

ACLU of Pennsylvania

STRATEGIC FRAMEWORK

2021-2024



Photo: Ben Bowens



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I.

MISSION AND IDENTITY STATEMENT

The American Civil Liberties Union of Pennsylvania is a nonprofit, nonpartisan, membership organization that serves as an enduring guardian of justice, fairness, and freedom, working to protect civil liberties and advance equity for all.

ACLU-PA defends and promotes the fundamental principles and values protected by the constitutions of the United States and of the commonwealth of Pennsylvania, as well as by national, state and local civil rights laws. For more than 100 years, the ACLU has sought in particular to protect and expand the freedoms of expression, belief and association; voting rights; the separation of church and state; the right to privacy, including reproductive freedom; due process of law, including the rights of the accused

and of immigrants; limitations on the power of police; and the right to equal protection for all, including marginalized and historically disadvantaged individuals and groups. In advancing these rights, ACLU-PA strives always to acknowledge and remedy the pervasive and persistent harms of systemic racism.

Integrating litigation, legislative and policy advocacy, organizing, and communications, ACLU-PA's staff and volunteers work both independently and in coalition with those most affected by the issues we address to ensure that threats to liberty and the civil rights of all persons in Pennsylvania are met with stark resistance as we progress toward a more genuine multiracial, multicultural democracy.

II.

VISION STATEMENT

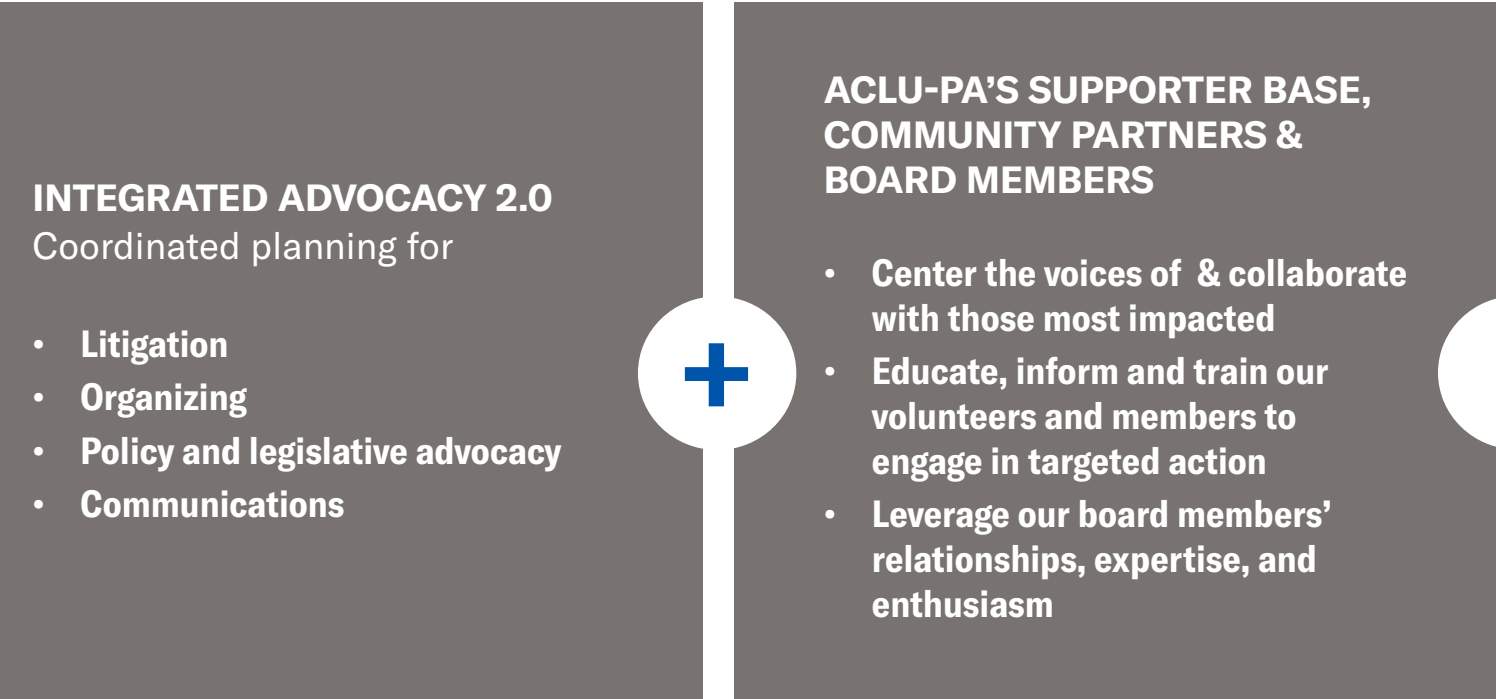
We are working for a future where individuals and communities can thrive in the security of knowing that, regardless of who they are or what they believe, their civil liberties and civil rights are ensured, and that freedom, equality, equity, and justice are guaranteed for all.



