll learn to advocate for our issues with state legislators. If you'd rather spread your efforts out over time, join one of our regular phone banks, or become a social media superstar and help us get our message out on the daily. You might also attend regular Neighborhood Group meetings, caucus meetings, and monthly Member Assemblies in person or online.

**"I feel deeply committed to this work, and I want to make it a regular part of my day-to-day."**

You're already doing everything right! But it sounds like you might be ready to



take on a specific role in our organizing work — a role that makes a big impact, and comes with responsibilities. You can sign up to join the leadership team of a neighborhood group, or join one of our new role networks. You can help plan an event, facilitate a study group, learn to do security at actions, be part of crafting our social media messaging, or create artwork for a campaign. Start by attending our monthly Member Assemblies; ask a staff member how to get involved with a specific campaign or team, and stay on the lookout for more information about how to join role networks and leadership teams — coming soon!

**"I am all about that JFREJ life.  
Tell me how I can help!"**

If you are already a JFREJ member who is active in our work, we would love for you to consider one of many leadership roles. You'll have lots of support from staff and other members. You can lead a neighborhood group, co-chair a campaign, take ownership of a campaign role or an action, help to lead a role network, and help to develop the leadership of other members through trainings and mentorship. Don't be shy — leadership is a gift to our movements; whatever role you end up playing, know that you are powerful and your community wants to be inspired by you. Come on — step on up!

*Remember — our goal is that there will be many more opportunities for members to play well-defined roles than ever before! In addition, the plan is that members will rotate in and out of roles regularly. You're not making a lifelong commitment, and you don't have to worry about taking a scarce role away from someone else. So considering advancing your leadership and taking responsibility for the success of our movements today!*

## CAMPAIGNS & TEAMS: ROLES & STRUCTURE

---

### Campaigns

JFREJ works on long-term campaigns that are selected through community-wide processes that involve our partners, allies, members, staff, and board (see: *Criteria for Strategic Decision-Making*, page 28). Our organization also prioritizes responding to important issues that fall outside of these campaign areas, but we aim to balance rapid response, lower-capacity coalition work, or shorter-term campaigns with the goal of fulfilling our organization's commitments to our partners and coalitions within our three core campaigns. This balance is sometimes difficult to strike, and has sometimes caused confusion about our priorities, and what level of capacity and focus our members and staff should put where.

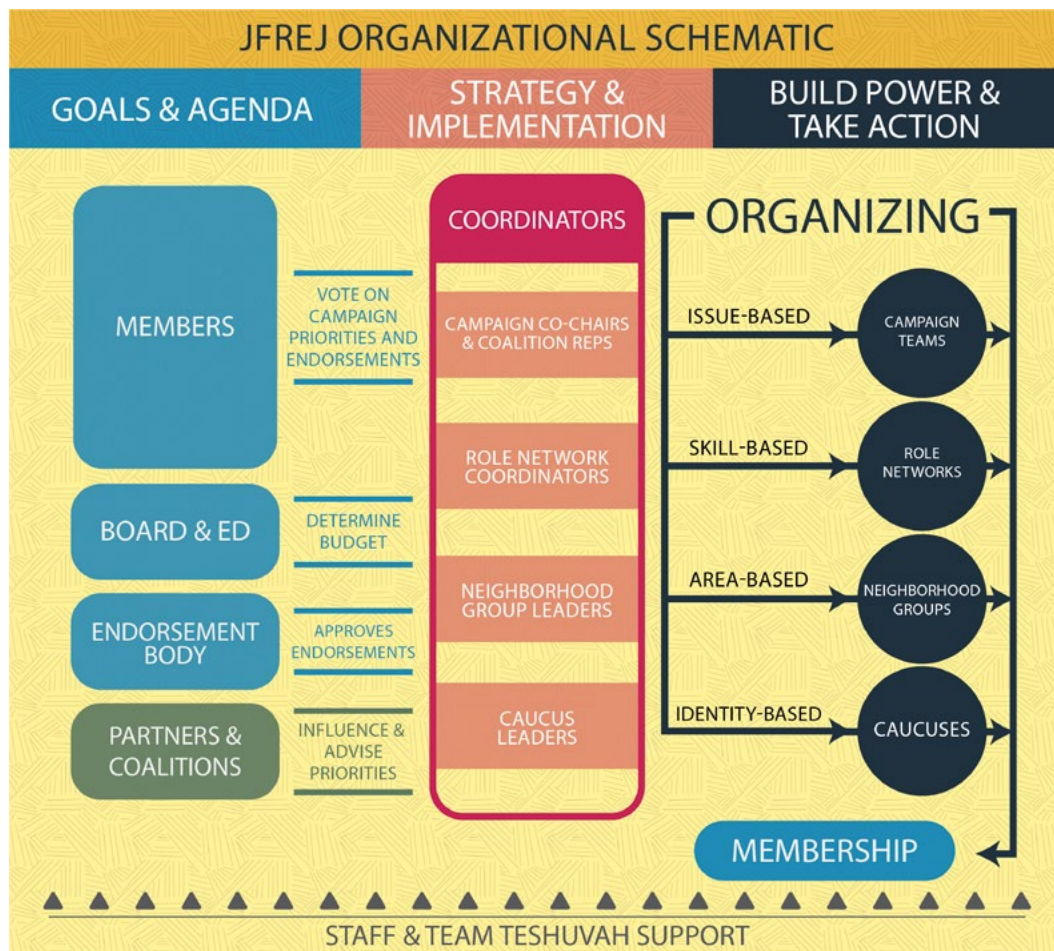
**In 2021, our hope is to enable more members to weigh in on, facilitate, and make decisions about overall organizing capacity and coordination, and particularly about how to balance campaigns or mobilizations that are beyond our core priorities with the needs of our long-term campaigns.** Additionally, we aim to enable much wider participation in our campaigns for all members, both to increase access and opportunity, and to create more leadership turnover, and allow members who are highly involved to move in and out of roles as their capacity changes.

