

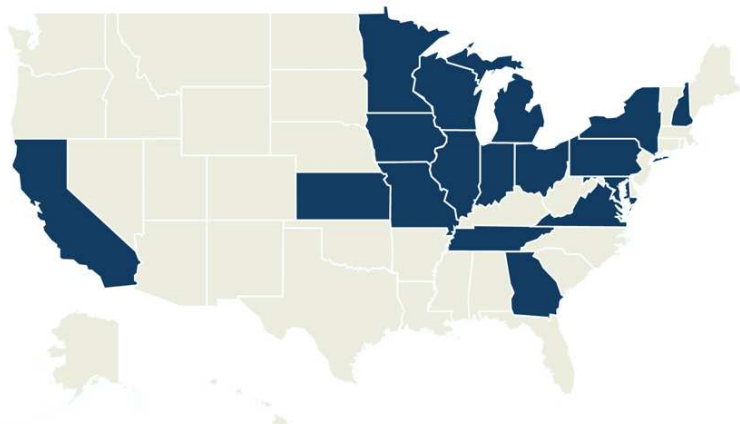


At-a-Glance

Our Long-Term Agenda

Over the last several decades, corporate and other interests have moved an agenda to consolidate power by changing the structures and institutions of decision-making, thus making it harder for regular people to have an impact on the decisions that impact their lives. In the case of structural racism, there has been a long history of excluding people of color from decision-making roles. In 2015, intent on transforming structural power in our communities, Gamaliel launched a long-term transformational agenda with a focus on reforms that shift who has the power to decide. The four pathways for structural reform include:

- Creating structural racial equity
- Building people's control of government
- Building community control of the economy
- Expanding the public sphere



A Powerful Organizing Network

The Gamaliel Network is a community organizing network with affiliates in 17 states and 44 regions. Gamaliel's organizing work draws on struggles for justice by people of faith spanning many nations, creeds, and cultures. Our work draws on the sacred writings of our multiple faith traditions—Christian teachings from the Bible, the Torah, Catholic social teaching—as well as the founding principles of American democracy, the U.S. civil rights movement, and many other sources. Above all, our work begins and ends in an expression of the personal faith and values of its members.



Our History

Gamaliel was founded in 1968 to support the Contract Buyers League, an organization that fought to protect African-American home-owners in Chicago against discrimination by banks and savings and loan institutions. In 1986, Gamaliel was restructured as a community organizing leadership institute that trained community leaders to build and maintain powerful organizations in low-income communities.

For the last decade, Gamaliel has transformed its internal structures and decision-making processes to ensure they are aligned with its values of diversity, inclusion, and democracy. To implement these changes, the Gamaliel Board of Directors hired long-time Gamaliel organizer Ana Garcia-Ashley as its second executive director—the first woman of color and immigrant to head a faith-based organizing network.

Our Work

Martin Luther King, Jr. described power as “the ability to achieve purpose . . . the strength required to bring about social, political, or economic changes.” Power is the centerpiece of Gamaliel’s work. In order for our work to bring about real change, our organizing must encompass three faces of power.

Building a sustainable base – Much of this is achieved by investing in the development of a diverse set of leaders through our National Leadership Training, a weeklong, residential training (held three times annually) that helps individuals clarify their world view and the source of their commitment to social justice and equips them with the basic skills of organizing and the ability to link into Gamaliel’s priority campaigns. Gamaliel also hosts a women’s leadership development training, N’tosake. Each year, we train more than 2000 leaders at the national and local levels. Some of these leaders have gone on to become elected leaders in their communities. We count a former governor, a sitting U.S. senator, and a former U.S. president as our alumni.



Running issue campaigns that secure immediate political gains – Gamaliel affiliates are multi-issue organizations working on campaigns that range from water equity to school discipline/restorative justice practices, from minority and local hire policies to early childhood education, from rent stabilization and just cause eviction policies to police accountability boards. At the national level, Gamaliel affiliates work collectively on immigration, criminal justice reform, and transportation/jobs, all deeply rooted in our efforts to secure racial and economic equity.



Shifting the narrative of what is possible – The current dominant narrative in the U.S. reinforces market interests over community interests and rugged “make it or break it” individualism over equal opportunity and justice, which in turn shapes how people hear our messages. Challenging oppositional worldview narrative, linking work in the short term to a broader vision and long-term goals, while defining and reinforcing key themes that bridge to our issues, provides people with the opportunity to imagine something new, something previously believed impossible.

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Our Namesake

The name Gamaliel (guh-MAH-lee-el) comes from the New Testament. The first Christians were a threat to the established authorities in Israel. The Sanhedrin met to decide the fate of the leaders of the new religious movement. Some wanted to kill them; but the wise rabbi Gamaliel stood up and said, “Keep away from these men and let them alone; because if this plan or this undertaking is of human origin, it will fail; but if it is of God, you will not be able to overthrow them—in that case you may even be found fighting against God” (Acts 5:38-39, NRSV).

“It is not light that we need, but fire; it is not the gentle shower, but thunder. We need the storm, the whirlwind, and the earthquake.” Frederick Douglass