Respectability Webinar

**Jewish Leadership for the Future**

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Captions Rough Edit

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>> JENNIFER MIZRAHI: Hello, and welcome. I'm Jennifer Laszlo Mizrahi, President of RespectAbility, and I'm so glad that you are all joining us today. We have sort of a who's who of some of the Jewish Inclusion leaders on the phone with us and some interested parties, and I want to interrupt introduce some real superstars. So, sitting next to me in the RespectAbility office is Vivian Bass, who I think many people already know because she was the CEO of Jewish Group Homes here in the Washington area, but because of her leadership with Jewish Women International and so many other organizations, Vivian is also a member of the executive committee of RespectAbility and very, very involved, not only in our Jewish group work, but also in our leadership work.

She's going to kick us off in a few moments, but you also should see on screen Matan Koch, and Matan is a real superstar also of the disability movement. He is a graduate of Harvard Law School and Yale undergrad, and he worked in corporate law in New York City, and he also is a real disability leader.

But before we start, let me just say a couple of technical things. First of all, I'm just checking my connection to make sure that you're hearing and seeing the sound. But for those of you who are deaf or prefer to use captions, we do have live captioning that is available, so you should be able to follow via the live captions. And so I hope that that is helpful for all of you. So I was just saying that we do have live captions for anybody who wants to follow the live captions to help read the content instead of hearing it. All of our slides are also screen reader accessible, so that if you are blind, you should be able to absorb the content of the slides.

But I will just say before I turn it over to Vivian that the very first slide that you see is a picture of some of the Jewish team members of RespectAbility. So, every member of that photo, every person in that photo is a member of the Jewish community who's been active in Jewish Inclusion here at RespectAbility. We have many other members of our team that are also Jewish, both on our staff and our board and other team members, but this is a great group of fun people to work with, and we're looking for partners, so we're very excited to have this opportunity.

So I turn it over to Vivian.

>> VIVIAN BASS: Thank you, Jennifer, and enormous appreciation and admiration for your legendary and esteemed leadership. Good afternoon, or good morning, whatever the case may be, and we're thrilled that you could join us today.

As we open with our first slide, you see a composite of some very well- known and well recognizable individuals, in most cases nationally and globally known, who have led their lives and made enormous contributions. Yet one common thread that they have is that they all have a disability. And you can see that yet they've been able to continue and accomplish so much.

Generally, we know that 56 million people in the United States have a disability, and this represents the largest minority in America. And we know that one in five individuals has a disability. In the case of Jews, we know that that's even a greater percentage because a few factors. First, Jewish couples tend to marry later in life, and this can contribute to greater percentage of autism and also a prevalence of mental health issues and other disabilities. So the percentage is actually larger. And disabilities we know can be temporary and permanent. They can be visible and very invisible. And one can be born or acquired. Yet we know that anyone can join the disability community at any point. It's open to all at any time in anyone's life, as we all know, and the community is diverse and wide in its depth and in its scope, and people with disabilities do come from all minority communities.

And people with disabilities are so very important to Jews throughout our country and beyond. When we think that 48% have a family member with a disability, and that 42% have a close friend with a disability. When we really translate that, it means that over 60% of Jews have someone very near and very dear to them with a disability.

And inclusion is especially really important to California Jews throughout and with employment opportunities, 80%, and transition from school to workforce of 71%. Jewish summer camping experiences— last a lifetime— 66%. And synagogue services at 63%. And early childhood early education at 61%. And Hebrew school at 61%. All so relevant.

And we see that only one in three people with a disability, however, do have a job. And the poverty rate is twice that of people without a disability. So discouraging.

>> JENNIFER MIZRAHI: When we think about the mission of the work that we're doing collectively at RespectAbility, you know, what is our mission statement, it is to fight stigmas and advance opportunities so that people with disabilities can fully participate in every aspect of community, so that is throughout our work. Our theory of change is really very clear. There is essentially–it's like a three-legged stool, or three buckets of bodies of work in our theory of change. So the first is to fight implicit bias. The second is to advocate for best practices. And the third is to prepare that leadership pipeline.

I'm going to drill down a little bit on that, so that you can see that the fighting of implicit bias, it really has to do with the narrative change work that we're doing in Hollywood as our board member Jonathan Murray has created the Emmy winning show "Born This Way," or if we're advising different TV shows that you see on the different networks or the different films, it's very important that we see more people with disabilities for what they can do instead of what they can't. We need to be in the news media, in fact sheets, and here at RespectAbility, we have a very robust social media outlet.

In fact, if you're not already following us on our Jewish Twitter handle, @Jewishinclusion, or Jewish Facebook, which is RespectAbility, and then the number 4, all, RespectAbility4All. I encourage you to join us on social media, ’cause it's really important. We really want people with disabilities to be seen for what they can do.

When we're advocating for the best practices, we're really looking to advance things that are proven, that we know will work, and also offer innovation, so we have our solution center for best practices. We're very proud of Philip Kahn-Pauli, who leads this work and also co-chairs the task force for the CCD of 120 disability groups from around the country on the issues of training and employment. We really in this are looking to ensure that people with disabilities are both hired and heard.

