

Key Takeaways from Staying in the Work of Equity & Inclusion

1) Diversity, equity, and inclusion lead to belonging.

Each piece of this framework is a vehicle and mechanism to work toward *tikkun olam* (repairing the world).

2) Instead of using the acronym DEI, use the words diversity, equity, and inclusion. Continue using these words rather than adjusting our language amidst pushback.

Naming something gives it power. When we can't say the word, it becomes invisible, making it harder to address, engage with it as a community, or change it. While these words are being co-opted for political fodder, using the words instead of the acronym helps prevent these three important concepts from getting lost or crunched together. And then people cannot hide behind being against DEI but rather must clarify which concept of diversity, equity, and inclusion they are challenged by.

Research shows us that these words are actually very popular. If anti-Black, anti-Jewish, anti-trans, anti-[insert topic], etc., is someone's goal, it really doesn't matter what letters and words we're using to describe this work.

3) "Diversity, equity, and inclusion is not synonymous with race equity work." This is a myth.

There are multiple ways our communities can be diverse, equitable, and inclusive that are race-agnostic and race-inclusive. Using an intersectional lens, diversity, equity, and inclusion can—and should address all systems of oppression and targeted identities to help us build communities where LGBTQ+ folks, Black people, people of color, people with disabilities, women, etc., can thrive and belong.

4) We need to be in relationships and conversations with each other. Have relational conversations to identify the "willing" and find out what barriers someone has to supporting diversity, equity, and inclusion work.

Take the time to have open and honest conversations and build relationships. Meet with key stakeholders to find out where they sit and determine where their values are aligned. Have conversations with folks who are hesitant to support diversity, equity, and inclusion to learn about their specific barriers and be able to address them. "What do you think this word means?" and "Tell me what you meant by that?" are great questions to start those conversations.

Often when we find out what "DEI" means and represents to someone who is "anti-DEI", it opens up space to address how their understanding of what these words mean differs from our own understanding and work. We can begin to address the root of their barriers when we have relational dialogues.

5) The diversity, equity, and inclusion framework is a work in progress. It's constantly evolving and we can all help it evolve.

It's a myth that it's all about race. Diversity, equity, and inclusion work includes all forms of oppression, including antisemitism. There is power in solidarity and there is work to build this solidarity.

As diversity, equity, and inclusion leaders, when we're talking to people who are doing this work outside of our Jewish community, we need to be direct about how important it is that this tide lifts all boats and includes addressing antisemitism.

6) It takes all of us to bend the moral arc of the universe towards justice.

Ask for help as you need it. You are part of a community of incredible leaders who are deeply dedicated to this work and whom you can turn to for support and collaboration.

These takeaways are from SRE Network's program held on April 10, 2025, "Staying in the Work of Equity and Inclusion" with Abby Levine (Jewish Social Justice Roundtable), Yolanda Savage-Narva (Union for Reform Judaism), and Whitney Weathers (UpStart).