THEORY OF CHANGE

Our activities are designed to lead to the change we seek to make in Pennsylvania. The theory of change diagram below depicts how closely coordinated integrated advocacy,

working with the organization’s networks of relationships, leads to the powerful impact of our work in many different contexts.



IF the ACLU-PA closely coordinates planning for litigation, organizing, policy and legislative advocacy, and communications;

AND works with our community partners to center the voices of and collaborate with those most directly impacted by the issues; informs, educates, and trains our volunteers and members to engage in targeted action; and leverages our board members' relationships, expertise, and enthusiasm;

THEN we influence policy change at the local and state levels; reframe traditional narratives about social justice to facilitate the empowerment of impacted communities; educate and engage Pennsylvanians on civil rights and civil liberties issues in our state; pass and block legislation in furtherance of equity and justice, build power for impacted communities, and our identity as an integrated advocacy organization is strengthened.

THE CHANGE WE MAKE

- Local and state policy change
- Traditional narratives about social justice reframed to facilitate empowerment of impacted communities
- Legislation passed/blocked to further equity and justice
- Power and influence built for impacted communities
- Education and engagement of Pennsylvanians on civil rights and civil liberties issues in our state
- ACLU-PA identity strengthened as an integrated advocacy organization

VISION FOR CHANGE

We are working for a future where individuals and communities can thrive in the security of knowing that, regardless of who they are or what they believe, their civil liberties and civil rights are ensured, and that freedom, equality, equity, and justice are guaranteed for all.

IV.

VALUES STATEMENT

Recognizing the Human Dignity of All

We believe in the inherent value of all human beings and that everyone, regardless of who they are or what they believe, is worthy of respect and consideration. We recognize that people who have been directly harmed by injustice and inequity often have been dehumanized, and we seek to treat them with the equal respect they deserve.

Promoting Racial Justice

We recognize that the legacy of white supremacist hierarchy, rooted in a history of slavery and carried forward in myriad ways following abolition, is dehumanizing, inherently unjust, and undermines our democracy. Because we know that race remains the primary marker of wellness and success in American society, we work to root out racial injustice in the commonwealth in order to achieve our vision for all Pennsylvanians.

Embodying Equity

Fairness and justice can only be achieved if we recognize and overcome the unequal starting points that disadvantage and create barriers for so many. Our awareness of systemic and historic inequities helps us devise better strategies to address these imbalances, deepen our impact, and achieve equal outcomes for all, regardless of identity or experience.

Investing in Diversity

We can more effectively achieve our mission by drawing on the skills, ideas, and perspectives of a broad and diverse range of people whose different life experiences, social identities, and cultural backgrounds strengthen and sharpen our strategies and decision-making.

Fostering Inclusion and Belonging

We value the range of perspectives, identities, and life experiences each of our colleagues, including staff and volunteers, brings to the ACLU-PA. We are committed to incorporating them into our organizational practices and culture. This is fundamental to our ability to partner and build relationships across communities and to each of us doing our best work.

Building Power and Capacity

We believe in using our resources in the service of leveling the playing field for those whose access to power has been denied, diminished, or blocked.

Cultivating Partnership and Solidarity

Working for justice and freedom in collaboration with impacted communities increases our collective impact for all. Developing and strengthening these relationships are key to achieving our vision.

Practicing Integrity and Transparency

We believe in being true to our word and accountable for our actions. Our honesty and forthrightness build reliability and trust with each other and with our community partners and allies.

Embracing Sustainability

We strive to work in a way that serves our mission without compromising the quality of our work, depleting ourselves, or our resources. We balance rigor with staff well-being, the needs of our volunteers and community partners, and stewarding our resources for the future.





V.

AUTHENTIC BELONGING, INCLUSION, DIVERSITY, & EQUITY (ABIDE) STATEMENT

The ACLU of Pennsylvania affirmatively values the humanity and contributions of those we work with, internally and externally. We will take action to build and sustain an equitable, antiracist culture that centers the voices and experiences of marginalized and directly impacted people and communities, and an organizational environment where all people feel valued, trusted, and respected. We are committed to cultivating authentic belonging, inclusion, diversity, and equity (ABIDE) and having a workforce and board of directors that reflect the populations that we serve, including, but not limited to, people of color, formerly incarcerated people, people with disabilities, and LGBTQ&T+ people.

The oppressive systems at the foundation

of our nation, which have been in place for centuries, can only be undone with conscious effort, creative complementary tactics, and persistence. Dismantling these systems, in accordance with the democratic rights and humanitarian values that our nation also professes, requires people coming together across differences, led by the voices and experiences of those most impacted by them. The goal is to build a more equitable and just world, one where everyone – regardless of who they are – is supported to overcome historic barriers to their well-being and can exist as a valued member of their communities.