The third part of our Theory of Change is that people with disabilities need to be at the center of determining the future of people with disabilities. In other words, we don't want people to make decisions for people with disabilities. We want people to make decisions with people with disabilities, and for people with disabilities to make their own decisions and to really step up not to only make their lives better, but to improve the lives of everybody else in the community and in society writ large.

So in terms of our preparing the talent pipeline, we're very proud of our National Leadership Program, which is for young leaders, people in the end of their college career, they're in graduate school, or they’re a recent college or grad school graduate, who are working with us at our headquarters in Rockville. We have three cohorts a year, including a whole track on Jewish inclusion. So if anybody on this call knows anybody who would like a fantastic summer internship in the Washington, D.C. area that's right on the metro line in a fully accessible office, we're currently hiring for Jewish inclusion fellows for this summer.

We also have a very active Jewish disability leadership program which Vivian has been a key lay leader on, and it's a really successful program in New York. Soon you're going to hear about what we hope to be doing in Los Angeles.

But the idea is that people with disabilities themselves need to drive innovation and solutions, and that they are uniquely qualified and prepared to do so.

RespectAbility started about five, six years ago, and Jewish values have always been at the heart of our mission. We're really an outgrowth of the Jewish Funders Network Disability Cohort, and it was co-founded by myself, Shelley Cohen, and Donn Weinberg from the Weinberg Foundation, and always our foundation has been built on tikkun olam, the idea of repairing the world. So we're not an organization devoted to handouts for people with disabilities. We're here for hand ups. We want people with disabilities not to only be able to have great lives for themselves, but to also be able to improve and strengthen the community around us. Hence why this new program that we're very excited about is something that we want to speak with you about.

And by the way, we do not think that we are/have any sort of monopoly on good ideas. In fact, the strength of RespectAbility has always been on partnerships. One of the things that we do at RespectAbility is that every week, we send out our blast email of Shabbat Smiles, which is also on our website under the Jewish inclusion, under the Faith Inclusion Place. If anybody on this call would like to publish a Shabbat Smile piece, particularly those of you who are Jews with lived disability experience, we're always looking for tremendous writers to bring us great ideas from their own experiences out in the field, and we like to do webinars with people who are offering great new solutions.

We believe that we need to work with our partners to build a stronger commitment to inclusion in Jewish camping, synagogues, day schools, JCCs, colleges, universities, every single aspect of Jewish life.

And so I'm going to turn it over to my colleague Matan, who is going to talk to you about this new idea that we're very excited about that we're hoping to be rolling out soon. Matan?

>> MATAN KOCH: Thank you. So I am really excited to talk to you today about Project Moses. I'm even more excited about the fact that after I run through this, we're going to solicit your ideas and learn from you about ways that we can do it even better. But to start with, let's tell you a little bit about what we have in mind.

So, we know, and this won't come as a surprise to anyone on the call, because Jews are always talking about it, right? That 75% to 90% of Jewish non profits are going to need to find new executive leadership in the next five to seven years, and forgetting just the leadership roles, there are more than 600 open positions on Jewishjobs.com on any given day. Summary, the need for Jewish professionals is huge, growing, and not going anywhere.

Now, at the same time, we have learned that — the slides don't like to change. And we have learned that less than 15% of American Jews that we surveyed can even name a single Jewish leader with a disability. Now, to be clear, what does that mean? There are several Jewish leaders with disabilities on this call, and if they know of any one of us, then that's counted in that 15%, just people that know who we are. And yet less than 15% could name. This is despite the fact that, as Vivian told us earlier, 20% of Jews are people with disabilities. A huge pool and opportunity.

So, RespectAbility said, gee, we have to do something about this. But we know that what we really need to do about this is find some folks with disabilities, train them, and put them in leadership, because we know, right, as everyone on the call knows, that problems are best solved by people who have experienced them firsthand and know that the solutions work. Right? We are exemplars and idea makers.

Guess what. Corporate America already knows this. Employers have learned that people with disabilities have incredible problems solving experience and loyalty. I'm going to pause to catch my breath.

Companies that recruit and support employees with disabilities have a 30% greater profit margin, for instance, according to a recent study done by Accenture. What does this mean? It means that we're not just missing leaders with disabilities that can open up our organizations. We're missing incredible talent for our organizations. Changing talent. And guess what. We're not new for recognizing this. God recognized this. The Torah recognized this. The Torah recognized that Moses most likely had a speech impediment. Now, it uses Biblical language. A heavy mouth and heavy tongue. Yeah, it's hard to know what the Torah always means. But we're pretty sure it meant that Moses had some sort of either born or acquired disability, and when Moses said, no, I'm not sure this makes me the right leader, God said, no, this makes you exactly the leader I need. I made you, who you are. I know who you are.

So corporate America may just be learning about the talents and strengths of people with disabilities. The Jewish community has known about it for a really long time. And so we came up with this notion, Project Moses, named after Moses, that we would cultivate authentic Jewish leadership by training Jewish leaders with disabilities so that they're ready to serve and succeed in Jewish leadership, either as lay leaders or as Jewish communal professionals.