To do this, we need more formalized membership and leadership structures with clarified roles and commitments. This will create the container for members to participate in decisions at levels of their choice and training.

We also want our campaign structures to resemble each other enough that members recognize how to participate and take leadership no matter which campaign they are contributing to, while allowing flexibility for each campaign to create particular structures where needed.

**For 2021, we aim to move toward this campaign structure for all of our campaigns:**

- **Co-Chairs/Chairs** (campaigns will choose which they prefer): members who represent the campaign's priorities, goals, and calendar within the coordinating team
- **Leadership Team:** members responsible for strategic decisions for the campaign and developing the leadership of other members
- **Campaign Teams:** semi-stable groups that carry out the tactics and strategies of the campaign
- **Campaign Working Groups:** temporary groups created as needed for time-limited projects





## **At JFREJ, we engage in participatory cultural organizing anchored in the ritual calendar.**

These projects are responsive to the political moment and inspired by Jewish tradition and movement history. They build power and sustain our community by living out the world we dream of and getting a taste of what liberation feels like together. They build our organization by providing opportunities for leadership development of cultural workers and cultivation of radical left cultural tools like song and dance, as well as recruitment and political education opportunities for the larger JFREJ base.

### **Our recurring yearly events have included:**

- **Purim**, with our partners, The Aftselakhis Spectacle Committee
- **Mimouna**, led by the Mizrahi Caucus
- **Juneteenth Seder**, led by Black Jews & the JOC Caucus
- **The Mazals**, led by staff with input from the Move Money Build Power team and wider membership.

In addition, we often engage in ritual-based direct action or community gathering for **Passover** and **Tisha B'Av**.

Our ritual calendar is rich with opportunities for honoring and reinvention. Depending on the political moment, and other factors, we may choose to focus on any number of Jewish holidays to connect our organizing with our traditions and practices. In 2019, JFREJ Community hosted the *Omer for Black Lives* followed by *Shavuot for Black Lives* as a way to meaningfully tap into our ancestral teachings while meeting the urgency of the moment. We are a dynamic and nimble organization with a deep well of wisdom to draw from in order to root ourselves in our past while reimagining our future. We are open to all of it.

COVID-19 has made our events calendar more uncertain, but if you want to get involved in any of the above, we'll share opportunities through email and through the **Arts, Culture & Ritual Role Network**, once it's off the ground.

