



נזירה
DECREE
♥ PROTECT ♥
TRANS KIDS

#DEFUND
THE
NYPD

INVEST IN OUR
FOOD
INVEST IN OUR
ELDERS
AIR LBNY

FOR THE SINS WHICH
WE'VE COMMITTED
IN DISPLACING
BLACK & BROWN
COMMUNITIES
CRY FOR
BLACK LIVES

WORKERS
AND
RESIDENTS

COPS HAVE
NOT KEPT US
SAFE
NYC

Medicaid for
SENIORS
— NOT —
Tax breaks for
MILLIONAIRES

PREVENTION:
STOP HATE B4
IT'S TOO LATE
NYC
AGAINST
HATE

JFREJ
MEMBER
HANDBOOK
5783 / 2022-2023

ב"ה
FOR ABORTION
ב"ה
FOR ABORTION

DETENTIONS!
DEPORTATIONS!

ELDERS
for
BLACK LIVES

FUNDING
COMMUNITIES
=
PROTECTING
COMMUNITIES

CARE
NOT
COPS

TISHA BAV OF
TISHA BAV OF
TESHUVAH

#WE ARE HERE
WE ARE HERE

FAIR
PAY
— FOR —
HOME CARE

WE ARE THE
CARING
MAJORITY
boz del
puevlo
boz del
sielo
the voice of the people
is the voice of the heavens
ladino proverb
neighbors
take care of
neighbors



CONTENTS

INTRODUCTION	4	Membership Chart	14
Our Core Principles	4	ROLES & STRUCTURES	17
WE ARE JFREJ: A LONGER INTRODUCTION	4	Campaigns & Teams	20
JFREJ’s History	6	Neighborhood Groups, Caucuses, Role Networks	21
WHY WE ORGANIZE AT JFREJ	8	Israel-Palestine as a Local Issue	24
OUR STRATEGIES	8	HOW DECISIONS ARE MADE AT JFREJ	26
OUR PRIORITIES FOR THE NEXT FIVE YEARS	10	MONEY AT JFREJ	32
HOW WE ORGANIZE AT JFREJ	12	Staff & Board Lists	34
Sample Member Journeys	16		

A Short Introduction

Welcome to JFREJ, the home of New York’s Jewish Left! This handbook is designed to help new and long-time members alike find a role, and dig into the collective work of organizing.

JFREJ’s organizational story, principles, and structure help us organize creatively, develop our skills, engage the massive base of people we need to win the biggest fights of our time, and hopefully get a glimpse of the world we hope to bring about. Although organizing is something we learn through action, we hope this guide provides the tools you need to jump in, and the excitement to invite your friends to get involved as well!

We Are JFREJ: A Longer Introduction

Jews For Racial & Economic Justice is the home for Jewish New Yorkers organizing with our neighbors and allies to transform New York from a playground for the wealthy few into a real democracy (with playgrounds for all of us!) For over 30 years, JFREJ members have worked to make the city we love a more caring place, free from all forms of racist and economic violence, where everyone has the opportunity and resources they need to thrive. A grassroots organization with over 6,000 members and a powerful electoral arm, JFREJ is the home of the New York Jewish Left.

Drawing from our Jewish values and diverse histories, with persistence, commitment, and care, we will dismantle the systems and institutions that perpetuate racism, inequity, and injustice, and grow something new and beautiful in their place.

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.

JFREJ is rooted in our home, New York City, because we believe that cities like New York can be centers of radical progress.

That radical progress becomes all the more urgent right now; the judicial system and state governments across the country are increasingly codifying white Christian patriarchal supremacy into law, rolling back civil rights and minority protections at an exponential rate.

One of the reasons many Jews immigrated to this country and made a home in New York was the United States’ commitment to freedom of religion and association — however selective that commitment has been. The promise of freedom to practice our religion, to live as Jews and equal citizens, to have the same opportunities and rights as everyone else. These promises were only ever true for some people, and they are true for fewer and fewer of us every day. Conservative legal and legislative warfare have stripped away rights and rolled back progress many of us took for granted, and rapacious capitalism has exposed more and more members of all communities to the conditions that poor people and Black and Brown people have been contending with for generations.

New York prides itself on being one of the most liberal states in the country. But New Yorkers are facing multiple crises: enormous inequality, sky-high rents, failing mass transit, unaffordable healthcare, an ugly and discriminatory policing and incarceration system, disappearing small businesses, segregated schools, and the climate crisis. While poor and working class New Yorkers, older and disabled people, and communities of color are most impacted, *all of us* who call this city home *deserve more*.

We want to live in a city that meets our needs and reflects our values; a city that follows through on the promises of freedom, opportunity, and equality. As neighboring state governments are taken over by white Christian nationalists and their allies, more and more people will seek refuge in New York in search of those same promises. **It is essential that our city and state be democratic, caring, and affordable enough for not only the people who live here now, but also for the hundreds of thousands who will come;** our neighbors who are tired and poor and yearning to breathe free.