And here's how we're going to do it. We're going to expose our participants to innovation, excellence in leadership, social services, advocacy, and philanthropic entities within the Jewish community. Translation: We're going to be looking to all of our partners and all of you to help us bring to all of our leaders the very best of what's out there. And we're going to take everything we know from all the training programs that Jennifer told you about and everything else that we can come up with, and we're going to teach them. Strategic communications, self-advocacy, Jewish knowledge, and strategic decision making. But we're not going to stop there, because what good is it if we train up a bunch of leaders and then they have nowhere to go?

So at the same time, we're going to partner with Jewish organizations all over L.A. and we're going to train them so that they are ready to fully embrace and benefit from the talent of the leaders that we're training. Seems like a great idea, huh? I think. And now the slide won't shift again. All right.

And so we have a couple of target groups in mind. We're looking at young Jewish adults with disabilities who were raised after the start of the Jewish Inclusion. We're looking at Jews who acquired their disabilities a little earlier, and therefore maybe were not caught up in that inclusion revolution and are still looking for a way in. And we're looking at Jews who were educated and started to give their leadership before they acquired their disability, and now sort of trying to figure out after acquiring a disability from accident or aging or illness, how do I keep serving? And, of course, through all of that, we're going to reach what we call Temporarily Able Bodied Jews, which is, spoiler alert, everybody else. If you live long enough, you will acquire a disability.

So, even as we're reaching our first three targets, our audience is everyone. Our benefit is everyone. And, you know, Jennifer's not going to do it alone. I'm not going to do it alone. We have a great team. Most of us you can see in pictures. But combined, we have a tremendous amount of Jewish leadership experience. But we're also going to be learning from you. Learning from you, learning from all of our partners, learning from everyone who comes together. Sorry, there we go.

And not just learning, we're going to partner with you guys formally. We didn't choose L.A. by accident. L.A. has an incredibly rich infrastructure of Jewish organizations, of Jewish disability organizations. Demographically, it's the second largest Jewish community in the country after New York. It is absolutely the place to reach out for partnerships, and only with those partnerships are we going to succeed. Now, some of you are helping us out already. You've written letters to the L.A. Jewish Foundation,, you've talked to me, you've talked to Jennifer. But by the time we're done, we want to have reached out to every Jewish organization in L.A. so that we can join hands together. That is how we're going to succeed in really making an impact and in making a strong program.

So now a few specifics. What do we envision? We envision that every year – these are annual goals, right? If I recall. Every year, each year we'll train at least 12 L.A. based Jewish organizations to utilize the skills of people with disabilities, and every year, we're going to train at least 36 Jews with disabilities in all of the wonderful skills that we just mentioned. Hopefully many of them will be volunteers, maybe even board members. We hope that you'll be able to hire some of them. We recognize that that tends to take a longer time than a one year training program can necessarily accomplish, but we really hope that we'll bring those 36 people to a place where we can work with you, and because we tend to, you know, be conservative in our estimates for grant proposals, we hope that at end, we will at least manage to have six of our partner organizations actually pull in and retain these volunteers. Between you and me, I really hope it's more than six, but we try to put in manageable numbers into our proposals. Wouldn't it be great if all 36 were placed with 36 organizations. And what a wonderful Jewish number, huh, double Chai – 2 life. Gotta love it, and got to advance the slides again, because I am running out of riffing…

JENNIFER MIZRAHI: I got it

MATAN KOCH: And now I turn it back over to Jennifer to talk about why RespectAbility is the perfect partner for the L.A. Jewish community in this work.

>> JENNIFER MIZRAHI: So, first of all, we want to start in L.A., but we hope we won't be ending in L.A. We see this as the demonstration project and the pilot and the hub. But RespectAbility is not a direct service organization like many of the folks that are on the phone. We're thrilled that they're people from great educational organizations and synagogues and the JCC Manhattan and others that are on the phone with us today. But at RespectAbility, we really see ourselves like an aircraft carrier. We're a landing place where other Jewish organizations can land their planes, refuel, and take off to new heights. And so our real strength has always been to collect the best practices that are happening, and other places that are proving, testing, and innovating, and to help up skill leaders so that they can really jump into those direct service opportunities. And so we've been doing this for five, six years, and we really find that partnership is very, very important. We have a lot of skillful leadership here. They're from all over the country. You see some pictures. You know, Linda Berger, our treasurer from Texas, who led Jewish Family Services there, to Neil Jacobson in northern California, to Delbert Whetter who's in Los Angeles. Dana Marlow, who specializes in accessibility. Donna Meltzer, who heads the national organization for people with developmental disabilities. Our own Debbie Fink, who's just a powerful house along with Lauren Appelbaum and Heidi and Shelley Cohen and others from our team.

So we have a lot of people who have different pieces of the knowledge and collectively, we really try and help everybody. And we have a lot of demonstrable progress on inclusion, whether it's the Ford Foundation, or MacArthur, or the Jewish Federation. I will say that Lisa Handelman has an unbelievable program of Jewish inclusion here in the Washington area. We really have seen quite a lot. But L.A. is important to us, first because as Matan said, there's so many strong Jewish inclusion and Jewish programs that are there. Through HaMercaz, there's 19 disability organizations alone in that one umbrella of people that meet regularly. But because we're so involved in the Hollywood work, and frankly, Hollywood is very connected to the Jewish community, and there's a lot of synergy.

