

CELEBRATE

25 YEARS OF

JEWISH YOUTH FOR COMMUNITY ACTION

A JOYFUL LOOK AT JYCA'S PAST WORK AND FUTURE PLANS!



LOOKING BACK, LOOKING AHEAD

A LETTER FROM THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR & YOUTH BOARD CHAIR

Dear beloved community,

As JYCA celebrates 25 years of cultivating the leadership of young progressive Jews, we invite you to pause with us to look back at our history. An essential part of youth empowerment is honoring the people and work that came before us, making it possible for us to be where we are today.

You'll notice rivers running throughout this book. We draw inspiration from the first section of the Torah in which the four headwaters of Eden are described. We chose rivers to honor the source of our magic and its continuity. In 1995, the founders envisioned a Jewish youth community grounded in deep care, with adults committed to youth empowerment and joy. They connected Jewishness to justice, and built a youth space where justice is Jewish. The values of JYCA's founding youth and staff have been carried through the years

to guide the culture and work of our organization. Over the past 25 years, JYCA's river has changed course, sped up, gone through times of flood and times of drought. Through the twists and turns, the same magic our founders dreamt up continues to run throughout our organization.

We see JYCA's four headwaters as youth empowerment, socio-political education, Jewish ritual, and action. These aspects of our work are all imbued with the magic of radical inclusivity, deep compassion, democratic process and youthfulness. Just like the four headwaters flow in different directions, JYCA's impact flows through the varied work and lives of our alumni, community partners, the staff who have shaped our organization and the families who have supported their kids and the community.

Thank you to all who've kept JYCA's river flowing. We are so proud of the community we've created, the impact we've had on generations of Jewish youth, the campaigns we've supported, and the wins we've achieved over the last quarter of a century. Thank you for celebrating 25 years of JYCA and envisioning where our river will take us in the next 25 years.

*Rachel Gottfried, Executive Director
Liz Orlin, Adult Board Chair
Sabine Sulka, Youth Board Chair*

BEING HERE FOR JEWISH YOUTH, FROM THE BEGINNING

A LETTER FROM JYCA'S FOUNDER

Dear JYCA Community,

When I was in high school, I was in despair about the state of the world. I desperately wanted to help make meaningful change, but I didn't know how. I was also ashamed of my Jewishness, trying to hide my identity in the public high school that I attended, which was not a tolerant or welcoming place for those who deviated in any way from the dominant culture.

When I started to dream up JYCA, inspired by my work with Aurora Levins Morales and Yonah Camacho Diamond, my goal was to create the program I wish I had in high school. I wanted a place where each unique individual was supported to be themselves, in all of their intersectional identities and quirky glory...a group that was built on radical inclusivity and loving community. I wanted a place where youth could work together to make meaningful change,

and be trained and supported with the tools to do so. And I wanted a place where young Jews could feel proud about who they were, and to learn about all the ways that Judaism and social justice intersect.

From the beginning, youth have been at the center of creating and leading JYCA. Twenty-five years later, JYCA remains a youth-led program dedicated to the same founding principles. Jewish youth live at the center of JYCA and so the organization is vibrant, alive, powerful and innovative.

JYCA was founded out of the need for young progressive Jews to find their collective voice of resistance, cultivate their passion and commitment to social justice, and make concrete changes in their communities as well as in the world. Whatever age you are, and whatever your relationship to JYCA, I want to personally thank you for helping

to sustain and grow JYCA into the amazing program it is today. Together, we can keep JYCA strong and healthy for another 25!



*Pella Schafer Weisman,
JYCA Founder*

At JYCA, youth who have never engaged with Judaism before come together with children of Rabbis to forge a Jewish community defined by love, celebration, and justice. We root our work in the proud Jewish traditions of pursuing justice and we incorporate multiethnic Jewish culture, histories, ritual, and spirituality into our program and our activism.





25 YEARS OF

JEWISH LEARNING

"Coming from a multi-faith and multiracial family that mixes different traditions, always with a thread of social justice, JYCA's [idea of] tzedek felt like a lens for practicing Judaism and building community that was right for me."

Lily Friedman
JYCA Alum

"It also makes Judaism more relevant to me when we tie it into what's happening in the world...it ties it into all these relevant issues."

25 YEARS OF SHOWING UP

For 25 years, we have been learning by doing. JYCA has been involved in 60+ campaigns and trained hundreds of youth on key organizing skills. Whether fighting against criminalization, showing solidarity with other communities impacted by discrimination, or co-organizing climate work, our belief that Jews must be connected with other communities working for change has remained constant. And we've learned a lot about youth organizing along the way. Our approach to leadership development, campaigns and political organizing continues to evolve as we think more about the specific role of Jewish youth in our movements.