As federal law and court rulings threaten the freedoms that even now only some New Yorkers have, we must elect organizers, socialists, and fighting progressives who will do what it takes to withstand not only an explicitly white Christian nationalist federal government, but also the powerful police forces and corrections unions that will gladly enforce unjust laws, keep people afraid, and provide muscle for the political right's agenda.

New York cannot be the home we deserve or a place to seek refuge as long as everyday people have to compete with the massive corporations, powerful real estate tycoons, and corrupt political machines shaping the future of our city. 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. And we work to elect progressive candidates who share our bold vision and are committed to supporting the leadership of the diverse communities that call New York home.

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"). To quote 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."

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)



Photo by Stephanie Guedalia & Rome Davis



Photo by Erik R. McGregor

We come together as Jews out of a deep commitment to 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, Latino/a/x 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, 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 retreating behind walls has not led to Jewish safety anywhere in the world, and that organizing with others is the only way to confront the broken world as we find it 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.

WHY WE ORGANIZE AT JFREJ:
STRATEGIES, PRIORITIES, AND GOALS

There is not one singular organization, campaign, leader, or demand that will transform New York City into the home we deserve; we need a movement ecosystem of strategies and tactics to make it possible.

Over the past few years, JFREJ has sharpened our organizing strategies: combating attacks from the state, big business, or the far-right, and lobbying for policies that can transform our city and state (**direct action & advocacy**); contesting for and winning political power for the people by electing progressive insurgents (**electoral**); and creating spaces that nourish us as individuals and a community while providing alternatives to the state, whether they're spaces for education, spiritual transformation, connection or safety and protection (**cultural**).

OUR STRATEGIES

1. Direct Action & Advocacy: We build people power to win on our priority issues

Through legislation 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 — 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 with our allies across the country, we are building a progressive movement that fights for transformational policies: building a caring feminist economy and winning universal single-payer healthcare;



an end to mass incarceration and racist policing; a universal Homes Guarantee; a Green New Deal; free, quality education for all, and fair wages and dignified conditions for all workers. We will expand our democracy, redistribute wealth, and beat back rising authoritarianism and the white Christian nationalist movement.

2. Electoral: 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 political machines so that our democracy is responsive and accountable to the people of New York. Through our electoral arm, The Jewish Vote, we are 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. Cultural: 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 invest in education, artmaking, ritual, and joyful celebrations that bring us into new ways of relating to one another through Jewish culture with all our diasporic languages, traditions, and texts.

We center the voices and follow the leadership of people facing state violence and structural oppression, and who share our values and vision for collective liberation. Drawing from the Bundist principle of doykait (hereness), we fight for a safe, flourishing Jewish community — 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 Five Years:

A. **Winning a New York where we all have the care we need, when and where we need it: The Caring Majority**

JFREJ will continue to organize Jews around intersections of age, disability, class, gender, and race to build a more caring economy — one with healthcare for all, universal long-term care, dignity and support for family caregivers, and fair pay and respect for care workers. Care work is an essential part of building a sustainable economy that supports all of us. As a leader of the NY Caring Majority Coalition, JFREJ will help pass legislation to create good jobs and ensure all of us have the care and support we need to live full, healthy lives in our communities.

We'll know we've won when...A feminist caring economy agenda that includes single-payer healthcare and a Green New Deal is implemented as part of a movement-driven People's Agenda for New York. The work of providing care is a respected and recognized contribution to society, within a fast-growing and flourishing sector of a sustainable, humane economy.

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

JFREJ will work with our partners to build new systems of transformative justice in New York, and realize a vision of public safety based on violence-prevention, education, and providing communities with the resources and freedom they need to thrive. Jews have a direct stake in fighting for this vision; true safety comes through solidarity with our neighbors in the fights for housing, healthcare, education, a living wage, and all the things we need to live full, happy lives. The same right-wing police unions and status quo politicians that enable white supremacy threaten our safety as Jews too. We are organizing to abolish the NYPD and other punishment institutions that fail to protect — and often actively hurt — the communities they claim to serve. The NYPD is rife with racism, violence, and support for the far-right. It does not reflect the values and needs of New Yorkers.

We'll know we've won when...The NYPD longer exists or plays a very narrow role in everyday life. Public safety is guaranteed by new institutions, in which Jews actively participate, created by and accountable to communities of color. Alternatives to policing are fully resourced, and NYC's criminal legal system is fully non-punitive.

C. **Increasing progressive power in City Hall and Albany, and growing 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 2022, we are playing a central role in electing a new and incumbent cohort of progressive leaders at the state and federal level.

We'll know we've won when...We have a power base in key districts throughout the city and elected a major voting block in the City Council and state legislature that enthusiastically co-governs and actively works to pass transformational policies. Bad faith accusations of antisemitism against progressive candidates are no longer a legitimate or effective means of derailing a campaign in New York. More politicians appeal to "the Jewish Vote" on the basis of Jewish voters' actual priority issues, rather than fear-mongering and stereotypes.