But I'll also tell you on another front that there's something else very exciting about Los Angeles, which is that the L.A. Chamber Of Commerce hhas like a think tank there for best practices around employment for people in marginalized communities. We haven't announced It in really publicly yet, so you're hearing about it perhaps for the first time. Our Board of Directors and team have been working on it. But we're about to roll out a very big partnership with the L.A. chamber of commerce, which is 1,500 employers in the greater Los Angeles area. So we really see Los Angeles as a place of strong growth for us. We're hoping to be opening an office in Los Angeles this summer with at least three full time professionals in Los Angeles. Hasn't happened yet because we haven't raised all the money yet, but we hope to have a full time person there working on Hollywood, a second person working on the employment of people with disabilities, and then to have Matan Koch, hopefully, in Los Angeles full time to lead this Project Moses program.

So, again, three legged stools, three professionals, all of it having tremendous synergy to move this work forward. Just to remind you that our organization works with others, and that we've seen a 400% improvement in new jobs for people with disabilities nationally. We helped create the first Hollywood disability inclusion toolkit. We're constantly providing skill building tools and training to over a thousand people that are using our webinars. This is just one example of the many webinars that we do. We have 120 graduates of our young leadership program. And at this point, we have 550 volunteers, they're across more than 40 states, and we've met with 46 governors to advocate for better education and training and jobs for people with disabilities. So we really see this as a natural outgrowth of the work that we're doing, and we really feel that together, we can build a stronger community that will take advantage of the abilities of Jews with disabilities inside the Jewish community and leadership roles.

So not just that we should be included to attend a program, that we should be able to build programs for people with and without disabilities alike, whether that's in the pro-Israel space, whether that's in the educational space, the religious faith space. In any space of the Jewish community, we believe that Jews with disabilities have an enormous amount to contribute.

We're really excited to have a conversation with you all about this and to really see what kind of comments that you are bringing. I just want to say that this is a photo of the last one. It includes a photo of our dear friend, Ronald Glancz, of blessed memory, who was our treasurer, our first treasurer who wanted to be treasurer. He did a great job. His daughter, Rachel Shader, actually, Rachel actually made this PowerPoint for us. So, l’dor vador, from generation to generation, that's how the Jewish people work. Jewish leadership from generation to generation. And we cannot afford to lose 20% of our population, or 20% of the talent and the energy and the drive of the Jewish people by not having us be part of that talent pipeline.

So I'm going to turn it over. Operator, if you can explain to people how they can ask questions or comments via either the chat room or via the telephone, that would be fantastic, because we're ready to hear from the people who are with us electronically.

>> OPERATOR: Thank you, Jennifer.

Ladies and Gentlemen, if you have dialed in and would like to ask a question, press 7# on your phone now, and you will be placed in the queue in the order received. Listen for your name to be announced and ask your question when prompted. You can also send questions using the Q&A window located on the lower left of the presentation. Type your message and press 'Ask' to send it. Thank you.

>> JENNIFER MIZRAHI: So while people are dialing in, and I hope that you're sending us notes, I appreciate the note from the JCC Manhattan, which says that they're ready to be involved in being supportive. But they reminded us that they have an internship celebration reception coming up. They're going to be recognizing their adaptations interns and their staff and UJA colleagues that are involved in that. So Allison Kleinman from the JCC Manhattan, she's been a really great partner for us. We just hosted a major event in their facility on women with disabilities. So we're really very grateful for the partnerships that we have all over the country.

I see that there's a question about what if one isn't in L.A. or on the East Coast, what can one do in that case? Well, I think there's a lot of things you can do in that case. And so Vivian is sitting next to me, but I'll just jump in and start on the answer by saying that we will continue to do webinars and we will continue to be pushing out our Shabbat Smile programs, and we invite people across the country to send us Shabbat Smile programs, which are again, they're usually a first person narrative from a Jew with a disability, or it talks about a great program that's accomplishing a lot with people with disabilities that is something that can be replicated by others.

But I would say that if you're a person with a disability, we're about to release a major, major report on a survey that we did around the inclusion of people with disabilities writ large. In other words, not just in the Jewish community, but in all communities. And we ask people if inclusion is happening in their institutions or not, and if not, what do they think the reasons are. And interestingly, it was not that they thought it was too expensive or too complicated or they were worried about legal consequences. The number one reason that people were not being involved in board member positions or volunteer positions or professional positions was, number one, implicit bias. They think people with disabilities essentially don't have what it takes. Or, two, that no one with a disability ever asked to participate. No one ever asked. There's a huge number of people who said that nobody had ever asked, could they participate.

So if you are blind or you are deaf or you use a wheelchair or you have any sort of kind of disability, mental health, chronic pain, and you might need an accommodation to successfully participate, just ask, because we were just blown away by the number of organizations who said to us, we have a policy not to exclude people with disabilities, but we don't know how to do it, and so since we don't know what we don't know, we really need people to ask us, and then they can tell us, you know, what it is that they need. So that is one thing you can do, is just ask for the opportunity to lead. We really encourage people to do that.

Sheryl Calman is asking, what age are the emerging leaders that we're targeting? Any chance you could possibly partner with youth groups and actively engaged high schoolers? Yes. Matan, you want to answer that one?

