

**Daniela Gesundheit's Opening Remarks**  
**Shir Libeynu "Zoom" Shabbat, July 4, 2020**

I'd like to open with a quote by Rabbi Richard N. Levy:

"On this day, heat and warmth and light must come from deep within ourselves; no longer can we tear apart the world to make our fire."

Here we are on the full moon, a lunar eclipse tonight, it's the 4th of July in the United States, and our hearts are broken. My heart is broken. We have torn apart the world, and still so many are out in the cold.

Black Lives Matter.  
Black Trans Lives Matter.

We at Shir Libeynu stand up for and fight for the lives and rights of Black, Indigenous, First Nations, and People of Color. Jews and non-Jews. I feel so lucky to be a part of this congregation, the first queer inclusive congregation in Toronto, set in motion more than twenty years ago, thanks to the vision of our Rabbi Emerita Aviva Goldberg. We also owe thanks to the activism of the Black Trans community, who fought for civil rights and paved the way for our community to exist today. We are an inclusive community, with much to celebrate, and also with much work to do.

I moved back to Los Angeles several years ago, which is where I am now, so I am unfortunately steeped in American politics right now. Living in the US right now brings to mind the quote by Lily Tomlin: "No matter how cynical you become, it's never enough to keep up." But I still listen to the CBC daily and my social media feed is seventy percent "*Can-Con*" (Canadian content), so my eyes have been opened to some of the more painful aspects of both Canada's history and current reality — the events that were not featured on my citizenship test. I wonder if we are all taking the task of *chesbon hanefesh*, or spiritual accounting, to heart.

At this time I would like to encourage us all to remember our values as Jews:

Tikkun Olam — repair the world  
Pikuach Nefesh — we value human life above all else  
B'tzelem Elohim — we are all made in the image of God  
Tzedakah — we are committed to create a just society

And we also must celebrate our victories. During pride month, the US Supreme Court ruled to protect gay and trans people from employment discrimination. Canadian Member of Parliament Jagmeet Singh stood up against racism in Parliament, though he received much backlash.

This Louise Gluck excerpt from her poem October IV comes to mind as a high five to idealists, an endorsement of hope and the pursuit of a better world —

*" . . . And still, you are fortunate:  
the ideal burns in you like a fever.  
Or not like a fever, like a second heart."*

Pursuit of the ideal, much like tzedakah, is not a fever that evaporates when we feel better, but a *second heart*, the earthy bloody source of our vitality. I'm looking forward to working HARD alongside you all, to fight for Justice in the coming years, armed with our second hearts.

Many action steps were outlined in a recent Shir Libeynu newsletter spearheaded by our President Karen Charnow Lior, which I encourage you to consult. I will share here the words of Rabbi Susan Talve and Sarah Barasch-Hagans of T'ruah — the 10 Rules for Engagement for White Jews Joining the #BlackLivesMatter Movement — which were also referenced in a previous newsletter:

1. Show up. Keep showing up.
2. Practice deep listening and less talking. See the extent of racism in America (and Canada) and feel that pain.
3. Do your own internal community's work — don't expect BIPOC people to do free labour to teach you.
4. Explode the myth that all Jews are white.
5. Know the disparities in your community and commit to learning more about their root causes.
6. Hold yourself accountable.
7. Hold the Police accountable.
8. Lobby for policy change.
9. Use your privilege to amplify the voices of those who have less.
10. Go outside your comfort zone while staying in your lane. Pay attention. Don't hide when it gets messy.

Lastly, and perhaps most importantly, I encourage you to seek out the voices of Black and non-white Jews who are already leading the conversation on race and the Jewish community, such as [MaNishtana](#), [Rabbi Sandra Lawson](#), [Michael Twitty](#), [Amadi Lovelace](#), [Tema Smith](#), and [Rebecca Pierce](#).