D. **Creating the world as it should be: Art, ritual, and culture**

JFREJ will build structures and incorporate practices to bring attention to our spiritual needs and lives within organizing spaces. We will increase our resourcing of diasporic arts and ritual as a tactic in direct service of our campaigns, base-building, and development, while increasing and sharpening the tactical utility and relevance of that diasporic art and ritual. Pending funding, which we are currently seeking, JFREJ will create an artist-in-residence program.

We will dedicate capacity to prepare and support our community to do more Jewish cultural work in response to movement moments and political emergencies. We will create and share resources, publicize our cultural and ritual work, and enter into partnerships with appropriate institutions. As the old adage goes: culture eats strategy for breakfast.

We'll know we've won when... JFREJ is powered by a robust, growing, and influential pool of artists, ritual leaders, and cultural and ritual resources aligned with our strategies, goals, and values. Our tactics have even greater depth and specificity as a direct result of including ritual and cultural workers in planning and execution. Politically aligned cultural and ritual resources are organically adopted across Jewish communities, indicating the popularization of our politics within the cultural life of American Jews.



Photo by Seth Wenig

Our Vision: A JFREJ that’s 20,000 members strong

There are over one million Jews in New York City. We envision a JFREJ that represents at least 2% of our city’s Jewish population; that’s what we estimate we need to win a more caring New York that works for all of us. With the multiple intersecting crises we face, we can’t afford to be small. In the years ahead, we have a responsibility and an opportunity to grow significantly. We’ll do it through membership campaigns, bold cultural strategy, and irresistible campaigns that reach millions of people.

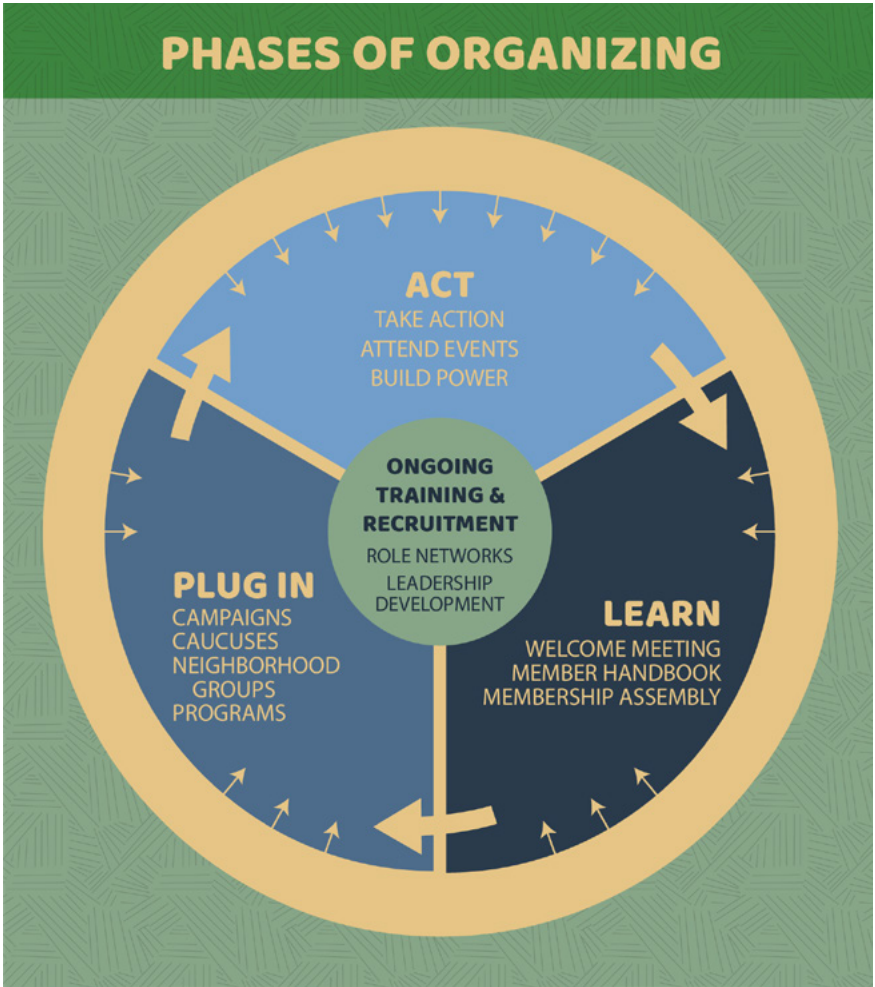
How we organize at JFREJ

What Does it Mean to Be a Member?

Guided by our seven core principles (see pages 4-5), JFREJ members participate in the organization’s work 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. All members in good standing can also participate in The Jewish Vote endorsement process (see page 32). These are all great ways to be involved, 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.

As a member, you have the option of joining a JFREJ “home base” — a **neighborhood group** (if you live in NYC) and/ or an identity-based **caucus** — to build relationships through learning and being part of a community with other members. In addition, **JFREJ members can join our Slack channel for rapid response calls-to-action, kibbitzing, and more.** Please contact lexi@jfrej.org to get added to the Slack channel!