>> MATAN KOCH: Yes. So, I think that for, you know, the target of our specific leadership corps, we’ll be shooting just a little bit older, but the whole point is we want a whole family of programs in L.A. I think it would be fantastic as we're structuring our trainings and as we're building to look at ones in the first instance that would be appropriate for the younger group. And then as we become a more established presence and begin to branch out in programming, to begin to run youth specific programs. Maybe not in the immediate scope of our first launch, which is going to be hectic, but as we envision the program growing and changing. I personally, as many on the call know, have, you know, extensive experience working with Jewish youth, and certainly would want to see that as a natural growth. And also, frankly, we're hoping to place our, you know, leaders in organizations that, among other things, serve youth. I know Doug Lynn from the Wilshire Boulevard Temple Camps is on the call right now, and wrote a letter. Well, wouldn't we love if at some point we have one of our slightly older leaders working in camps doing work for younger folks. There's just so many ways and opportunities and ways to leverage that we will do.

And I think if I could then jump right into the next question Jennifer, is that all right? I think it dovetails nicely.

>> JENNIFER MIZRAHI: Please do.

>> MATAN KOCH: Rabbi Dubowe has asked us: What is being done with regard to the URJ Camps. Well, Rabbi Dubowe, I believe, well you and I have known each other a long time, and you know among other things that I remain a consultant to the URJ the URJ Camps, so we have kept the URJ in the loop. I've already had a meeting with Jonah Pesner to sort of make sure that the URJ is aware of what we're doing, and we're really excited about the idea of partnering with, again, literally every Jewish organization that would like to. Certainly, including Newman in the first instance, the URJ Camp in California, and again, this responds a little bit to the earlier question, about what can those not in L.A. do. This is a program where we're looking to take our learnings and best practices and export them, export them as widely as possible, and that includes places like camps, other communities. That's sort of our vision. We want this to grow.

>> JENNIFER MIZRAHI: A lot of the fellows that come to us for our National Leadership Program who are doing Jewish inclusion, they previously were in some of the Ramah Tikvah camps for example. So there's a lot of synergy there between what we want to do in Los Angeles and our Jewish inclusion fellows who are here in the Rockville office, because this is a place they can be here for either our nine week summer program or our 16 week semester programs during the year. So I do encourage you that if you know people who are in college or graduate school or recent graduates, I want to remind folks that we do have a fantastic leadership program, it's a full time program here in our Rockville office. We've been doing it more than five years and we have 120 graduates so far between the Jewish inclusion and our other fellowship programs.

But, Matan, Lisa Handelman is asking sort of specifically, how are you going to go about recruiting people for this program, and specific skills that you might really want to teach people who are going into this program?

>> MATAN KOCH: I think to answer the first question, I almost jokingly say, what am I not going to do to recruit people to this program? Which is to say there's nothing I'm not going to do. As many on this call can attest, I've already been meeting with any Jewish organization that will take the time to talk to me, and we haven't even started the program yet, and that's a tempo that we're just going to step up as soon as we get on the ground and launch. But we have more elements to the recruitment strategy. Many of you know that I have a penchant for speaking in synagogues. Well, I'm going to show up at any synagogue in L.A. that will listen to me talk and tell them not only the normal things that I tell synagogues about Jewish inclusion, I'm going to tell them what they're doing, and I'm going to ask them who we need to be working with.

As I mentioned, I've already reached out to, you know, the Wilshire Boulevard Temple Camps, a huge area for youth. I've reached out to the Pico Union project, an area that engages Jews that are not traditionally engaged in other ways. We've talked to synagogues. We've talked already to Federation and all of this is before I've even set wheel in Los Angeles. As soon as we get on the ground, I'm really going to be relying on all of you to make sure that the word gets out and make sure that I find the leaders, potential leaders that I know are there.

In terms of what we're going to train them in, well, to paraphrase my friend Rob Likend, who is the chair of the AJC region here in New England, we're going to be giving them the skills you wish all of your lay leaders had. We're going to teach them how nonprofits work. We're going to teach them how to manage social media. We're going to teach them how to work with boards and organizations. We're going to teach them whatever skills you tell us you want for volunteers, board members, and eventual staff to have to succeed. We're going to borrow from the very successful leadership program that Jennifer references. I sat down with a group of our fellows as they were learning about organizational management and budgets. Though I will tell you I've been in the field 20 years, I still learned something. So that's the sort of thing that we are going to teach.

>> JENNIFER MIZRAHI: Jason Lieberman is asking, what are your plans for education when so many religious organizations are exempt from the ADA and the Rehab Act, especially if they have no federal money? How are you going to really have an impact without the ability of having the law behind us?

>> MATAN KOCH: Well, Jason, I'm so glad you asked that question, you perhaps more than even a lot of people on the call know exactly what my background is. You know that I've been a lawyer. You know that I've been a public policymaker. And yet, I will tell you, I don't think that that's what drives the bus. That sometimes is the stick to get people to do the absolute minimum. But the carrot that drives inclusion is when people get excited about what inclusion does for them. When inclusion is not an issue of compliance, but an issue of passion. When it's not an issue of obligation, but an issue of opportunity. And that's what I intend to present to the partners in L.A. And from the question of money, I'm actually going to borrow a quote from my good friend Jay Ruderman who says, you know, once Jewish organizations really care about it, they'll find the money somewhere or we'll find the money together, right? It's not I'm not going to worry about federal funds. I'm going to figure out how can we find the funding that we need to realize your goals, and we're going to do it step by step, you know, donor by donor, source by source, community by community. Once the passion is there, the money tends to follow.

