

SRE Convening
Shelter from the Storm
June 8-9, 2020

**Opening Keynote – A Compass in the Storm
With Elana Wien, ED, SRE Network**

Monday, June 8, 2020

Welcome everyone. My name is Elana Wien, and I am the Executive Director of the Safety Respect Equity Network, or the SRE Network.

Before we officially get started, I want to share some logistical info. First on technology: You are each experiencing this convening through an app called Whova, either on your phones and/ or your computers. For folks who had challenges registering and accessing the app: You made it! Please know: we are doing something as a network that we have never done before: a virtual convening; and we are doing it in a very challenging time under challenging circumstances. Our registration process was multilayered to ensure we could create as safe and accessible space as possible.

Let's expect some tech difficulties. Let's expect some challenges and mistakes. Let's not aim for perfection. Let's be kind to each other. We appreciate your patience.

And we also appreciate you reviewing and agreeing to our SRE Code of Conduct and Convening Norms. You received a copy of these when you registered and it is accessible in the Whova app. Please reach out to us with any concerns.

Our convening conversations, and our work more generally, involves sensitive discussions of power and gender violence. If you find yourself in distress, please do log off.

Please note from reviewing our convening policies, that we explicitly requested that you do not take any recording or screenshots of speakers or other participants. We will be recording some of these sessions where there was expressed consent and will make that available to all participants post convening. But in a time too many are sheltering in place and juggling so much unpredictability with little control, it was important that we took steps to protect your privacy.

If you are media/press/blogger, we have clear guidelines in place and you can contact Megan Freed, our media contact for more details by looking in the Whova app.

So now, let's take a moment to ground ourselves. If you were in the middle of scrolling the latest news headlines and facebook timelines and are able to, please give yourself a momentary break from that. If you were in the middle of making a mental list of all the

things that are breaking in your household, in your relationships, in the world, try to give yourself the space to slow that mental inventory-taking down. If you were in the middle of writing that “just one more work email”, and you are able to, please save it to drafts and come back to it later.

And now, if you are able, please get into a resting position, and gently close your eyes. Take one deep breath in and one deep breath out. Observe the first words that come to mind when you ask yourself: How is my body feeling? Take one big deep breath in, and another out. If you are able, now put your hand or both hands on your heart, sending yourself acceptance for what you are feeling and experiencing right now. Let’s take another two deep breaths. Now slowly, gently open your eyes.

Let’s now try to take a moment to locate where we are in this virtual space. It is Monday, June 8, 2020. I am speaking with you from my home in Culver City, in Los Angeles, California. The ground on which I live are the ancestral lands of the Tongva-Gabrieliño Native Americans. I know in these virtual experiences it can be hard to see who is in the room, so I want to share with you more on who you are, who we are, based on what you’ve shared with us: There are over 250 of us convening together today and tomorrow. Professionals, practitioners, board members, and funders committed to gender justice and actively engaged in safety, respect and equity work in Jewish organizations and Jewish communal spaces. We represent over 120 organizations We are from over 35 cities from across the United States. We are from Canada, from England, from Israel.

The vast majority of us identify as female. A much smaller percentage of us identify as male, and some of us identify as gender non-conforming.

Many of us are victim-survivors of gender-based violence, as children, as adults, at home, at our schools and at our workplaces. Some of us are being forced to shelter in place with our abusers. Many of us have faced and continue to face discrimination in the workplace and in other communal spaces, based on socioeconomic class, sexual orientation, gender identity, disability. Some of us have directly experienced being separated from family members due to inequitable immigration policies. Many of us are the children and grandchildren of Holocaust survivors and have family who were killed in the Holocaust.

Some of us have been the targets of systemic racism and anti-black oppression. The rest of us have both directly and indirectly benefitted from it.

Our families have been impacted as we have lost wages, been passed over for opportunities, struggled silently with mental health challenges, emotional labor, and carried the weight of a system that is inequitable in how it distributes its wealth, power and work across both our Jewish community and larger society.