That is why the ACLU-PA is committed to embedding equity, diversity, inclusion, and belonging in our organization at every level.

Our attention, persistence, and ongoing recalibration in this effort will ensure significant progress.

OVER THE NEXT THREE YEARS, WE WILL:

- Practice ABIDE values when interacting with each other as colleagues, with our community partners and volunteers, and with other stakeholders;
- Center ABIDE considerations in our priorities and choices about the work we take on with a focus on

promoting greater equity and justice in Pennsylvania; and

- Annually identify priorities for equity and justice progress in our work, develop and implement interventions that address those priorities, and regularly monitor progress as we move toward clear outcomes.

Knowing that we will not always get it right, we will take accountability by pausing to notice when we make mistakes and then correcting course. We will acknowledge and celebrate progress and act in accordance with our values.

VI.

STRATEGIC GOALS 2021-2024

OUR LENS AND APPROACH

1. We will work in partnership with impacted communities and individuals.

We will work in active relationship with the people closest to the pain of the conditions we seek to address. The strategies we pursue toward justice and equity will be guided by their voices, and we will work in coalitions and movement ecosystems where their concerns are centered and where they play a leadership role in determining the priorities and direction for collective solutions. We will find our niche and leverage our resources to make meaningful contributions to the larger movement, not as outside saviors, but as true partners with something to contribute and something to learn.

2. We will apply a racial justice lens to all of our work.

We will deepen our understanding of the ways that racism, racial dynamics, and white supremacist ideology affect the range of civil liberties issues we tackle. We will work actively to counteract that influence in all that we do.

3. We will defend critical gains while reimagining how systems can be shaped anew.

We will remain vigilant about defending progress that has been made in securing rights and achieving justice, as we push forward on strategies that imagine a new future centered on even greater levels of equity, dignity, and justice.

4. We will work collaboratively and sustainably to maximize our impact.

From planning, through implementation, to evaluation, our legal and advocacy approaches will be deeply integrated to produce unified strategies that maximize organizational resources. This will allow us to work more effectively and efficiently to maintain the health and well-being of our staff.

OUR FOCUS

The ACLU-PA's work will be organized around the following three priority areas over the next three years. We expect that 70-80% of our time and resources will focus on these areas, while 20-30% can be reserved to respond to significant opportunities or threats to the civil rights and civil liberties of all Pennsylvanians, regardless of issue area.

1. Reducing the number of people in prisons, jails, immigrant detention centers, and under other federal, state and local governmental control,

including all forms of official supervision, such as parole, probation, and bail.

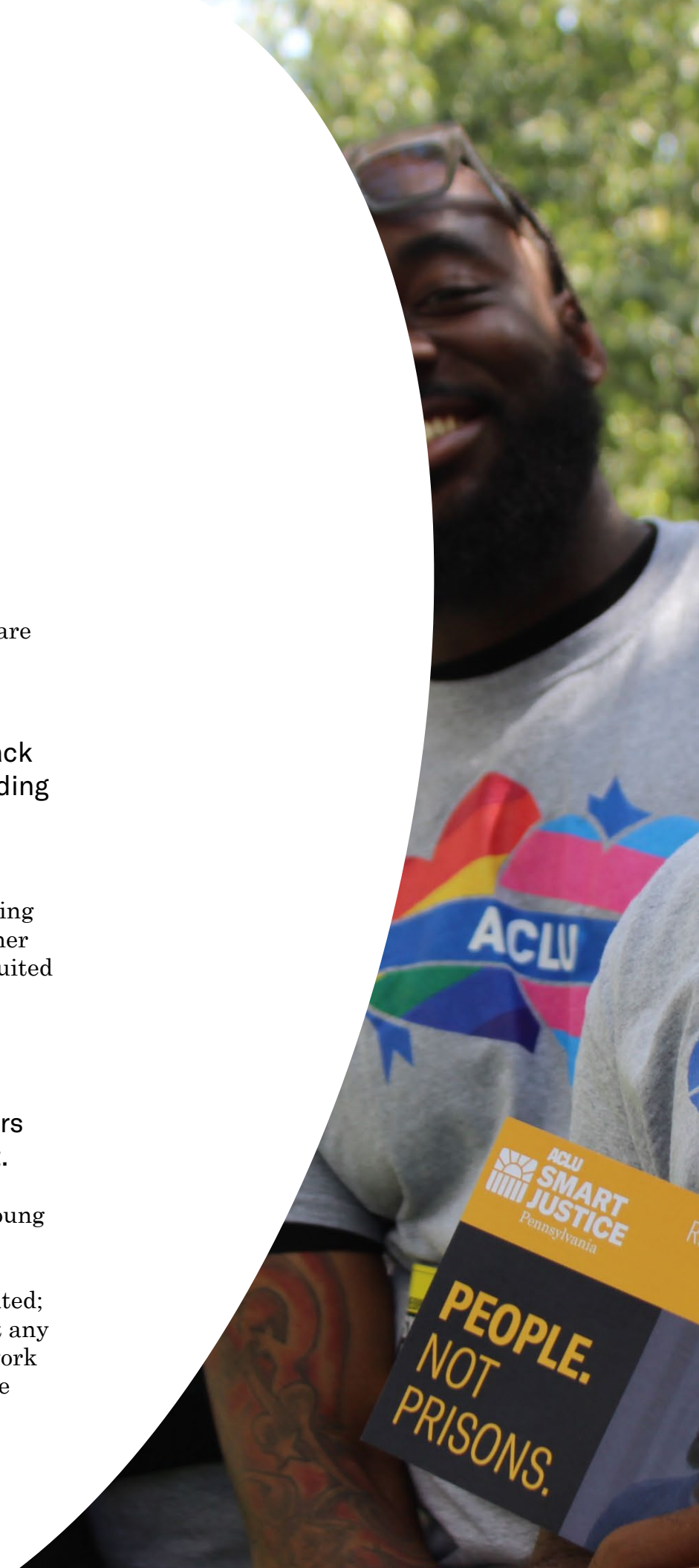
We will work to end mass incarceration in Pennsylvania by focusing on the mechanisms by which Black and brown people, transgender and non-binary people, and people who are immigrants are disproportionately incarcerated.