# OUR CAMPAIGNS & TEAMS (WINTER 2021)

## CAMPAIGNS

### Freedom to Thrive:

including:

- [Jews4BlackLives & CopWatch](#)
- [NYC Against Hate](#) and our work against [antisemitism](#)

### Caring Majority The Jewish Vote

## KEY COALITIONS

- [Fund Excluded Workers](#)
- [Street Vendor Project](#)
- [UWS Open Hearts](#)
- [Let My People Go, Jews Against ICE, Never Again Action](#)
- [Hate Free Zones](#)
- [Invest in our New York](#)
- [Communities United for Police Reform](#)

## TEAMS

- [JFREJ Action Board of Directors](#)
- [JFREJ Staff](#)
- The Jewish Vote Steering Committee
- Mazals Committee
- [Jews of Color Caucus](#)
- [Mizrahi Caucus](#)
- [Poor/Working-class Caucus](#)
- Team Teshuvah
- Rabbinic Council
- Leadership Teams (Neighborhood Groups, campaigns, etc.)
- [The 2021 Endorsement Team](#)

## Caucuses

JFREJ caucuses are politically and culturally engaged affinity spaces for [Jews of Color](#), [Mizrahim & Sephardim](#), and [poor/working-class Jews](#) who share JFREJ's values and goals. Caucus members contribute to JFREJ's many campaigns and influence the overall political organizing strategy of JFREJ. Caucuses host cultural events (for ourselves and sometimes for the broader JFREJ community), and build a shared political vision for our community, taking collective action to achieve those goals.

## Neighborhood Groups

[Neighborhood Groups](#) are where JFREJ members build relationships with other members, learn about a range of political and cultural topics, and take action together — all in our local neighborhoods.

As New York City continues to respond to the COVID crisis and prepares for the 2021 elections for City Council, Mayor, and Comptroller, we know that our neighborhood groups have the potential to be powerful sites of mutual aid, learning, community-building, action and rapid response, and partnership between local elected officials and the progressive Jewish community. If our groups are organized and politicized, our members will have the power to



## OUR CAMPAIGNS & TEAMS (WINTER 2021)

help elect grassroots, progressive candidates in their neighborhoods, who will co-govern with us over the next many years in advancing our transformative vision for a city and state where everyone has the resources and care they need in order to thrive.

We believe that our neighborhoods and living rooms (even via Zoom) are vital sites of radical imagination in this moment, and there's no better place to start building the multi-racial, feminist, social democracy we all deserve.

### Role Networks

One of the key ideas that we are excited about is giving JFREJ members who want to develop and practice specific skills a more structured, easily accessible way to do just that. We call these new structures "role networks," after the Sunrise Movement's design. Role networks would group together skills like planning actions, being a spokesperson for a campaign, or creating political art or video, and give members a place to develop and practice those skills alongside their peers. For example, you could be in a network with other JFREJ members who are working specifically on communications across the organization, whether running our social media, speaking at rallies, writing op-eds, etc., and get opportunities for training in this area.

Over the next year we will create the following networks:

- **Arts, Culture & Ritual**  
Collaborating on movement artwork, cultural organizing, and ritual actions
- **Communications**  
Developing spokespeople, telling our story, social media, live video, op-ed writing, internal communication with members
- **Direct Actions & Events**  
Action planning, security, marshalling, remote homebase support, accessibility, Zoom administration
- **Move Money, Build Power**  
Building fundraising skills with an anti-capitalist lens, planning membership drives and large fundraising events like the Mazals, database management, and data entry
- **Training, Facilitation, Political Education**  
Developing skills around facilitation, leading political education workshops, etc.
- **Welcome & Care**  
Bringing in and orienting new members through 1:1s, outreach, and welcome meetings, and ongoing community care.