We have been laid off from our jobs with grace. We have been laid off from our jobs unjustly. And if you are middle class, and you or your partner were recently laid off or furloughed, the luckiest 20% had a 2-month emergency cushion, which 10 plus weeks into COVID, you may have already blown through.

Some of us are wealthy. Some of us are even wealthier than we were 10 weeks ago. Some of us are recovering from living in poverty, or have recently fallen into poverty. Most of us are just getting by.

We have been sick. Some of us have died. From a virus. From old age. From suicide. From racism.

Some of us have recovered.

And we have lost loved ones, who we have been unable to properly mourn.

We are workers. We are community members. We are leaders.

And...

We have also harmed others. We have both intentionally and unintentionally benefitted from privileges bestowed upon us from an inequitable society. We are sitting in a virtual space in which we both have been harmed and have caused harm. And it is a harm that in most cases has not yet been fully recognized or repaired. And that is because we have not yet built the muscle. Or as my colleague and racial justice leader April Baskin recently described it: That muscle of holding our multiple personal and communal identities at the same time. The muscle that lets us know that coming to terms with who we are and how we impact each other is not a sign of weakness, but a sign of strength.

And yet...

On a daily basis we are also being asked to make hard decisions, in our households, in our workplace, in our Jewish community, in the world, about what matters now, and what matters next. We are called upon to convene today and tomorrow, because we are in the middle of a storm. In fact, we are in the middle of *multiple storms*. There is the storm brought on by the virus of COVID, and there is the storm brought on by a broken system that has taken generations to build up: systemic racism. Systemic anti-black oppression. Xenophobia. Anti-Semitism. Homophobia. Anti-poor policies. Gender-based violence.

And when there is a storm, we are called upon to do more. We are called upon to rise to the occasion. *And we will rise*. But we cannot rise alone.

We need support, we need collective shelter, and we need the spaces like this to gather, to reflect on the kinds of tools, resources and partnerships we can tap into to co-develop the foundation for a *new* house. The house we actually *want* to live in once this current moment passes. Because this moment, this time, this period of disruption, however long, will pass. And there will be no going back to before, whatever that looked like for you. It will be a new day. Let us build a house together where all of us have the same rights and privileges and responsibilities. A house where we can openly call out when we have been harmed. Where we can repair when we have caused harm. A house where we can heal together. A house where we are accountable to each other. A house where we are stronger together. A safe house. A respectful house. An equitable house. A house of justice.

Tzedek, tzedek, tirdof. “Justice, justice you shall pursue.”

Each of you can be a *member* of this network, helping to build that house. Each of you can help build this *movement* for positive social change. And each of you can leverage, *multiply* your impact by plugging in.

That is why the vision of SRE Network 2020 is what we are calling the “3 M’s”: Member-driven; Movement builders; Multipliers.

By member-driven: we will reflect the diversity of identities and needs of our membership through our composition, programming, and resources. As movement builders this network will served as a catalyst for building the kind of long-term movement needed to create a safe, respectful, equitable Jewish community and larger society. And as multipliers, we will, through our thoughtful and innovative grantmaking and the power of our membership, multiply the impact of our community investments.

Throughout these two days, you will have an opportunity to hear more about our vision and opportunities to plug in and engage.

So what is the SRE Network? We were born of out the MeToo movement. Yes the same ‘me too.’ movement founded by Tarana Burke in 2006 to help survivors of sexual violence, particularly Black women and girls, and other young women of color from low wealth communities, to find pathways to healing. The same ‘me too’ movement that years later, in early 2017, following the exposure of the sexual-abuse allegations against Harvey Weinstein and the ‘me too’ hashtag spreading virally. The beginning of a form of reckoning of decades of abuse against women within Hollywood here in my hometown of Los Angeles. The launching of the TIME’S UP Legal Defense Fund in January 2018.