2. Minimizing police and other law enforcement interaction with Black and brown communities and holding police accountable for grievous harm.

We will work to remove traditional policing from schools and communities where other interventions and resources are better suited and more effective.

3. Protecting and expanding voting rights and access, eliminating barriers that disenfranchise voters and increasing civic engagement.

We will work to expand voting among young people; Black, Indigenous, and people of color; communities who need language access; those who are formerly incarcerated; and those with disabilities. We will fight any attempt to limit voting rights and will work year-round in our efforts – not just in the lead-up to elections.





VII.

VISION FOR MEMBERSHIP AND VOLUNTEERS

Millennials, Generation Z, and those younger comprise almost 51% of the population of the United States, and this trend is projected to continue tracking upwards. By 2045, people of color will be the majority population of the country. The ACLU-PA seeks to expand its base of volunteer and member support to better reflect the diversity of our Pennsylvania communities and build the next generation of civil liberties defenders.

We will work to create collaborative systems in all places in the organization where our staff and board members engage with our supporters so we can better plan, coordinate, and maintain meaningful volunteer and

member involvement and activism, including a long-term, ladder-of-engagement model.

We will make our work more accessible to our supporters via creative virtual events, which will become a regular avenue of participation to provide access for those who cannot or prefer not to participate in person.

In accordance with our values, we will set authentic belonging, inclusion, diversity, and equity (ABIDE) standards to welcome and engage a more diverse base of members and volunteers who can find meaning and purpose in the ACLU-PA's mission and know that their participation matters.

VIII.

VISION FOR ORGANIZATIONAL CULTURE

The ACLU-PA believes that in order to achieve its strategic goals, it must invest in building an inclusive, equitable, and open environment inside the organization. We endeavor to live out our shared values every day as we work together, both as employees and as volunteers. We will not always get it right, but we commit to a learning culture with clear mechanisms for feedback so that we can do better. We are deeply committed to building a multiracial and multicultural work community that supports

everyone who works for ACLU-PA to achieve their work goals, grow professionally, and maintain work-life balance; where leadership is responsive and open; where there is clear and transparent cross-departmental communication and decision-making; and where our teams take responsibility for making an impact in the world through shared goals and in relationship with community stakeholders.





IX.

ORGANIZATIONAL STRUCTURE

The ACLU-PA has offices in Harrisburg, Pittsburgh and Philadelphia, with staff in those cities and board members spread across the state.

Our staff has grown dramatically over the past few years. With this growth comes increasing complexity in our work. Over the next three years, we will implement structural changes at the staff level to:

- Improve planning, collaboration, and evaluation across all departments;
- Strengthen organizational management to adapt to the increased complexity of our work; and
- Create structural opportunities for the voices and advancement of staff of color.

To these ends, we will hire a **chief operating officer (COO)** to oversee implementation of the Strategic Framework’s key elements to operationalize them. The management team will become the **senior management team (SMT)** comprising the department directors, COO, and executive director. We will create **project teams (PTs)** that are cross-departmental to support strong collaboration and strategic execution on campaigns, cases, and projects. We will create a new **leadership team (LT)** consisting of managers who are below the level of department directors to help bridge knowledge and information gaps and to develop a community of practice to strengthen performance management. The LT will also create space for existing and future managers of color to more fully cultivate and express their leadership to help shape organizational practice and culture.