JYCA Youth held internships at nonprofits addressing environmentalism, gender justice, immigrant rights, homelessness and racial & economic justice

Supported striking hotel workers in Berkeley, CA to achieve fair wages



Active in the No on Prop 21 youth movement to stop the criminalization of young people



2000



Developed "Check Other" zine and actively protested the war in Iraq, while supporting the Muslim community in the wake of 9/11 repression

1995

2005

Youth participated in the Anti-Fracking Climate Justice March



2010



Organized with a coalition of youth on the No Coal in Oakland Campaign

2015



Offered a progressive Jewish voice in the CA Ethnic Studies campaign



JYCA youth organized several local mutual aid projects during shelter in place including:

- Cooking and distributing meals to homeless and disabled community members
- Connecting elders with volunteers to support them with shopping, rides, and prescriptions
- Supporting peers around increased isolation and mental health struggles as school closed
- Raising over \$10,000 to bail people out of detention and advocating for release of those incarcerated

2020



Convinced Jewish school board members to vote to remove police from Oakland schools successfully supporting a 10 year campaign

"To make George Floyd's memory for a blessing, we must take a stand for racial justice and listen to the community members who have been the most impacted by police violence and policing in schools."

-JYCA's letter to the Oakland school board president

JYCA NOW!

Whether meeting in parks, on zoom, or at protests at six in the morning, youth design our programs and actions in ways that work for them! Youth are empowered to make choices but not expected to be adults.

Early on we figured out that a close community where youth belong is key to enacting change on the personal, communal, or societal level. All of our work starts with creating a culture of radical inclusivity, identity development, and care. From this place of safety and belonging we provide the training and support youth need to be successful, equipping them with skills to listen, learn, organize and facilitate.

For much of our history we saw skills development and political education as the most important aspects of our work. However over the past 5 years youth have organized within JYCA! We know that political education and mobilizing

for other campaigns is not enough and we've been making changes. We've created affinity spaces to further our culture of belonging, added more analysis about antisemitism and piloted new ways to choose and lead campaigns.



campaigns supported
60+

political education workshops
300+

youth participants
450+

JYCA consists of three programs for youth aged 14-18 in the California Bay Area

JEWS AGAINST MARGINALIZATION (JAM)

JAM is JYCA's affinity space for youth who identify as People of Color, mixed-race, Sephardic or Mizrahi. Through JAM, participants connect with others who share their experiences, learn about intersectional identity formation, develop political power as JOCSM youth, lead on select JYCA campaigns, and host community-building events.

THE LEADERSHIP GROUP IN TRAINING (LGiT)

LGiT is JYCA's introductory, 6-month biweekly program. Youth in LGiT participate in a series of popular education workshops created and led by their peers to learn about Jewishness, social justice, power, and oppression.

THE ORGANIZING GROUP (OG)

OG is an intensive year-long program that supports youth to develop their leadership through our innovative committee structure. Youth choose what committee they want to be on based on what leadership skills they want to hone. Through committees, youth can grow their facilitation skills, participate as full voting members on our board of directors, practice organizing skills on our action committee, or learn how to hold JYCA's cultural work.

Through the current configuration, JYCA's held onto the original vision of the organization as a space for Jewish teens to learn about the world, practice leadership skills and build a radically inclusive community.



"I've always felt like I had to say something when there was injustice going on, but JYCA has helped me handle that better. It's taken me from discontent through anger, in tandem with a sense of community - those two together brought me to a much better [place with] politics and activism. I'm more comfortable in leadership roles now."

Lea
JYCA Alum



"Climate change is really important because as youth, as people, that's our future. We're seeing it now too, it's already happening ... Being in [JYCA's] Action Committee, is how we can make so much change, cause we're right in the middle of all the action. We're doing the organizing, we're talking to people directly,"

Satya Zamudio
Current Youth Leader



25 YEARS OF

COMMUNITY ACTION

“After 25 years, our alumni community ... are, for example, teachers, doctors, social workers, artists, organizers, and public health advocates. And alums are leaders in for example: Planned Parenthood, AFSME, SEIU, Bend the Arc, the Catalyst Project, Bernie’s campaign, The Mosaic Project, Greenfaith, Bay Area Women Against Rape, and the list goes on. The bottom line is that our little JYCA is a powerhouse incubator for social changemakers.”

Sara Shor
JYCA Alumni

WHERE ARE WE GOING NEXT?