At the same time that all of this was developing, another important conversation was happening within the Jewish community. In March 2018, what started as a partnership, later a coalition and is now known as the Safety Respect Equity Network launched.

It was spearheaded by Lisa Eisen, co-president of the Charles and Lynn Schusterman Family Foundation, who brought in several other major Jewish community funders and philanthropists including the Jim Joseph Foundation, the Weinberg Foundation, and a dozen others.

And we brought in Jewish communal leaders, organizations and foundations to make a commitment. A commitment to adopting what we call the SRE Standards for Safe, Respectful and Equitable Workplaces. To date, over 120 entities have made that commitment.

So our origin story in some ways starts in 2018, in other ways it starts in 2006 and in other ways, it starts back at the beginning, and through generations, as women in Jewish workplaces, communal spaces and at home have raised their voice about the abuse, disrespect and inequity that continue to play out. Let me be clear: the SRE Network did not discover gender inequity in the Jewish community. Or that we needed communal standards. The SRE Network came about because major funders decided to make a commitment to demonstrate their values with their funding.

And I mention the standards, and our roots in the me too movement, and our origin story as a collaborative of funders, to illustrate both how far we've come and also to share: We are truly at a crossroads. The country, the world is at a crossroads. The Jewish community is at a crossroads. And this Network, with its focus on safety, respect and equity, when those very values are under attack each and every day, is at a crossroads.

And our biggest turning point is up ahead. We have support from funders, we have made grants to the field, we created standards, we have organizations that have committed to them. Our turning point rests on a major question: How do we effectively hold ourselves and each other accountable?

In a world in which there is no roadmap, how do we move forward in a safe, respectful, equitable way? How do we acknowledge the ways in which we have harmed, have been harmed and continue to harm each other? And how do we lift each other up, knowing that the work we have to do is great, and it will require each of us to be onboard, together, to take shelter as we aim on our sights on building that new house together. Knowing that we are always learning, knowing perfection does not exist, knowing that we are operating in systems within systems of oppression that have been holding us back from progress for centuries.

And if we are going to move deeper into accountability, we need be crystal clear about what we mean by equity. While the SRE in our name stands for Safety, Respect and Equity, and these are universal values, the impetus and focus of our Network from the beginning has been on gender equity. Why?

Because there are an estimated 70% of our Jewish nonprofit workforce that identifies as women, and they are disproportionately impacted by abuse, harassment and discrimination based on gender.

Because by some estimates, only 30% of women in Jewish organization have the top leadership role, when they make up 45% of that top leader role in nonprofits at large by some estimates.

Because there continues to be a culture of silence in Jewish institutions and workplaces that serve to protect predominantly men in positions of power, be they executives, board members or donors, when accusations of abuse, harassment and discrimination against women are raised.

Because in our wider society in which all of us are a part, an estimated 60% of all women have been victims of sexual harassment, with three-quarters saying it took place in the workplace.

Because victim-survivors, those who have been directly harmed by gender violence, find themselves encouraged to be silent or leave the Jewish communal field, giving up career tracks, prestige, connections.

While those who have harmed continue to deliver keynotes, have their names on our buildings, and are honored in book anthologies.

That is why we came to be. And that work is still left to be done. But we cannot do it alone.

We need to have an intersectional lens. We need to have an intersectional lens that acknowledges that we *can* we fight multiple forms of oppression at the same time. And we need that because if we do not, we will never see lasting change. But we also need that because *it is our truth*.

We, as a people, today, June 8, 2020, each actually hold multiple identities. I'm not talking about the ones that necessarily get included in our job applications or our LinkedIn bios. I'm not talking about the ones that people see, or if they see them, that they necessarily understand.

One of the most powerful things that came out of the recent conversation about Jews of Color in our community, was the affirmation that yes we do have a meaningful number of people in our community that identify as Jews of Color, and even more families, like my own, that identify as multiracial, multiethnic families.

