

ACLU

District
of Columbia



ACLU-D.C. STRATEGIC FRAMEWORK 2023



OUR VISION

We envision a just and free D.C. where all people, especially historically oppressed communities, live without systemic governmental oppression and can exercise their power to protect and expand civil rights, civil liberties, and human dignity.

OUR MISSION

The ACLU of D.C. works with District residents and supporters of our vision to protect and advance civil liberties and civil rights by using the tools of public education, political advocacy, organizing, and litigation.



OUR POLITICAL AND HISTORICAL CONTEXT FOR ADVOCATING IN D.C.

The history of D.C. is deeply intertwined with anti-Black racism, from its origins as a hub for the slave trade to its nickname of “Chocolate City,” used as recently as the early 21st century.

Black people have played central role in building this country – including much of the nation’s early infrastructure and D.C.’s federal buildings –and have been the economic backbone of the nation. Yet, they have been subject to discrimination, exploitation, and subjugation. Even today, Black residents make up a significant portion of those targeted by policing and oppressed through other systemic practices. Understanding and acknowledging this history is essential to building a just and free D.C. for everyone. This task requires centering Blackness, Black history, Black culture, Black experiences, and Black D.C. residents in our work toward liberation for all.



OUR COMMUNITY

We prioritize those who have faced systemic oppression due to their race, color, gender, sex, socioeconomic status, immigration status, disability, age, national origin, sexual orientation, marital status, personal appearance, gender identity or expression, incarceration status, or religion. We align ourselves with individuals, organizations, and movements that are committed to our vision and that want to build collective political power.

OUR ASSUMPTIONS

We know every step of progress requires investment in the communities we work with, knowledge of the interconnectedness of our issues, and anticipation of backlash along the way.

We understand that overhauling policies and systems that deprive people of their civil liberties and civil rights requires a sustained and long-term commitment, including investment in incremental and fundamental changes that pave the way for lasting progress.

We know that collective power is built in collaboration with our communities and recognize that there are instances when we should work separately but towards a shared goal.

We understand that building relationships and coalitions, public education, and community outreach require a coordinated and multi-pronged approach to integrated advocacy.

We believe in providing information and digestible analysis so that people can advocate for themselves or spur collective public action.

We know our achievements are not just our own. We acknowledge community contributions and celebrate together.

We know that doing our work through an anti-racist lens is rooted in dismantling white supremacy and anti-Blackness.



OUR VALUES & COMMITMENTS

Note: We recognize that these are not listed in order of importance and will not be equally present in every decision or choice point.

Accountability

We uphold the highest standards, following through on our commitments as a staff and an organization.

Innovation

We incorporate new approaches to solve old problems, thinking beyond what has already been tried.

Anti-racism

We work through a racial justice lens while combating anti-Blackness and white supremacy internally and within the broader District.

Equity & Inclusion

We create and sustain an equitable and inclusive culture where everyone feels valued and respected for who they are.

Collaboration

We are stronger together. We maintain strong teams and coalitions, coordinating and leveraging energy and resources to move toward our vision.

Humility

We recognize our limitations and respect the contributions, experiences, approaches, and expertise of others.

Liberty

We believe individual agency and freedom from systemic governmental oppression are fundamental human rights, and preserving these rights for everyone in the District guides our work.

Centering and Building Strong Relationships with Impacted Groups

We build long-lasting relationships with individuals, communities, and organizations that are directly impacted by the denial of civil liberties and civil rights. These relationships are based on mutual respect, allowing us to identify and pursue shared goals. We prioritize the meaningful involvement and input of those most affected as we decide on goals, strategies, and coalition-building efforts to advance our vision.





OUR CORE STRATEGIES

Data and Analysis: We equip residents with accurate legal information and political analysis so they can confidently exercise their rights and engage in advocacy.

Rooting in Community Healing and Joy: We make decisions and set goals that align with the joyous outcomes our vision will achieve rather than the fear of what could happen. Through innovative approaches, we aim to heal and minimize the harm caused by traumatic inequitable systems and create connections and community among D.C. residents who support our vision. In this way, we aim to foster sustained political participation and position ACLU-D.C. as our community's political home.

Our Membership: We build a politically educated and deeply engaged membership that consistently mobilizes around our advocacy efforts to achieve our goals. We aim to harness our collective power to overhaul inequitable systems and create a free and just D.C.

Law and Policy Change: We advocate for laws and policies that support justice and equity, especially for historically oppressed communities. Our Internal Culture: We strive to practice the values of the world we want to live in.

Integrated Advocacy: We believe in the equal power of our departments and provide individualized attention and resources to maximize the impact of community organizing, policy analysis, lobbying, litigation, public education, and media outreach so that we may collaboratively achieve our organization's vision.

Reputation and Expertise: We utilize our experiences, our accomplishments, and the lived and taught experiences of our communities—especially that of those who have been denied civil liberties and civil rights—to develop expertise for lasting impact on priority issues.

OUR IMPACT ON D.C.

We prioritize issues based on where our expertise can have the biggest wins with lasting change, so that we may overhaul inequitable systems.

We inspire widespread political change and cultural shifts that reinforce such political change.

We achieve outcomes that produce concrete changes in the lives of community members by enabling them to exercise their rights and by ameliorating and eventually ending the oppressive conditions and practices they face.

We push for an equal and equitable system of justice.

We advocate for a full and fair democracy for residents of D.C., which includes D.C. statehood.

We are a leading advocate for civil liberties and civil rights in the District.

We aim to eliminate policies and practices that disproportionately harm historically oppressed communities, particularly those experiencing the impacts of racism and discrimination.

We provide accessible and trustworthy legal and political expertise on civil liberties and civil rights issues within the District.





WHAT OUR RESULTS WILL BE

- ✓ Our communities will be educated and engaged in ACLU-D.C.'s efforts.
- ✓ Our departments will align around a shared vision for achieving ACLU-D.C.'s goals.
- ✓ Our membership will play a crucial role in accomplishing ACLU-D.C.'s objectives.
- ✓ Our established political power and influence will move D.C. toward justice and equity.
- ✓ Our communities will engage in sustainable and meaningful ways, understanding the interconnectedness of the political and historical landscape.
- ✓ Our communities will trust ACLU-D.C.'s short-term and long-term goals.
- ✓ Our work will build stronger relationships with impacted community members.
- ✓ Our endeavor will support D.C. residents in achieving self-determination.
- ✓ Our undertaking will bring about systemic change through litigation, lobbying, and organizing, and expanding and protecting civil liberties and civil rights.



STRATEGIC PRIORITIES



D.C. STATEHOOD



FIRST AMENDMENT



FREEDOM FROM DISCRIMINATION



CRIMINAL JUSTICE REFORM



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