From your home base, at a quarterly membership assembly, or via slack or email, you will receive regular opportunities to increase your participation and build your skills through role



networks and campaigns. As a member of a role network, which we’ll be phasing in through 2023, (see pages 21-22 for details), you can participate in key roles across the organization with the training and support you need, at the capacity you have. Within a campaign, you can participate in advancing the goals of that campaign at multiple levels.



Photo by Stephanie Guedalia & Rome Davis

Finding a Role

As individuals we can also use this cycle of engagement to reflect on our own activism and leadership. You can periodically ask yourself, “are there new ways I can push myself to take risks, confront privilege, or support other members?” This 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.



Photo by Jordan Macy

Membership Chart

Members move through this chart based on desire, capacity, and training. Co-chairs and co-coordinators are often responsible for recruiting and supporting new leaders to step into those roles, i.e. to replace themselves.



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
Member	ATTEND 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 pay membership dues at an amount over \$3/year that feels powerful to me.	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
Active Participant	PARTICIPATE 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

Role Network Co-Coordinator (6 month time commitment)	COORDINATE 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
Leadership Team Member (6 month time commitment)	LEAD 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
Leadership Team Co-Chair (6 month time commitment)	DIRECT 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
Coaches (6 month time commitment)	ADVISE 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 & Leadership Teams

Developing the skills and analysis of members is a core part of community organizing. We hold regular opportunities for political education and training at membership-wide events and assemblies, within campaigns, caucuses, and neighborhood groups, and for members of various leadership teams throughout the year.

CULTURE & RITUAL

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. The below events 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 yearly events have included:

- **Purim**
- **Mimouna**, led by the Mizrahi Jews and the Mizrahi & Sephardi Caucus
- **Juneteenth Seder**, led by Black Jews & the Jews of Color 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.

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 and step on up!

Remember: Our goal is for there to 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!

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 2018, JFREJ 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. In 2020, after the murder of George Floyd, we organized [40 Days of Teshuvah](#). Over Passover in 2021, we joined forces with NYC artists, musicians, and partners to launch the [Let My People Go](#) campaign to free immigrants from ICE detention In 2022, we held outdoor [Purim](#) and Passover gatherings, calling attention to our core campaign priorities while reveling in community joy and festivities. We are a dynamic and nimble community with a deep well of wisdom to draw from to root ourselves in our past while reimagining our future. We embrace all of it.

CAMPAIGNS & TEAMS, ROLES & STRUCTURE

JFREJ works on long-term campaigns that we select through community-wide processes involving our partners, members, staff, and board (see: Considerations for Strategic Decision-Making, page 31). JFREJ 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 short-term campaigns with fulfilling our commitments to partners and coalitions within our three core campaigns. This balance can be hard to strike, and has sometimes caused confusion about our priorities and the level of capacity members and staff should put where.

Core Campaign Work

Freedom to Thrive:

- Divesting from the NYPD and redirecting resources to our communities
- Winning city funding for community-based violence intervention programs and combating antisemitism and all forms of hate violence

Caring Majority

- Passing Fair Pay for Home Care and the New York Health Act in the New York State Legislature

The Jewish Vote

- Electing insurgent progressive candidates and defending our incumbent champions

Active Coalitions

- Communities United for Police Reform
 - Campaign for New York Health
 - New York Caring Majority
 - Fund Excluded Workers
- Invest in Our New York
 - People’s Plan NYC
 - NYC Against Hate
 - Working Families Party



Photo by Gili Getz

In 2023, we hope to empower more members to weigh in on, facilitate, and make decisions about overall organizing capacity and coordination — particularly about how to balance mobilizations that are beyond our core priorities with the needs of our long-term campaigns. Additionally, we aim to enable more participation in our campaigns for all members, both to increase access and opportunity, and to create more leadership transitions, 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.



OUR CAMPAIGNS & TEAMS

All of our campaigns have the following structure:

- **Co-Chairs/Chairs (campaigns will choose which they prefer):** members who are responsible for coordinating and supporting their leadership team
- **Leadership Team:** members responsible for strategic decisions for the campaign and developing the leadership of other members
- **Campaign Teams:** flexible groups that carry out the tactics and strategies of the campaign
- **Campaign Working Groups:** temporary groups created as needed for time-limited projects

Teams

- JFREJ Action Board of Directors
- JFREJ Community Board of Directors
- JFREJ Staff
- The Jewish Vote Steering Committee
- Mazals Committee
- Jews of Color Caucus
- Mizrahi & Sephardi Caucus
- Poor & Working Class Caucus
- Disability Caucus
- Israel-Palestine Team
- Team Teshuvah
- Leadership Teams (Neighborhood Groups, Role Networks, Campaigns, The Jewish Vote Endorsement Team, etc.)