>> JENNIFER MIZRAHI: Luke, are there people on the phone that have questions, and if not, can you explain again how people on the phone can be asking questions?

>> OPERATOR: Thank you, Jennifer. We do have one question from Silvia. But as a reminder also, if you would like to ask a question, just press 7 # on your touch tone phone. Go ahead, Silvia, I'm opening the line for Silvia who has a question for everyone. Go ahead, Silvia.

>> SYLVIA Hello?

>> JENNIFER MIZRAHI: Hi. Thanks for joining us.

>> SYLVIA Oh. Hello. Actually, my question was already I got in, but I think my question was already answered about how other communities can deal with this, because we are dealing with it we're in south Florida, so we are dealing with this, too. Thank you.

>> JENNIFER MIZRAHI: Great, Silvia. I think that one of the key things is to really ask the organizations that you're involved with. How do they see people with disabilities? Do they see them just as people who serve, or do they see them also as people who can serve us? I think that's also when the transformation takes in. I myself am dyslexic, I have ADHD, so I'm a person who lives with disability. I didn't really start to read until I was 12 years old. When I was 12 years old, I was already 5'10". And yet, I've been involved with Jewish life my whole life, and I think that I've been able to contribute a lot to the Jewish people because the Jewish people were open to my interest in trying to do my part in tikkun olam. But unfortunately, a lot of people with disabilities haven't had that opportunity.

And I will also say that there's a lot of people who are Jewish who are acquiring disabilities, particularly in south Florida, you probably have a lot of people who may have been major leaders up north in some cold place and then they decided to move to some warm, sunny place like in Florida, and they're still really really smart people who have really a lot of talent. But maybe as they age, they're losing their eyesight, for example. Maybe they're losing some of their hearing. Maybe they're embarrassed about that. And one of the things that we can do, for example, is that there's assistive technology. Like on this webinar right now, we have live captioning. We have live captioning because we know that there are people on the call who are completely deaf and they need the benefit of live captioning.

So, we also know that any kind of organization that has any kind of generational diversity, that they're people who are aging who prefer to have the captions because they're losing a little bit of their hearing, and that's very important in board meetings, for example, and it's very easy to put live captioning now. You can have less perfect ones if you use some of these apps. On telephones, we use these in our office. They're very, very simple and really very dirt cheap. Or you can have a fancier setup like we have now on this particular webinar. But it enables people who are really, really talented who contributed a lot to the Jewish people and still have a lot more energy and ideas to contribute to still be able to contribute, something very simple having captions on screen when meetings are happening, for example. So many nonprofit organizations, they're creating videos. They might be a fundraising video. They don't bother to put captions on their video. Guess what, it's actually free to put captions on your videos. Literally, free. Why? Because YouTube has an algorithm now that they instantly put captions on every video that you put on YouTube.

So if you have a nonprofit organization and you have training materials to teach people how to do something, or you want to raise money, or whatever it is, you take your video, you put it on YouTube, and boom, magic, you have captions. Of course, every Hebrew word will be spelled completely wrong, it will be butchered because YouTube doesn't know how to phonetically spell the Hebrew word. There's actually a way you can go in and fix it. They could never spell Jennifer Laszlo Mizrahi, that's kind of complicated. You can go in and fix it. There's so many different ways that Jewish organizations, no matter where they are, can make their work more accessible. 38 million Americans need captions to actually get content, and yet this new study that we're about to release shows that only 14% of non profits are even attempting to put captions on videos.

By the way, I'll tell you a secret. Look at most disability organizations and you will see that they have videos on their own websites that don't even have captions. Guess what. We can solve this problem for free. Put your videos on YouTube and fix any spelling mistakes, and you'll have captions, and 38 million more Americans will be able to absorb your content. So there's a lot that you can do no matter where you are. We're going to continue to learn with the people in Los Angeles. We're going to try and put that learning online, in webinars, and in tools so that no matter where you live, you can benefit for it, whether you're in southern Florida and God bless you, I'm jealous. Or you're in you know in Nebraska where it's flooded and it's, you know, not a very pleasant place to be because of the high waters right now. But hopefully this program will have an impact everywhere.

But I think it will work the best if people are always willing to share their ideas. Lisa Handelman just asked a question, but in fact, she was the Shabbat Smile profile this past week because she has most of the answers. No one person or organization knows all of the answers. We're all successful when we help each other, whether it's Arlene Rem up in Boston at Gateways, or LeAnn Heller here in the Rockville area, or Lisa, or the tremendous people through HaMercaz in Los Angeles and everywhere in between the coasts, there are a lot of different solutions. So I encourage everyone on this call to send any ideas that you have to us because we, as I said, do not have a monopoly on the answers. We really want to have your involvement. Let me see if Vivian wants to add to that, because I think that she may have some more ideas to offer.