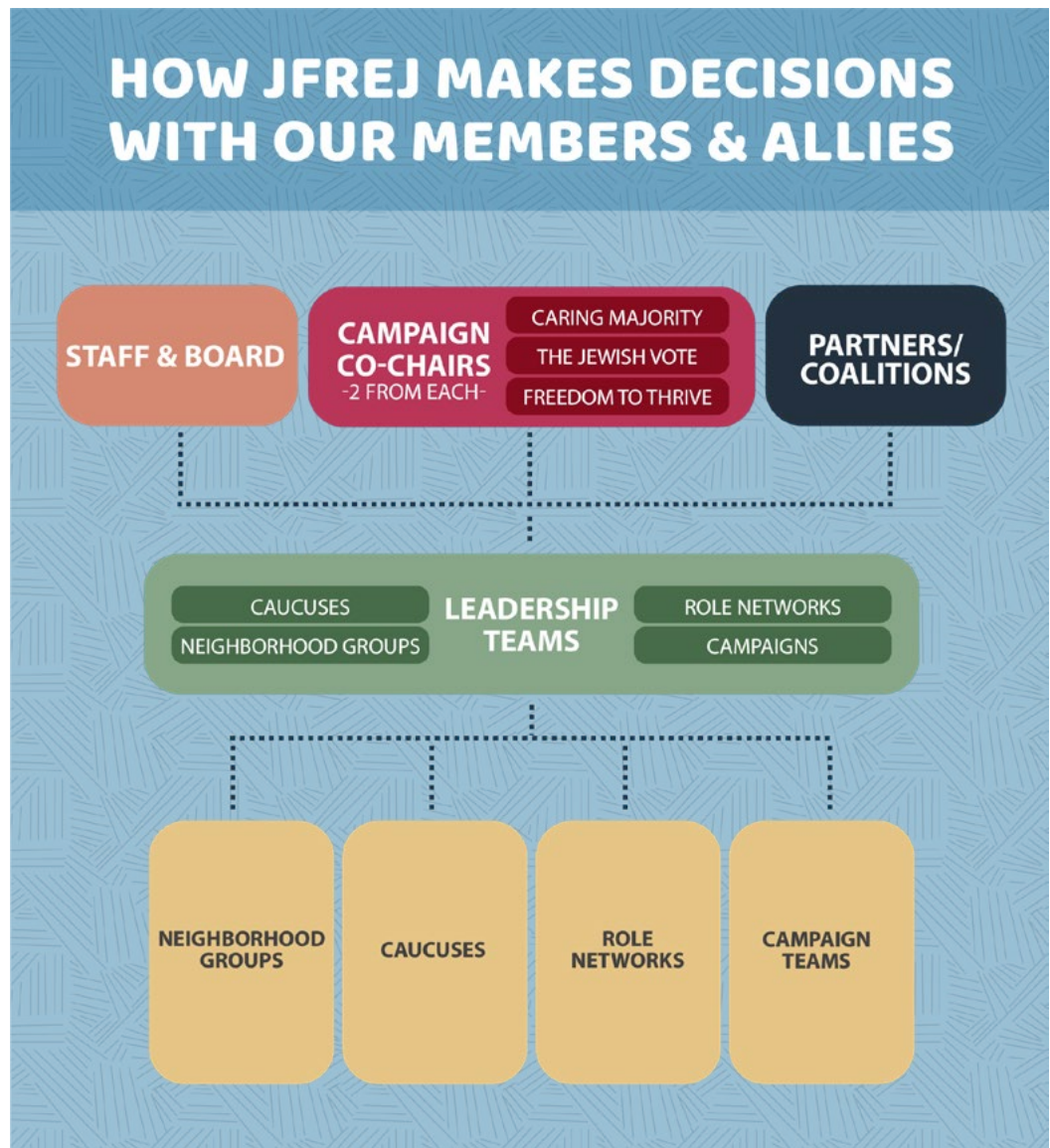
We will add additional networks or revamp existing ones as we go, assessing our needs and what works along the way.

## HOW ARE DECISIONS MADE AT JFREJ?

Our organization is made up of many teams, caucuses, and committees as well as a board of directors and staff, and all campaign organizing that takes place at JFREJ is done in coordination with our allies, such as the organizations that make up Communities United for Police Reform (CPR) and the New York Caring Majority.

Our aspiration is that individual teams, caucuses, and committees operate with clear alignment driven by the organization's values and priorities, and particularly by its campaign commitments, but with as much day-to-day autonomy as possible. JFREJ's campaign priorities do not exist in a vacuum — we organize in coalitions and partnerships, and we have networks of accountability that involve these partners as well as constituencies within our own membership. Staff support and train members to facilitate decision-making that balances team autonomy and creativity with the needs and leadership of our partners and caucuses.