OUR CAMPAIGNS & TEAMS

Caucuses

JFREJ caucuses are politically and culturally engaged affinity spaces for Jews of Color, Mizrahim & Sephardim, poor & working-class Jews, and Jews with disabilities or chronic illness or neurodivergence in our membership. Caucus members share JFREJ’s values and goals, contribute to JFREJ’s many campaigns, and influence the overall political organizing strategy of JFREJ. Caucuses host cultural events (for fellow caucus members and sometimes for the broader JFREJ community), and build a shared political vision for our community, taking collective action to achieve those goals. To learn more, please contact leo@jfrej.org.

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!

Neighborhood groups can be powerful sites of mutual aid, political education, community-building, action and rapid response, and partnership between local elected officials and our progressive Jewish community. If our groups are organized and politicized, our members will have the power to help elect grassroots, progressive candidates in their neighborhoods, who

will co-govern with us to advance 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 multiracial, feminist, social democracy we all deserve. To learn more, please contact: jake@jfrej.org.

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 will group together skills like planning actions, writing campaign talking points, or creating political art or videos, 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 messaging across the organization, whether running our social media, speaking at rallies, writing op-eds, etc., and get opportunities for training in this area. (see page 22 for a description of the different role networks). To learn more, please contact shoshana@jfrej.org.

Over the next few years, we will continue to phase in the following networks and provide training in these kinds of skills:

- **Arts, Culture & Ritual:** Collaborate on movement artwork, cultural organizing, and ritual actions.
- **Social Media & Messaging:** Engage with JFREJ’s posts, and learn live-tweeting and live-streaming skills, creating graphics, drafting social media toolkits, and speaking to press.
- **Community Safety & Security:** Get skilled in action-planning, online and offline security, marshaling, remote direct action support, and action accessibility planning.
- **Move Money, Build Power:** Build fundraising skills with an anti-capitalist lens, planning membership drives and large fundraising events like the Mazals.
- **Tech & Data:** Run texting campaigns, support online meetings and organization, and learn about using data to build people power.
- **Facilitation:** Get opportunities to be facilitators across JFREJ and to attend trainings on online meeting facilitation, and the work of sharing information across diverse teams and campaigns for greater transparency and access.
- **Welcome & Care:** Lead welcome meetings, bring in and orient new members through 1:1s, outreach, and ongoing community care.

Team Teshuvah: Community Care & Accountability

At JFREJ, teshuvah refers to our process of addressing harm through our values of justice and care for the sake of repair and transformation. To us, teshuvah is: accountable, not punitive; communal, not individual; and measured by our collective ability to regularly check if our actions align with JFREJ’s values and principles. In 2020, JFREJ formed *Team Teshuvah: Community Care & Accountability*, guided by transformative justice (TJ) frameworks to build out JFREJ’s process for addressing conflict and reducing harm within the organization.

From 2020 to 2022, the team learned from experienced TJ practitioners and sought to learn from past conflict and harm in order to inform our community-wide policies and practices moving forward. In May 2021, the team helped design JFREJ’s first organization-wide database policy to address and seek to prevent naming errors in our communications. In October 2021, the team hosted JFREJ’s first TJ training for the wider membership. In addition, the team worked to carefully tease out and explore the many opportunities and challenges that exist at JFREJ — and in our wider movement — in shifting our internal culture to one where nobody is disposable, and where our commitment to abolition and care is practiced in everyday interactions with one another.

In May 2022, the team stepped back to take stock of their learnings. The key takeaways include, how *slow* the work can and needs to be, especially if done with integrity; how *important* it is not to let it go; and how *critical* it is to include a wide range of voices in these efforts. We believe transformative justice is a path toward abolition — which means ending white supremacy, economic inequity, classism, patriarchy, ableism, and all forms of systemic violence and oppression. As we shape the next chapter of our collective efforts to integrate TJ at JFREJ, we remain committed to building a culture of teshuvah at JFREJ. If you are interested in this work at JFREJ, please contact audrey@jfrej.org.

Israel-Palestine Team

Over the summer of 2021, we surveyed the full JFREJ membership on the subject of Israel-Palestine in order to open up space for discussion on how JFREJ relates to the issue. At the end of 2021, we formed an Israel-Palestine team to develop a plan for how to move forward based on the survey results. The JFREJ Board and staff recruited specific people in order to build a team comprised of JFREJ members with: a high level of commitment to and understanding of JFREJ’s political project; an ability to think strategically in the service of JFREJ’s vision and long-term goals; capacity to hold this project in a consistent and ongoing way; some combination of the skills we need, such as writing, editing, strategy, pedagogy, organizing, and facilitation; and familiarity with Israel-Palestine politics and the Palestine solidarity movement.

To learn more and contact the the Israel-Palestine team, please visit jfrej.org/israel-palestine.



Photo by Zachary Schulman

JFREJ & Israel-Palestine:

While JFREJ was founded to focus on local organizing in NYC, our founding members knew then, as we do now, that **our liberation as Jews is tied up with the liberation of all people around the world**. Israel-Palestine has been a subject of debate within JFREJ for over thirty years. We are connected to what happens there. We are connected as a Jewish organization, and an organization in the United States. At JFREJ we focus our efforts on pursuing racial and economic justice locally — and we know that the U.S. government provides more than \$3 billion in annual military aid to the State of Israel. We are connected as a community with members who have lived there, loved there, put down roots there, protested there, and have friends and family there. And we are connected as a New York City-based organization, navigating Israel-Palestine’s impact on NYC organizing and politics.