>> VIVIAN BASS: What's important, too, is to show the value of mutually beneficial and respectful relationships and visions that individuals may not see or think of. There's always the feeling of doing for instead of doing with. And persons with disabilities can have such a phenomenal and really meaningful – I don't mean patronizing or whatever – but have roles that really enhance the lives of others, and when that is done, making certain that there is significant, you know, visibility and, you know, notoriety so that they can others can emulate this potential model. And just for individuals to, you know, work amongst one another and, as Jennifer said, certainly not in a yours/mine, but in an ours mentality, that everyone is here together to make our lives better as a whole. Just really significant.

>> JENNIFER MIZRAHI: Thank you. Luke, do we have any more questions on the call?

>> OPERATOR: Yes, we do. We have Suzanne with a question. Suzanne, your line is open. Go ahead, please.

>> JENNIFER MIZRAHI: Welcome, Suzanne.

>> SUZANNE: Thank you very much, and thank you for the amazing work you're doing. I only learned about RespectAbility from the Sunday program you did at the JCC in Manhattan. I'm in New York and I'm actually calling as an advocate for my daughter who is unable to be on the call middle of the day. She's 30 years old and she has epilepsy, and I wanted to know what you're doing with – because epilepsy is an interesting disorder. It's one in 26 people can have a seizure at any time, because it's a brain disorder. It's more prevalent than autism, but it's something that people don't talk about.

So I have multiple, multiple questions for you. One is, what are you doing with the epilepsy foundation, because recently, you talk about Hollywood. There was a horrific portrayal of someone having a seizure on a movie and the Epilepsy Foundation had to rally around and correct the inappropriate portrayal. They were actually making fun of a kid, calling him seizure boy. And the other piece is that I worked for two and a half years to try to get my daughter the ability to participate in the birthright trip. I was successful, but it took two and a half years, and I did this pretty much on my own. I tried to enlist the help of the UJA. We're active members in a larger form synagogue. And much to my dismay this year, for February, nothing was done. And we are one of the most this is Temple Beth El of Great Neck New York, we are one of the most prominent synagogues in Long Island, 12 miles from New York City, and nothing was done for Jewish Disability and Awareness Month.

>> JENNIFER MIZRAHI: So you've given me a lot a lot to talk about. So let me start by saying thanks for participating in our women's event that happened in New York City for Jewish disability awareness month or action month. There's a lot of different ways of calling it. Epilepsy is very, very important. One of our board members used to Diana Meltzer, used to head the Epilepsy Association nationally, so we have a board member who is an expert on that. Tony Coelho used to be on our board. He also has epilepsy. He was one of our early board members. We've had several of our national leadership fellows who have epilepsy, and we've had people have seizures here in the office. And so we're prepared to assist people as needed when they have seizures and have epilepsy.

What you talk about in television is very important, and you talked about a negative example. I'll give you a positive example for this week. We've been working very hard to advocate for people with disabilities, not only on scripted television, but we've had even more success in reality television. Our board member Jonathan Murray was literally the inventor of reality television. His first TV show was "Real World" on MTV. And so he has been speaking at all of the major conferences for the reality television industry, and we've seen that a lot of these contest shows are trying to include people with disabilities in all of their shows. So whether it's "The Voice" or "America's Got Talent," you see more and more contestants with disabilities in the show.

This week on "World of Dance," there was a woman with epilepsy who was did you see it?

>> SUZANNE: Yeah, I know. I mean

>> JENNIFER MIZRAHI: She was phenomenal. So, so, you know, we're not winning every battle yet, but we're certainly, certainly trying. As to whether your synagogue did Jewish disability awareness month in February, my suggestion is this. People with disabilities…

>> SUZANNE: It's going to be done next year, and I'm heading the committee. It's not a problem. That's not a problem.

>> JENNIFER MIZRAHI: okay great. That's the answer. That's exactly the answer that I was going to suggest, what you're already doing.

>> SUZANNE: the rabbis were totally open and admitted that this was remiss on their part and we're just moving forward. Can't look back, got to move forward.

>> JENNIFER MIZRAHI: Right. You gotta move forward, and we have to say hineini . We have to volunteer and we have to roll up our sleeves, because we can't expect people to do it for us. I mean, it's like I said in the statistics, that you really have to ask. You know, you really have to ask people to do stuff. And then you have to volunteer. That's really the best

>> Oh, no, absolutely. The advocacy work, you know, it's been sort of around the synagogue, but it's never been directly in the synagogue. My daughter is not somebody you know, there's multiple issues to this. But my other question is, your fellows program looks so enticing and so interesting, and I just wondered if you ever thought about opening this to people in the New York area? I'm a little disappointed that you're going all the way from Maryland to California, ‘because my daughter cannot go to California.

>> JENNIFER MIZRAHI: Great. So, actually, we have had people come from all over the country to do the program here. It's obviously more expensive because they have to find housing to do so. But people have come from all over to do the program. But let me just say, it's a very staff intensive program. The people who come here, they're in different teams, where they are small teams with managers that are teaching them specific skills. We have a writing coach, Stan Goldman, who's a Ph.D. who's a professor of English who does their individual one on one writing, coaching for them. And we have as many as 30 speakers that come in per cohort to work with the fellows. So it's very, very labor intensive. We would love to be doing it in a lot more places, but there's this big barrier called money.