As part of our 2019–2020 *We Are Here* process, we learned that our members and staff need more experience and training in order to create and engage in the more transparent and participatory decision-making we all want to see.





We need:

- Knowledge about the movement landscape and about our relationships with our diverse partners and coalitions
- A clear picture of our overall organizational capacity
- Strategic decision-making skills and best practices (see: *Criteria for Strategic Decision-Making*, page 28)
- The ability to hold a collective decision-making process involving a quorum of JFREJ members
- Methods and shared values for equitable decision-making given that the majority of our members are white, Ashkenazi, and may have other kinds of structural power.

*Our aspiration is to become an organization where this information and these skills are much more widely shared among members in order to increase the ability of members to decide what we do and don't do. To get there we need to create learning and training opportunities for all of us to practice these skills, and that is one of our goals over the next two years.*

In the meantime we will increase opportunities for members to facilitate more decision-making wherever possible. Staff, the executive director, and the board hold ultimate responsibility for finalizing a decision.

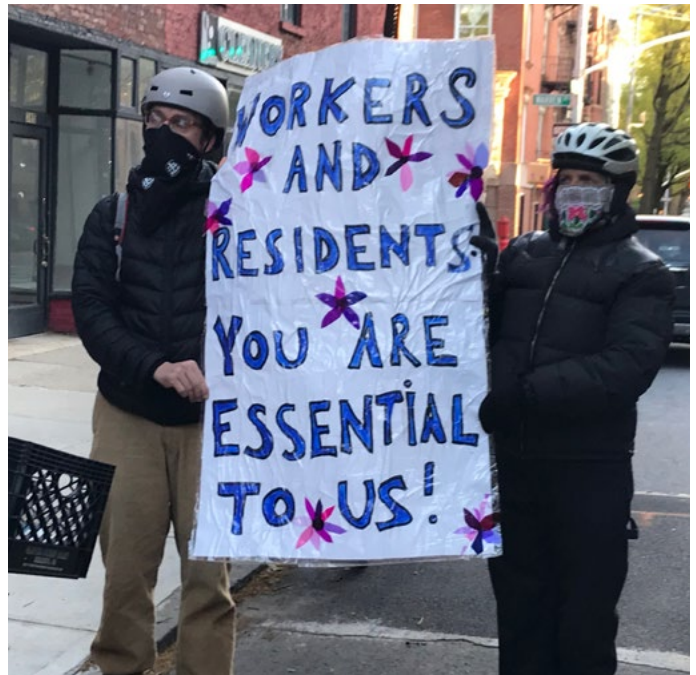
## **Coordinating Team**

In 2021, we will build a new Coordinating Team, made up of leaders from the campaigns, caucuses, Neighborhood Groups, and Role Networks.

The initial leaders will be members who have been operating in a similar role already, and they will be responsible for helping set up the process for identifying their replacements. This team will meet quarterly to coordinate priorities for organizing, political education, and training toward stronger alignment and coordination of overall capacity and direction across the organization. In addition, when there is prohibitive disagreement between members (or between members and staff) on the interpretation of JFREJ's values and priorities, that decision can be brought to the team for further deliberation.

We may need to experiment with how it works longer-term, but this is the goal for 2021.

Individual teams and committees make day-to-day strategic, tactical, and programmatic decisions that are relevant to their work. But when it comes to big strategic decision-making, the role of members has been a long-running source of confusion. **By the end of 2021, we plan to integrate a clearly defined membership role into big picture strategic decision-making.** We are exploring the creation of a new organization-wide leadership body that includes leaders from staff, board, membership, and all aspects of our work. There are a few good reasons for this:



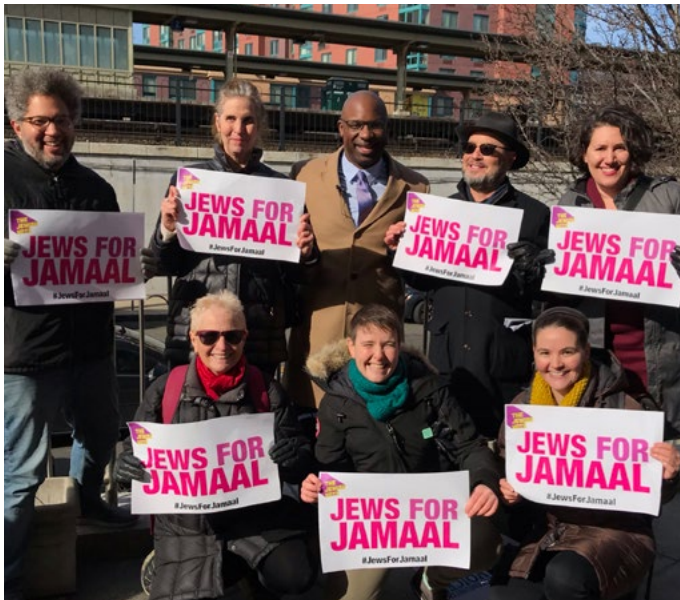
- As JFREJ grows in power and numbers, we must work to hold individuals to high standards of integrity, provide structured leadership development, and consciously build our capacities towards more democratic governance. Our organization is stronger and healthier when a broad cross-section of members are engaged in high-level decision-making. The more we build skills for governance and co-governance, the more effective we'll be at transforming democracy in our city. An organization-wide decision-making body, together with the role network outlined above, will help us achieve this.
- A nominated organization-wide decision-making body will be an important step towards clarity and transparency for our membership. It will allow us to answer the question much more clearly than ever before: how are decisions made at JFREJ?
- The JFREJ decision-making body will provide a necessary structure to make big political choices that will increasingly affect the membership as a whole, especially as it relates to endorsements of candidates. If you've been part of The



Jewish Vote's excellent, member-led endorsement decision-making process, you can appreciate the value of taking some of what's worked well at TJV and applying it to JFREJ as a whole.

It will take time to make sure we get it right, and all members who are interested will have a role in weighing in on the new process. So until a new organization-wide decision-making body is established, here's how decision-making works at JFREJ:

The **JFREJ Action Board of Directors** is responsible for the overall governance of the organization. This means protecting our financial health and ensuring that we live up to our mission, goals, and values. The board is also liable in the case of any organizational wrongdoing. There is no personal giving



requirement to sit on the Board of Directors at JFREJ. There is, however, a requirement that everyone on the Board of Directors participates in our fundraising and contributes a personal gift that is meaningful to them. In addition, the board has the following decision-making responsibilities for the organization:

- Hiring and firing the Executive Director (this may be done in consultation with staff but the board is the final decision-maker)
- Approving the organizational budget as presented by the Executive Director
- Making sure IRS filings, finances, audits, and all administrative systems are legal and in compliance with city, state, and federal laws
- Recruiting and approving new board members (recommendations are often solicited from staff as part of this process).

As we prepare to build a new approach to decision-making at JFREJ, we will explore if it makes sense to have an elected board of directors, or a certain number of seats reserved for election.

The **Executive Director (ED)** is responsible for the day-to-day management and smooth running of the organization and for



leading the rest of the staff in the development and implementation of organizational strategies and priorities that are both visionary and sustainable. Overall, the ED is responsible for:

- Setting and approving final organizational goals — and identifying where goals aren't being met
- Developing a budget (with input from staff) that aligns with organizational strategy
- Creating a sustainable work culture and developing/revising all personnel policies as needed
- Managing the Director of Development and the Political Director and working with both to oversee fundraising and organizing goals
- Managing the Finance and Operations Manager in the implementation of HR policies, financial tracking systems, and overall administration
- Representing the organization in high-profile public spaces (as needed — this is shared with other staff and members) and signing off on messaging and statements
- The ED, together with the Board, may exercise their “veto power” if they see a project or campaign that cannot be resourced, exhibits “mission creep,” etc.



The **JFREJ Staff** is the team that partners with membership and the board to implement strategy and build power. The staff is responsible for:

- Ensuring that we meet our short and long-term strategic goals.
- Ensuring that our work as a whole maintains coherence, and that it is strategic and sustainable.
- Ensuring that our work is effective, remains true to JFREJ's vision and priorities, and reflects JFREJ's collective values.