Too often our opponents successfully use legitimate Jewish fears about antisemitism to divide and distract New Yorkers from our goals. Too often, Israel-Palestine is the vehicle for this division. **With the combined rise of Trump, anti-democracy movements, and corporate maneuvers, we don’t see a path in this political climate to building the city of our dreams without addressing the issue.**



JFREJ’s unique and profound power is in holding localized diasporic struggle, rooted in solidarity.

With this in mind, JFREJ’s Israel-Palestine team developed **four strategies to address Israel-Palestine *as a local issue***. These strategies are designed to ensure we stay grounded in who we are — with JFREJ’s unique history and strengths, and our principles and core mission — while confronting Israel-Palestine’s impact on our local work.

- 1. The Jewish Vote’s electoral strategy:** electing the candidates we need to enact our transformational agenda, and defending them from bad-faith smears and attacks.
- 2. Countering antisemitism & authoritarianism, and defending free speech:** we will step up our efforts to protest anti-BDS efforts, which are just the beginning of our opposition’s long-term campaign to undo democratic rights across the board. In New York City, CUNY is a key site for this anti-democratic campaign. Backing a New Deal for CUNY legislation is a clear way JFREJ can push back and defend public higher education in NYC.
- 3. Internal education & engagement:** deep learning with our full membership to clarify when and how we take action and speak out on the subject of Israel-Palestine; align around a theory of change; and develop a shared understanding of our strategy on Israel-Palestine as a local issue.
- 4. Continuing to speak out in key movement moments:** We will continue to speak out for our allies in the movement for Palestinian freedom, and sign on and lend our power to these efforts whenever there is a clear intersection with New York. At the same time, we’ll take care not to expend massive capacity or resources in these instances so we can leave this lane to our partners whose primary mission is Israel-Palestine, and keep our focus on our priority campaigns.

How are Decisions Made at JFREJ?

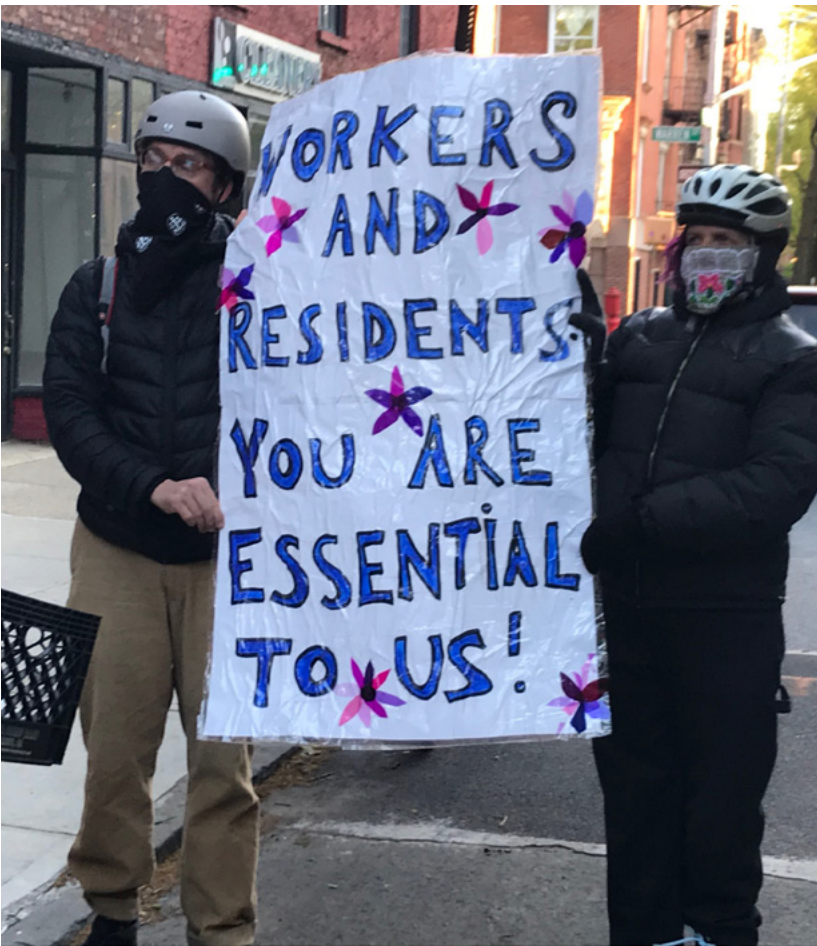
Our organization is made up of many teams, caucuses, and committees as well as a board of directors and staff. All campaign organizing that takes place at JFREJ is done in coordination with our allies, such as the organizations that make up Communities United for Police Reform (CPR) and the New York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

Our hope is that individual teams, caucuses, and committees operate with clear alignment driven by JFREJ’s values and campaign commitments, with as much day-to-day autonomy as possible. Our campaign priorities do not exist in a vacuum; we organize in coalitions and partnerships, and we are accountable to our partners as well as to members. 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.

