

POLICY PLATFORM

CIVIL RIGHTS

PROGRESSIVE VALUE

We champion civil rights for all, rooted in the belief that everyone is created equal, by supporting legal and social equality, expanding opportunities, and standing against discrimination and bigotry.

ROOTED IN JUDAISM

Many Jewish teachings stem from the biblical statement that we are all created in G-d's image, including directions in every era of Jewish teachings that we are all equal. Judaism speaks at length about the treatment of strangers, a term that, in Jewish teachings, often means someone different from us. And we go further, demanding that we should not just accept the other but should champion those in need, including those who have less power. As Jews, must uplift others.

American Jews have a long history of work in civil rights spaces. In partnership with Black Americans, American Jews helped establish historic civil rights organizations including the NAACP, the Leadership Conference on Civil and Human Rights, the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee (SNCC) and the Southern Christian Leadership Conference (SCLC). During the Civil Rights movement in the 1960s, almost 30% of the white Freedom Riders were white-presenting Jews, and Jewish spiritual and business leaders supported civil rights work through their activism, their legal skills and their financial support. But there was a long history of coordination and support between Black and Jewish leaders preceding the Civil Rights movement as well, and there are many examples since.

Jews first came to the United States fleeing the Inquisition as it spread to South America. The tiny Jewish community that was established in Rhode Island received a letter from President George Washington telling them "...for, happily, the Government of the United States, which gives to bigotry no sanction, to persecution no assistance, requires only that they who live under its protection should demean themselves as good citizens..." We were promised a land which does not hold space for bigotry and persecution. And it is our responsibility to help uphold that promise for all Americans. Jewish values, and the promise of an America that has been the safest haven for the Jewish people in history outside of Israel, are what drive our commitment to equality and opportunity for all.

REFLECTED IN ZIONISM

Civil rights work is about the fight for legal and social equality, equitable opportunities, and protections against unfair treatment. Zionism is rooted in the recognition that without a place where Jews can self-govern and seek self-determination, we will never have those protections. Political Zionism demands a space, now, to have those freedoms, in a country by and for the Jewish people—but not inhabited exclusively by Jewish people. Identity Zionism recognizes its inevitable necessity.

As Zionists we are in the fight for our own freedom, and as Jews we are taught that we should create for others those same conditions. In fact, Theodor Herzl, the father of the modern political Zionist movement, was known for declaring: "There is still one other question arising out of the disaster of nations which remains unsolved to this day, and whose profound tragedy, only a Jew can comprehend. This is the African question. Just call to mind all those terrible episodes of the slave trade, of human beings who, merely because they were black, were stolen like cattle, taken prisoner, captured and sold. Their children grew up in strange lands, the objects of contempt and hostility because their complexions were different. I am not ashamed to say, though I may expose myself to ridicule for saying so, that once I have witnessed the redemption of the Jews, my people, I wish also to assist in the redemption of the Africans."

As progressive Americans who are also Zionists we will always lift up our neighbors' calls for civil rights.

POSITION STATEMENTS

- **We will continue to join civil rights movements to advance the rights of Black Americans and all people in the United States.**
- We will support any religious, racial, or ethnic group whose rights are being attacked simply because of these immutable identities.
- **We support efforts to expand voting rights and re-enfranchise people who have had their voting rights stripped from them.**
- We support laws which expand equity and equality to all people.
- **We support financial investments in equity which begin to address years of inequality.**
- We support programs and policies that advance opportunity, including affirmative action; and we support well-crafted diversity, equity and inclusion programming, which is fundamentally about creating expanded access, opportunity, and resources for more individuals from different backgrounds and lived experiences, including those from historically marginalized communities.
- **We support our allies with statements and actions, and we oppose binary identity definitions that don't allow people to express all the facets of their identities. We follow our partners' lead on what actions their communities need, and we are always working to expand our capacity so that we can back up our statements with actions whenever possible.**