- Building and maintaining the underlying organizational infrastructure that enables broad member participation.
- Making day-to-day or time-sensitive decisions that are uncontroversial and don't pertain to any team, e.g. signing JFREJ onto letters/statements that are fairly straightforward.
- Making decisions re: all of JFREJ's public-facing communications, including the website, social media, and e-mail blasts.
- Facilitating decision-making with member teams and caucuses, using the criteria outlined below, striving to create a culture of participatory decision-making.



- Until a new organization-wide decision-making body is in place, the staff is responsible for determining annual strategic goals for the organization, in consultation with the Board of Directors and member leadership teams.
- Until a new organization-wide decision-making body is in place, the staff is responsible for making decisions about whether new projects initiated by members can be a priority, given current capacity. They will continue to do so through consultation and consensus-building between all the members and allies who would be affected by the introduction of a major new short-term project.



Photo by Zachary Schulman Photography

The **2021 Endorsement Team** is the interim decision-making body for all 2021 candidate endorsements. We hope this team can serve as a bridge to a new organization-wide strategic decision-making body. The team will work to build our skills and muscle for more collective and participatory governance, as the organization builds alignment around what a permanent process and structure would look like. With this team in place, here's how endorsement decisions will be made in 2021:

## **Some key considerations when we make strategic decisions:**

- What is the core power dynamic at play? What is our analysis of the threat or opportunity in this moment, and what's our hypothesis about how we would win?
- Is there a strategic Jewish role? Do our people have skin in the game?
- Who are the partners/allies? Who's directly affected, and what are they asking for, both within and beyond JFREJ? Is there a different organization that's better positioned to take it on?
- Does it grow our power to contest for the state/democracy? Will it grow our *capacity* to act, for example, by growing our base, developing leadership and growing our power? Does it strengthen important relationships, set us up for our next win, or weaken our opposition?
- Do we have the resources necessary?
- How would doing this impact our progress towards our existing strategic priorities?

## **Key considerations when making decisions about actions, events, and rapid response:**

- When making decisions that relate to cultural/ritual organizing we also ask whether we can create ritual space that transforms people's political consciousness *and* seeds political action with our campaigns and organization. Does it build our base? Does it develop leaders? Is it participatory? Does it build solidarity with other communities? Does it grow resources?
- For rapid response: How much capacity is needed for what level of response? Does it advance a campaign or other preexisting priority? Does it build our base? Does it develop leaders? What training is required for what level of response to be sustainable? What follow-through or continued commitment might be needed, and what is our capacity for that? Would doing this hurt existing priorities?



- For rapid response communications: Does it build our narrative strategy? Is it our job to say something?
- What would we *not* be able to do if we did this?

## TEAM TESHUVAH: COMMUNITY CARE & ACCOUNTABILITY

---

At JFREJ, *teshuvah* refers to our process of addressing harm by returning as a collective to our values of justice and care for the sake of repair and our communal transformation. To us, *teshuvah* is accountable, not punitive; communal not individual; and measured by our collective ability to continuously realign our actions with our JFREJ-wide values & principles when harmful situations arise again. As part of our 2019–2020 *We Are Here* process, JFREJ formed Team Teshuvah: Community Care & Accountability to build out JFREJ's process for addressing conflict and reducing harm within our organization using transformative justice (TJ). Our team is continuously working on building capacity, growing our skills in TJ frameworks with experienced TJ practitioners, and developing TJ materials and trainings to share with JFREJ-wide membership to support our collective ability to navigate conflict and harm. We focus on both prevention and mediation, working with expert consultants on establishing a culture of consent in our



Photo by Desmond Reich

community while also addressing past conflict and harm, including everything from interpersonal harassment or violence to organizational wide patterns of harm or oppression. **If you want to confidentially reach out to this team, please contact [tjatjfrej@gmail.com](mailto:tjatjfrej@gmail.com).**

## MONEY AT JFREJ

---

Supporters can choose where to make their gift — whether to JFREJ Community (501c3) or JFREJ Action (501c4). We are inviting and encouraging all JFREJ Community members to **“transfer” their membership dues to JFREJ Action** in the coming months. JFREJ Action, a 501c4, is the homebase for all our organizing moving forward, whether we’re building Neighborhood Groups, advancing our issue-based campaigns, organizing ritual and cultural events, or participating in elections. JFREJ Community is the new name of the organization we founded 30 years ago, which continues to exist as a 501c3 alongside JFREJ Action, with the same mission as always — to build the Jewish left in New York. (Many of our movement partners are structured in this way to allow for the most flexibility and power in how we organize.)