Our aspiration is to become an organization where this information and these skills are much more widely shared, so members can be more involved in decision-making. 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 few years.

To create and engage in the more transparent and participatory decision-making we all want to see, we need:

- Shared 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: Consideration for Strategic Decision-Making, page 31)
- 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.



We will increase opportunities for members to engage in more decision-making wherever possible. Staff, the Executive Director, and the board are responsible respectively for decisions listed below:

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:

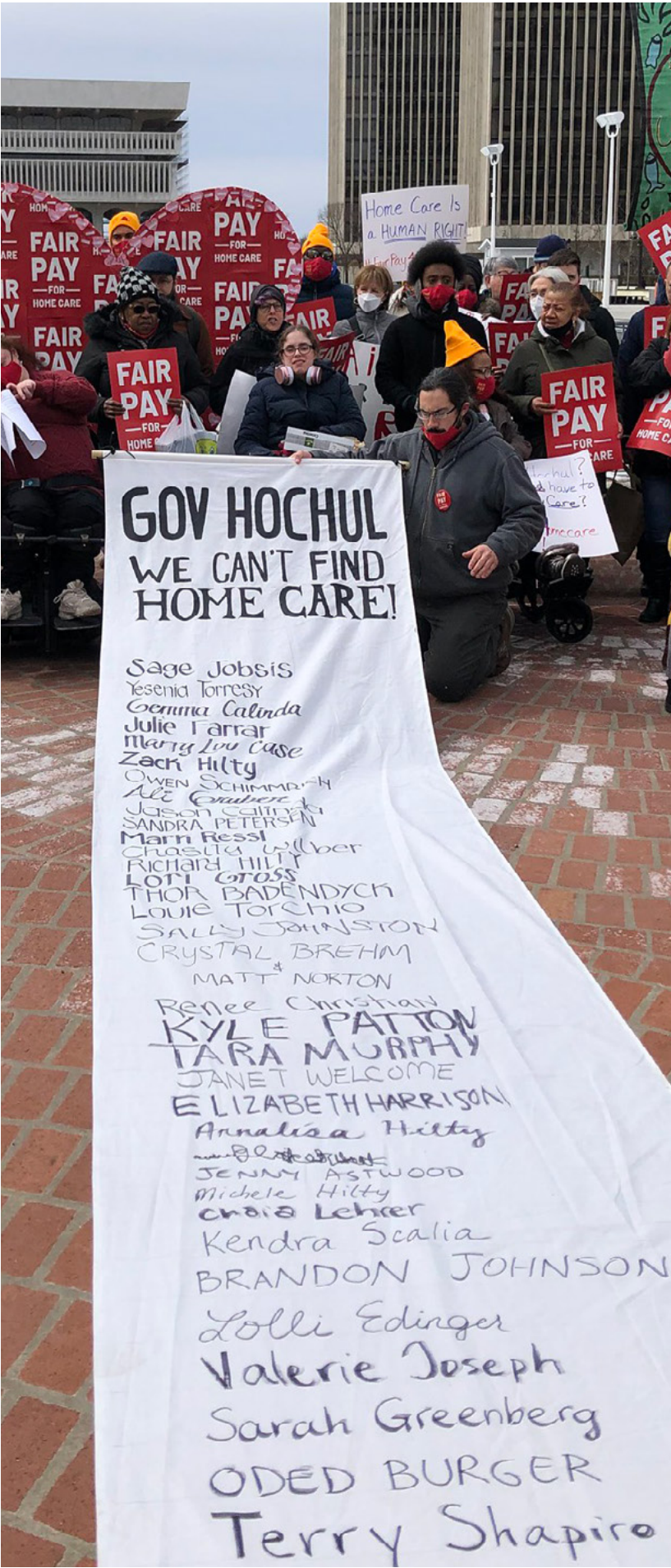
- Setting and approving final organizational goals, and identifying where goals aren't being met
- Developing a budget, with input from staff, that aligns with organizational strategy
- Creating a sustainable work culture and developing/ revising all personnel policies as needed
- Managing the Deputy Director and the Political Director and working with both to oversee fundraising and organizing goals
- Managing the Director of Strategic Communications
- 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.

Illustration Credits:

How We Organize (p.12)
by Emily Simons

Phases of Organizing (p. 12)
by Ezra Seligsohn

JFREJ Organizational Schematic (p. 19)
by Ezra Seligsohn



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 statements, web content, social media, and email 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.

The Jewish Vote Steering Committee decides which races to consider for endorsements, invites candidates for selected races to fill out a questionnaire and join JFREJ members for a candidate forum, and submits a recommendation to the Endorsement Team.