>> SUZANNE: I understand that.

>> JENNIFER MIZRAHI: It has been limiting in a very, very big way. So we're taking it as fast as we can. We think that Los Angeles will be our next big place. But I encourage you to spread the word, because we are doing a lot of work in New York, as you saw from that women's event, and we'd love to do more. But money is hard to come by for everybody working in the disability space.

>> Right, but there's certainly a lot more certainly local people could reach out for fundraising, and each synagogue, particularly the reform movement, they need to start now for next year. They need to be aware, and it's not just a month kind of thing. This is all the time. You don't have a disability for the month of February and then you're fine.

>> JENNIFER MIZRAHI: Right, no, you're absolutely right. And I will tell you, in terms of the fellowships, that we're starting to get some interest that some communities may pay for somebody from their community to come. So one thing that would be great is if maybe the New York federation or some group in New York would say, hey, you know what, we would sponsor two fellows a year, and we'll pay for their salary and we'll pay for their housing and for their transportation and we'll take that on.

But I will tell you that our per person cost to deliver the program is actually $16,000 per fellow because they get so much training for their, you know, for that nine week program. But it's a terrific program. We are able to get jobs or help these guys get into graduate school. One of our fellows, Ariella Barker, we're very proud of her, she got a full 100% scholarship to the Kennedy School of Government at Harvard, they're going to pay her full ride, and they're very excited about that. I see that Matan has a comment.

>> MATAN KOCH: If I could, just for a moment, I want to be very clear that as wonderful as our Maryland based program is, that is not the program that we're opening up in L.A. at the moment. Let's not confuse what we're doing. What we're going to be doing is, you know, a much more pilot based, less intensive at the moment training program to start Jewish leaders. Would we love to one day get to a place where we're doing that intense level of training in Los Angeles as well, absolutely, but that's an entirely different financial and staffing scale than what we're talking about right at the moment because, as Jennifer pointed out, it's an incredibly human intensive and financial intensive top flight program that we will learn from and take some of the best parts of and try to reproduce on a different scale in L.A.

>> SUZANNE: Well, I commend you for that, but I'd like to ask if you could consider a much smaller program for those people with disabilities who have been unable to complete college. My daughter had had to stop college, and has only just in seven years finished an associate’s degree. So I don't know if graduate school is in her future. It's probably not due to the repeated traumas to the head, due to the seizures. But a much smaller workshop, I'm certainly happy to help and try to find other advocates, parents, families who may have training as professionals. In other words, I'm a professor of linguistics. I'm happy to help work with students who may not have that level of getting into graduate school or being a Harvard or a Yale graduate, but for them, it was a huge achievement to get an academic diploma from high school due to their disability.

So we need to include everything, not just those achievers who have a disability with an IEP they were able to get through, because there's some people with serious disabilities where college is not an option.

>> JENNIFER MIZRAHI: Absolutely. So I'm going to have you take that offline with us, and let's be in touch with that on a more personal level. Let me just give you my let me just make sure that everybody sees on this slide here that my email is here, which is JenniferM@RespectAbility.org.

We're going to wrap it up in just a second here, but I want to say just a couple of things. Number one, this is a pilot program, Project Moses, that we want to start in Los Angeles. We have not started it formally yet, because we don't have the money yet. We are in the process of applying for money. We've applied for money from a couple of different, amazing Jewish organizations where we've started that dialogue. We're looking for other support. If anybody on this webinar has ideas for us, I hope that you'll let me know. Again, JenniferM@RespectAbility.org. We think this is important, no matter where you are, whether you're in Rockville, Maryland, Los Angeles, or anywhere, that people with disabilities should be in leadership positions, should be seen for their talents as volunteers, as staff, as board members, as potential donors, and we want that to happen nationally.

I want to invite folks to be involved in writing for the Shabbat Smile series, or to bring ideas for webinars to our attention, or readings that you think should happen or events that are happening in your community that we should put in our social media. I want to remind folks that we have our own Facebook Jewish Facebook channel. That's RespectAbility4, that is the number 4, All. And our Twitter, which is @Jewishinclusion. Because we think that social media is a good way to really build community.

RespectAbility has a couple of events coming up in New York City soon. We have one for college students with disabilities, college women with disabilities in particular, and one for Latinas with disabilities coming up in New York. I want to really plug our national conference, which is July 22nd here in Washington, D.C. July 22nd, major, major conference. I hope that people will come. It's going to be free. You can sign up now on our website, and I hope that you'll be involved.

I want to thank Matan Koch and I want to thank Vivian Bass for being, you know, a key part of building this program out. I want to thank Philip Pauli and Debbie Fink and other people from our team that are involved. We have a terrific board. You're seeing some of the pictures of some of our board members and staff that are Jewish and care about these issues. There's well more of them. We have many, many board members who are Jewish who are active, literally all the way from coast to coast. And we are very connected to a lot of the disability groups in Israel.

So, operator, I want to thank you very much for organizing the call. Thank you to everybody that dialed in, or is on via computer. Again, please send us your questions and your comments and any ideas that you have to JenniferM@RespectAbility.org. Thank you all, and on behalf of RespectAbility's team, I wish you a wonderful day. Thank you.