Gifts to 501c4 organizations (JFREJ Action) are unrestricted and therefore more flexible than gifts to 501c3 organizations (JFREJ Community). Gifts to JFREJ Action, however, are not tax-deductible.

If you prefer to make a tax-deductible gift, you can contribute directly to JFREJ Community. Gifts to JFREJ Community are tax-deductible and will be used only for non-partisan, 501c3 compliant activities.

For more information, visit [jfrej.org/c4faq](https://jfrej.org/c4faq)

## Gift Policy at JFREJ

Our gifts & donations policy will be released in late 2021.



## Compensation at JFREJ

JFREJ is a membership-based social justice movement organization, committed to building a multi-racial Jewish and broader progressive left with the power to build a city where all New Yorkers can thrive. Historically, working class people have built power through giving time and paying dues to create strong movement organizations that have driven transformative change.



Photo by Erik McGregor

In that tradition, JFREJ does not pay members to participate in our work or take on leadership roles. JFREJ members participate for multiple reasons — because they believe organizing is the best path to their liberation, to be in community with like-minded people, to live their values, to build leadership skills, and even to strengthen their resumes.

To more fully live our values, JFREJ has created a payment policy that answers the question, “In what context and under what conditions might a member of JFREJ be compensated financially as part of their participation in building JFREJ?” The policies cover staff roles, freelance roles, interns, and ways to reduce financial barriers to participation in the work of JFREJ. These policies are designed to be class-conscious and responsive to the harms of racialized capitalism and the realities of living under it. **For more information, please ask a staff member or email JFREJ Executive Director Audrey Sasson ([audrey@jfrej.org](mailto:audrey@jfrej.org)).**

### Illustration Credits:

*How We Organize* (p.7)  
by Emily Simons

*Phases of Organizing* (p. 13)  
by Ezra Seligsohn

*JFREJ Organizational Schematic* (p.18)  
by Ezra Seligsohn

*How JFREJ Makes Decisions* (p.22)  
by Ezra Seligsohn





Photo by Erik McGregor

## JFREJ STAFF

---

**Adi Aboody**, Mizrahi/Sephardi Organizer

**Ben Bienstock**, Development & Database Associate

**Sophie Ellman-Golan**, Director of Strategic Communications

**Leo Ferguson**, Director of Strategic Projects

**Sara Goldberg**, Development Coordinator

**Rachel McCullough**, Political Director

**Kirstie Kimball**, Director of Development

**Tanya Roopnarine**, Finance & Operations Manager

**Audrey Sasson**, Executive Director

**Keren Soffer-Sharon**, Community Organizer

**Yehudah Webster**, Community Organizer

**Zahara Zahav**, Director of Organizing

## JFREJ ACTION BOARD OF DIRECTORS

---

Paula Galowitz

Estee Konor

Rabbi Ellen Lippmann

Megan Pamela Ruth Madison

Alexis Ortiz

cori schmanke parrish

James Schaffer

Margot Seigle

Andrea Shapiro

Rafael Shimunov

Judith Trachtenberg

## JFREJ COMMUNITY BOARD OF DIRECTORS

---

Amanda Altman

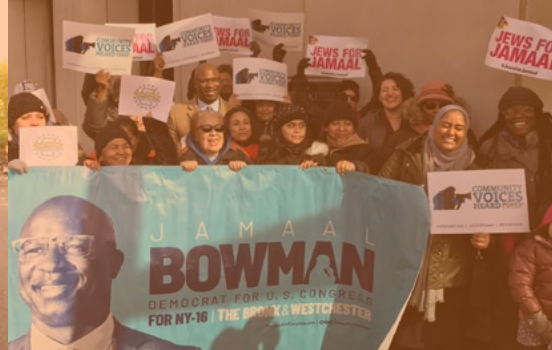
Neal Hoffman

Rachel Laforest

Autumn Leonard

Alisa Solomon





WWW.JFREJ.ORG

INFO@JFREJ.ORG

@JFREJNYC

@THEJEWISHVOTE

