Seven Years of Justice

JCUA’s victories, accomplishments, and milestones from 2014-2021

March 2014: JCUA establishes a new organizational model based in grassroots community organizing

December 2014: We join the campaign to create a Level 1 Trauma Center at the University of Chicago. In December 2015, we are victorious when the university agrees to open the center

January 2015: JCUA launches JCore, an organizing and decision-making space for our most engaged members

January 2016: We join the coalition to pass the Illinois Domestic Workers Bill of Rights. In August 2016, we are victorious when Gov. Rauner signs the legislation

March 2015: JCUA’s new membership program reaches 500 members!

April 2016: JCUA launches Congregation Partnership Network, organizing Chicagoland congregations to take action on local issues

July 2016: Following Laquan McDonald’s murder, we create JCUA’s Police Accountability Committee and begin working with the Grassroots Alliance for Police Accountability (GAPA) coalition

July 2016: We hold our first Organizing 101 training. We soon begin to offer Organizing 201, Racial Justice, and Intersections of Antisemitism & White Supremacy training programs for members and partners

September 2016: JCUA reaches 1,000 members!

November 2016: Following the 2016 presidential election, JCUA creates Do Not Stand Idly By as a rapid response group. JCUA’s standing Immigration Justice committee forms in Fall 2017

March 2017: We host “Out From the Narrows” event at KAM Isaiah Israel to build Jewish community support for police accountability, focusing on GAPA and CPCa campaign to reform police contracts

July 2017: As part of the newly formed Campaign for a Welcoming Illinois coalition, JCUA joins campaign to pass the TRUST Act, which limits state and local law enforcement participation in immigration enforcement

September 2017: We welcome the inaugural cohort of JCUA’s College-Aged Organizing Fellowship

February 2018: JCUA members stage a Purim-themed action at the offices of Senators Durbin and Duckworth, calling on them to pass legislation to defend and protect DACA and TPS recipients

April 2018: JCUA members launch the Kol Or Jews of Color Caucus, a space for those who identify as Jews of Color to build community and organize for systemic social change. In June, Kol Or hosts its first Juneteenth Havadalah, connecting Shabbat to Juneteenth

May 2018: We join the campaign to Erase the Database and advocate for the end of the Chicago Police Department’s use of the racist surveillance and tracking system
June 2018: JCUA’s Community Ventures Program (CVP) reaches a milestone of creating or preserving more than 4,000 affordable housing units across Chicago.

November 2018: We begin a civic engagement campaign for 2019 municipal elections, creating a voter guide for 11 aldermanic races and recruiting members to participate in two mayoral forums.

April 2019: JCUA reaches 1,500 members!

September 2019: We welcome the first cohort of JCUA’s redesigned Or Tzedek Teen Internship, which explores community organizing through a Jewish lens.

October 2019: JCUA members begin first cohort of the White Racial Justice Working Group, a self-organized affinity space to combat white supremacy.

October 2019: JCUA members vote to join the Vote Yes For Fair Tax campaign to create a progressive income tax in Illinois. We engage more than 130 JCUA members and collect 4,700 positive voter IDs over the next year.

April 2020: In response to the COVID-19 pandemic, we join the Right To Recovery coalition, which works to ensure an equitable government response and critical resources for local communities.

June 2020: Kol Or Jews of Color Caucus hosts the Black Jews for Black Lives action in Union Park following the murder of George Floyd.

August 2020: JCUA youth leaders create the Youth Organizing Caucus and in February 2021, create the Queer Youth Caucus.

Fall 2020: JCUA works with the Count Every Vote coalition and the Illinois Election Defense Action Council to up hold democracy and combat white supremacy during the 2020 presidential election.

November 2020: The CVP zero-interest loan fund grows to nearly $2 million.

January 2021: City Council passes amendments to the Welcoming City Ordinance—a culminating victory after a six-year campaign, as a member of the Chicago Immigration Working Group.

February 2021: JCUA is invited and members vote to join Grassroots Collaborative, a city-wide labor and community coalition.

February 2021: We become a founding member of the Empowering Communities for Public Safety (ECPS) coalition, bringing together organizations from GAPA and CPAC coalitions for police accountability.

March 2021: Following a campaign selection process, JCUA members vote to create a third standing committee on Housing & Economic Justice that will join the Bring Chicago Home campaign.

June 2021: We celebrate the life of JCUA’s founder Rabbi Robert J. Marx, who passes away during Passover at the age of 93.

July 2021: Chicago City Council passes the ECPS ordinance, which creates the strongest system of civilian oversight of police in the United States.

October 2021: CVP reaches a milestone of awarding $7 million in zero-interest loans for affordable housing and economic development.

At the end of 2021, JCUA is stronger than ever, with more than 2,000 members, 16 Congregation Partners, more than 5,000 points of engagement each year, and more than 900 leaders taking action each year.

Let’s continue to grow together.