We envision a world in which Jews mobilize towards justice from a place of joy, pride and connection instead of a place of fear. We envision movements for liberation filled with the songs, voices, leadership and allyship of Jewish youth. We envision a Jewish community that recognizes the importance of investing in youth leaders. We envision an intergenerational base ready to uplift and support the power of Jewish youth. We envision a multiracial, multiethnic, community of Jewish youth ready to organize with brilliant vision and bold demands.

To move toward our vision we're developing a new purpose statement, strategy, and plan for how we'll strengthen our work while holding on to our magic. We've engaged youth, alumni, community partners and former staff in a stakeholder process to create guiding priorities for the future of our organization.

The message was resounding and clear: Youth, alumni, and partners want to see us do more community organizing and deeply center racial justice while we maintain the inclusive community, youth leadership, and heart-centered connections that our programs are known for.

90% of youth
think JYCA should be more involved in community organizing including campaigns and actions.

60% of Alumni and partners
agree!

"I hope JYCA is still a goofy, fun place to be, with great activism opportunities that makes it easier for youth to be involved in their communities."

"I think the organizing & community workshops will be strengthened significantly with more racial equity work"

"I remember coming away from the first JYCA workshop I attended feeling a renewed sense of faith in the world."

"[I like] the friendly and loving community with a great support system"

"I love the involvement of Judaism in our activism, and I specifically like when it results in actions."





JEWISH
YOUTH
FOR
CLIMATE
JUSTICE

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JEWISH YOUTH FOR CLIMATE ACTION
COMMUNITY ACTION

25 YEARS OF

YOUTH POWER

"JYCA teaches us strategies that many adults don't know, [strategies] that we'll carry with us and share with others to help make change."

Julian Korchin
Youth Leader in OG

CONTINUING JYCA'S IMPACT

WE WILL DEEPEN OUR ORGANIZING WORK

We want to leverage our unique power as Jewish youth on the issues where we can make a difference. To move from a model where youth mobilize as allies in adult campaigns to a model where JYCA youth fight for and win structural change as progressive Jewish youth, we need to shift our programming and our actions. We plan to do this by:

- Prioritizing campaigns and coalitions that systemically shift power
- Creating an organizing model that connects Jewish youth with other oppressed communities while holding a clear analysis of antisemitism and racial justice
- Shifting our curriculum to teach base-building skills in addition to the socio-political education which has been our focus

WE WILL CENTER RACIAL JUSTICE IN OUR ORGANIZATION AND OUR WORK

At JYCA we're committed to creating a community where youth see all of their intersecting identities, experiences and full selves represented. In order to do that, we commit to centering racial justice in all aspects of JYCA. Here are some of the ways we're doing this work:

- Articulating JYCA's vision of anti-racist, anti-oppressive culture through a 6-month collective process
- Revamping our organizational policies to center racial justice and equity
- Dedicating a full program model for Jews Against Marginalization (JAM), our program for Jewish youth of color, mixed-race, Sephardi and Mizrahi youth

WE WILL CULTIVATE JYCA'S MAGIC

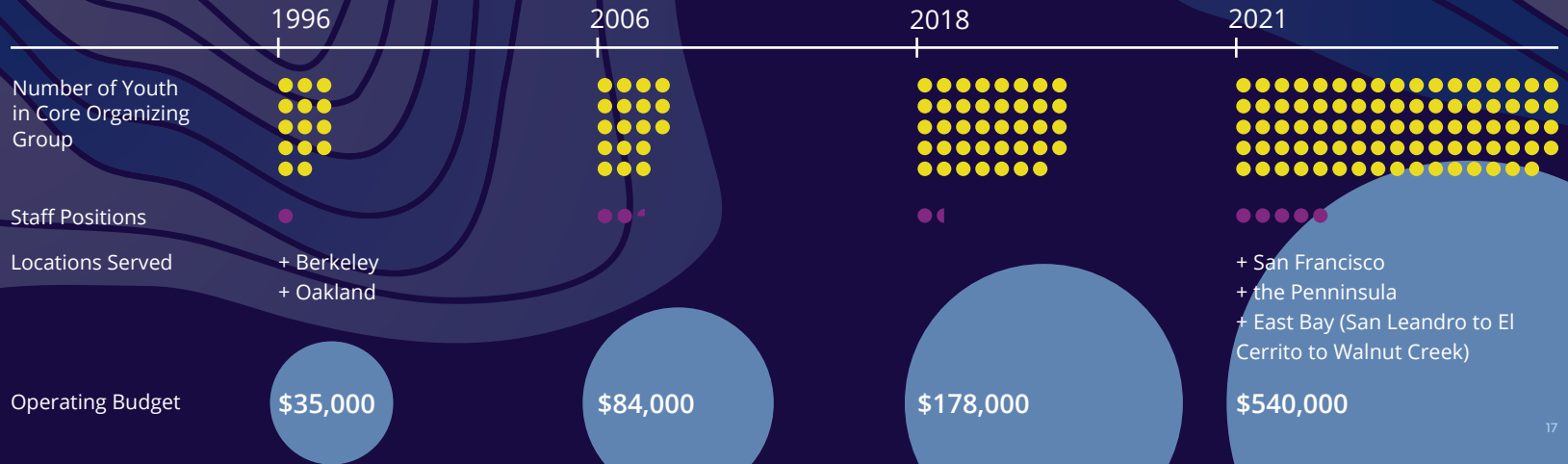
Youth keep coming back to our programs for the "JYCA magic"—the deep connections youth build with one another and the indescribable feeling of being part of a community where, as one youth put it, there is "*freedom to be ourselves.*" We will maintain this essential part of JYCA's work by:

- Training staff on mental health first aid in order to support our youth on retreats and throughout the year
- Providing more peer-to-peer counseling workshops for youth so youth have skills to support each other
- Empowering our culture committee to ensure that we center youth empowerment, radical inclusivity, and vulnerability in everything we do

JYCA has survived for 25 years on the love and labor of our community. At JYCA, we don't believe in growth for the sake of growth. Our growth is strategic, youth-led and necessary to serve our purpose and fulfill our vision. We've worked with youth and our entire community to define our own vision of success and we know sustainable financial growth must be included in our strategic plan.

JYCA is needed as much today as it was 25 years ago. As young people face down the crises of white supremacy, climate change, surging antisemitism, staggering wealth inequality, and other forms of oppression, we know that we need a multi-racial community space where Jewish youth can develop the skills and connections needed to build a more just world for all of us. To meet this mandate, we have begun to

make an ambitious plan and we need our whole community on board. With enough financial support, we can fully resource the community that JYCA youth are dreaming about.



LOOKING TO OUR COMMUNITY FOR FINANCIAL SUPPORT

JYCA is needed as much today as it was 25 years ago. As young people face down the crises of white supremacy, climate change, surging antisemitism, staggering wealth inequality, and other forms of oppression, we know that we need a multi-racial community space where Jewish youth can develop the skills and connections needed to build a more just world for all of us. To meet this mandate, we have begun to make an ambitious plan and we need our whole community on board. With enough financial support we can fully-resource the community that JYCA youth are dreaming about.

With \$36,000 we can secure accessible, centrally-located youth meeting and office spaces

We know youth don't all have the same ability to get around the Bay Area. Youth in the Peninsula have shared transportation and traffic as one of the biggest barriers to participation.

"JYCA having space by BART would mean increased access to programs for all JYCA's. It would help us become more connected to one another."

~ Bella Nathan, JYCA Youth Leader in OG

With \$54,000 we can continue to offer JAM as a free program for up to 25 JOCSM youth

Youth in JAM have shared that keeping the program free allows them to explore Jewish community in new ways.

"JAM has allowed me to find a community and family that I will be grateful for forever- It empowered me to reclaim space in Judaism that I've felt disconnected from for so long."

~ Is Perlman, Youth Leader in JAM

With \$108,000 we can seed a new staff position and hire JYCA's first ever Director of Organizing

This position will be dedicated to building out our community organizing model and making sure JYCA youth can effectively mobilize our base of over a thousand youth and allies.

"One of the most important things I've learned in my time at jyca has been how to organize people and build community and then help that community mobilize for change."

~Maize Cline, Youth Leader in OG

A group of young people, mostly teenagers, are gathered in a grassy field at sunset. They are standing in a circle, with their hands raised towards the center, suggesting a group activity or a moment of unity. The background shows a hazy landscape with trees and hills under a bright, low sun. The overall mood is warm and hopeful.

With **\$360,000** we can seed a grassroots funding base that helps us align our funding with our political values

"In recent years, I have often felt paralyzed by how many injustices I see around me, and it is difficult to feel like I have any power to make a difference. JYCA has also taught me about vulnerability, support, and genuine human connection in a way I have never seen anywhere else. There is an almost magical affect that JYCA seems to have on people that allows us to begin to let go of the masks and defense mechanisms."

~ Avery Krantz-Fire, JYCA alumni

Support JYCA's 25 Anniversary fundraising campaign by making a donation at:

bit.ly/JYCA25donate



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