The Jewish Vote Endorsement Team is the representative decision-making body for all candidate endorsements. We create a new endorsement team for each electoral cycle, with representatives nominated by each organizational caucus or team. After wider membership has conducted interviews and voted in straw polls, the Endorsement Team makes the final decision on our slate of endorsed candidates. All endorsements require a supermajority (6 out of 11) to be approved.

Moving Towards Even More Participatory Governance

Individual teams and committees make day-to-day 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. In the last few years, JFREJ has experimented with new models for participatory decision-making and through our endorsement process, taken big steps towards making our governance more democratic. Over the next year, we will explore a plan to create a new decision-making body, responsible for deciding how we spend our annual budget for cultural events. Long term, we are also 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.
- A nominated organization-wide decision-making body, along with the role networks outlined above, will be an important step towards clarity and transparency for our membership.
- The JFREJ decision-making body will provide a necessary structure to make big political choices that affect the membership as a whole, especially as they relate to candidate endorsements. If you've been part of The Jewish Vote's member-led endorsement 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:

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:

- For cultural and ritual organizing: are we creating a 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 generate 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? Would our input have a significant impact?
- In general: What would we not be able to do if we did this?

Key considerations when deciding which races to endorse in (for The Jewish Vote’s full endorsement criteria, go to jewishvote.org/endorsement):

- Do we have a base in the district?
- Are allied organizations and movements also considering or actively organizing as part of this race?
- Are there candidates in the race our members are excited to learn more about?
- Is there a key Jewish role that needs to be played in the race?
- Does endorsing in this race set us up for our strategy in 2023, 2024, and beyond?

Money at JFREJ

Supporters can choose where to make their gift — whether to JFREJ Community (501c3) or JFREJ Action (501c4). *We invite and encourage 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.

Where does JFREJ’s money come from?

JFREJ solicits and accepts gifts that are consistent with our core principles and that support our programs. JFREJ is an organization committed to an equitable and antiracist fundraising model while living in an inequitable world. We know that there are many tensions within this work and we strive to be as transparent as possible with members and funders about those tensions. We accept donations from individuals (membership dues and larger individual gifts) and foundations. Giving a gift of any size to JFREJ does not give a donor influence over JFREJ’s organizing, communications, or advocacy strategy, outside of the normal channels for members to engage with these strategies (role networks, neighborhood groups, campaign teams, etc). The Board of Directors has the right to refuse contributions that do not reflect the core principles of JFREJ or support the long-range financial viability of the organization. We also do not accept gifts that are overly restrictive or through which a donor is trying to influence the direction of our work.

Compensation at JFREJ

JFREJ is committed to building a broad, membership-based organization, where the vast majority of the day-to-day work of building power happens through the unpaid yet invaluable contributions of our thousands of members taking on a variety of roles and developing their leadership over time, dedicated to building a vibrant Jewish left in partnership with wider movements for justice.

And, our members often ask “In what context and under what conditions might a member of JFREJ be compensated financially as part of their participation in building JFREJ?” The policy was developed to answer that question.

We are currently piloting the policy and will revisit it once we’ve had a chance to try some of the new practices and protocols that we’re rolling out. If you have feedback or questions, please don’t hesitate to contact audrey@jfrej.org with “Compensation Policy: Feedback / Questions” in the subject line.

You can download and read the full policy, which includes our sliding scale, [here](#). You can fill out the payment questionnaire [here](#).



JFREJ Staff

Ben Bienstock, Development & Database Associate

Sophie Ellman-Golan, Director of Strategic Communications

Leo Ferguson, Director of Strategic Projects

Sara Goldberg, Development Manager

Rachel Jensen, Administrative Assistant

Jake Levin, Neighborhood Groups Organizer

Rachel McCullough, Political Director

Tanya Roopnarine, Finance & Operations Manager

Lexi Sasanow, Field Organizer

Audrey Sasson, Executive Director

Shifra Sered, Deputy Director

Shoshana Vogel, Leadership Development Organizer

Zahara Zahav, Director of Organizing

JFREJ Action Board of Directors

Amparo Abel-Bey	Alexis Ortiz
Phyllis Arnold	cori schmanke parrish
Carlyn Cowen	Margot Seigle
Paula Galowitz	Andrea Shapiro
Estee Konor	Rafael Shimunov
Rabbi Ellen Lippmann	Judith Trachtenberg
Megan Pamela Ruth Madison	Simone Zimmerman

JFREJ
Community
Board of
Directors

Amanda Altman

Megan Madison
[ex-officio]

Rachel Laforest

Autumn Leonard

Alisa Solomon

The Jewish
Vote Steering
Committee

Carlyn Cowen

Sasha Kesler

Zack Lerner

Elana Levin

Rebecca Lynch

Rafael Noboa y Rivera

Maia Rosenberg

Mik Moore

Katie Schaffer

Katie Unger

Elizabeth Wilson



Photo by Gili Getz



Photo by Stephanie Guedalia & Rome Davis



Photo by Erik McGregor



WWW.JFREJ.ORG
INFO@JFREJ.ORG
@JFREJNYC
@THEJEWISHVOTE