It just is.

Yes, there are forces at play to try to deny that.

But if we are truly committed to effective change, there is no denying what is.

It is time to look deeply within ourselves, within our own families and acknowledge what we see: Agency and oppression coexisting together.

In ourselves, in our families, in our workplaces, in our Jewish community.

We see multiple disabilities, multiple gender identities, multiple socio-economic backgrounds, multiple forms of abuse both experienced and perpetrated.

This is who we are. As Jews. As humans.

So as we embark on this day together, let's really sit with who we are, with all of the identities we are holding. And let us use this time to get closer to each other. Get closer to hearing each other. Get closer to naming and healing the harm that we have experienced, witnessed, and enabled.

Because we have all harmed one another.

And then let us close tomorrow with a commitment to carrying this work, to holding onto it, throughout this storm over the next few months. To ensure that when we get through this, and we will get through this, we have built a house together.

Our intention over the next two days together is that you get to know what SRE Network is about, what we do, and to engage in learning and sharing about how we might build that house of justice.

We will look to Jewish texts to offer us some wisdom. We will gather with those who are in similar roles to think through how safety, respect and equity play out in our various spaces. We will grapple together with the concepts of teshuva and restorative justice and apply our learning to real life situations where others are grappling just like we are to move accountability forward. You will also get a chance to learn from many of our grantees, entities doing this important work in the field that we have supported over the last 2.5 years. And most importantly, you will have time to meet and learn from one another in conversation and collaboration, and carry those conversations and connection with you as you continue the work ahead.

Thank you for being with us on this journey.

Now for some important acknowledgments:

First to Lisa Eisen, for her commitment and fearless leadership, and for believing in the need for long-term investment and focus on issues of abuse, sexual harassment, discrimination, women's advancement and equity in the Jewish community.

A thank you to our 14 generous funders who make our work, and the ability to have this free virtual convening for over 250 attendees from around the world possible.

A thank you to our 8 wonderful advisory board members, who you will have a chance to connect with throughout these two days, who in the midst of everything, have really stepped up to back this new leader, providing me with the guidance and encouragement that has been so appreciated.

I'd like to thank Dr. Guila Benchimol, SRE's Senior Advisor for Research and Learning, one of the earliest partners in SRE's work, who has become over my short tenure, my key thought partner, colleague and friend. To Jayme Loving-Wills, our Executive & Operations Associate, who has helped keep the trains running even in the midst of everything going on, and for her positive energy and commitment. A big thank you to Jordan Daniels for his savvy communications and social media guidance for this convening. And Megan Freed for her media relations support.

A big thank you to Tamara Rebick, Founder & Chief Experience Officer of CORIPHERY Holistic Consulting Solutions, who has designed and managed this convening. To her talented colleagues Arielle Branitsky who helped ensure this was an accessible and safe program, and Rabbi Tova Leibovic Douglas for creating an engaging and interactive experience.

I want to express gratitude to those of you with us at this convening and those who were not able to join us, but who had a part, both big and small, for helping SRE Network get to where it is and the work where it is right now. You know who you are... You participated in those early planning conversations, focus groups, working groups, leadership groups.

To the Jewish communal professionals who have dedicated their lives to protect and ensure the rights and equal inclusion of women, of Jews of color, of people with disabilities, of people of all orientations and legal status in both our Jewish community and the world at large:

This is not the work of one. It is the work of many. And we are grateful to you for your commitment to these critically important issues.

And to you, joining us today. Thank you for making this commitment to yourself, to your workplace, to your community. Your time and energy are precious resources, and we feel privileged that you have made this choice. Thank you for every mountain you needed to move to make it possible for you to join us.

I'd now like to invite up Lisa Eisen, Founding Advisory Board Chair of the Safety, Respect Equity Network and Co-President of the Charles and Lynn Schusterman Family Foundation, to share some words of welcome and to introduce the next speaker.