



(L-R) Elana Wien, Director of The Foundation's Center for Designed Philanthropy and Next Gen panelists Jordan Fruchtman, Rabbi Ronit Tsadok, Aaron Henne and Ayana Morse.

# DESIGN & IMPACT NEWS

## Next Gen... Leading the Way!

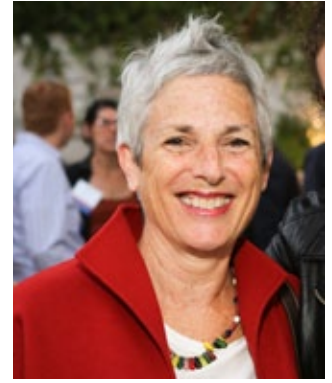
As millennials become the next generation of community leaders, they are poised to shape the future of the Jewish community. That's why in mid-September, The Foundation hosted its **Next Gen Leading the Way** event, which brought together a panel of four Cutting Edge Grant recipient organizations focused on reaching next genners: **Moishe House**, **Reboot** in partnership with **IKAR**, the **Silverlake Independent Jewish Community Center**, and **theatre dybbuk**. The evening event was held at the Westwood home of Foundation trustee **Allan Cutrow** and his wife **Mary**, and the speakers presented their remarkably interwoven stories about bringing Judaism—spiritually and culturally—to the younger Jewish community.

"The inspiring organizations represented tonight exemplify the goals of our Cutting Edge Grants," said **Elana Wien**, director of The Foundation's Center for Designed Philanthropy and moderator of the panel. "They directly engage young people in Jewish life through creative, innovative, and thought-provoking programs; they are led by forward-thinking young leaders, and investing in these causes helps ensure the future of our community as it continues to evolve."



“I loved the whole evening. It’s been great to feel the sense of excitement in reimagining Judaism. These organizations bring people together to really connect, and that’s super exciting.”

– Davia Rivka  
Foundation donor



# Next Gen Leadership & the Future of the Jewish Community

## OUR SPEAKERS...



(L-R)

Moderator **Elana Wien** is the director of The Foundation’s **Center for Designed Philanthropy**. She manages the vetting and distribution of The Foundation’s grantmaking and the customized philanthropic services provided to Foundation donors. Elana has a BA in geography from the University of California, Berkeley and received her MA in anthropology from the Universidad de las Americas as a Rotary Ambassadorial Scholar to Mexico. She currently serves on the Family Philanthropy Advisory Council of Southern California Grantmakers.

**Jordan Fruchtmann** is the chief program officer of **Moishe House**, where he develops its program team and the community builders they support. Founded in 2006, Moishe House engages young Jews by establishing grassroots community houses that cater to the next gen Jewish population. Residents of each Moishe House host a wide range of Jewish programs that engage hundreds of their peers in events such as Shabbat dinners, Jewish study, holiday celebrations, and social outings.

**Ayana Morse** is the executive director of the **Silverlake Independent Jewish Community Center (SIJCC)**, a leader in Jewish education, arts and culture. Founded in 1951, SIJCC serves as a gathering space for the local community. It provides early childhood education to young children, helps to develop a foundation for families to explore Jewish culture, and shares the values and ethics of Jewish heritage through educational, recreational, and social programming.

**Rabbi Ronit Tsadok** is the associate rabbi at **IKAR**, a Jewish community where tradition and innovation meet to create a Judaism that is resonant and rooted. Launched in 2004, IKAR is partnering with **Reboot**, which together launched “Death Over Dinner: Jewish Edition” to engage young adult Jews in conversations about death, relationships, and end-of-life questions.

**Aaron Henne** is the artistic director of **theatre dybbuk**, an innovative arts and education company whose work focuses on Jewish folklore, rituals, and history. Founded in 2011, theatre dybbuk is an arts and education organization that creates theatrical events geared primarily to an audience in their 20s, 30s and 40s. Its work is steeped in and based around arts, culture, education, and exploring the universal human experience from a Jewish perspective.



Marvin Schotland speaking to the panelists.



Since 2006, more than \$8 million of The Foundation's Cutting Edge Grants have been awarded to Next Gen initiatives. Below is an edited excerpt of the evening's engaging discussion.

**Elana Wien (EW): How are you engaging next gen Jews?**

**Ayana Morse (AM):** At **Silverlake Independent Jewish Community Center (SIJCC)**, we highlight values and feelings rather than defining a particular age bracket. There is an energy in our events that is palpable, driven by creativity, arts and culture, that fuse together to create something that feels fresh and relevant. Our model of community-driven programming invites participants to work alongside our team to dream about and visualize what comes next.

**Ronit Tsadok (RT):** Through this Jewish version of "Death Over Dinner," we will enable many next gen Jews to participate in meaningful dinner table conversations contemplating mortality, end-of-life, and other spiritual questions. These conversations are often surprising and somehow life affirming. We're helping people connect to a topic our tradition addresses particularly well, and that many people are already interested in discussing, but don't know where to start.

**EW: What about your programs are innovative vs. iterative/rediscovering?**

**Jordan Fruchtmann (JF):** **Moishe House** started out as quite innovative because none of us had prior experience as Jewish professionals. My cofounders and I were simply young, inspired recent college graduates who saw and felt a need, based on our own lives. We are now in a mixed phase between innovation and familiarity. In terms of innovation, we have a bucket in our strategic plan directly related to experimenting with new big ideas. The process is also continuous and drives most of our innovation. We are constantly asking ourselves to improve and make changes to the existing structure. We are unafraid to try new solutions, and particularly unafraid to say when something is not going well, so long as we fix the problem.

**Aaron Henne (AH):** Theatre is, as is religious ritual, one of our oldest forms of communal engagement. Utilizing theatrical forms to illuminate Jewish traditions, topics, and perspectives is inherently repetitive. It brings our history to life through a contemporary exploration of some of our most

ancient forms. We use these techniques and storytelling to provide a variety of opportunities for connection: educational workshops, provocative productions, and synagogue collaborations. We are forming community by going into different communities throughout Los Angeles and serving as a binding agent for those who are seemingly disconnected from one another.

**AM:** For us, innovation and familiarity are constantly in conversation. The through line of our programming is reinterpreting Jewish rituals and traditions. We take something that has been at the cornerstone of Jewish life for many years and give it a contemporary twist.

**RT:** The "Death Over Dinner" project was already out there, and after speaking to the creator, Michael Hebb, Rabbi Sharon Brous realized how incredibly powerful it was. The initial response is often, "Who wants to talk about death, let alone over dinner?" But it turned out that thousands of people, including those in their 20s and 30s, have wanted to talk about end-of-life issues and the afterlife...about mourning and grief. **IKAR** and **Reboot** were excited to expand upon that model.

**EW: What are some of the key challenges you face as a leader and what can funders and the wider community do to support you in addressing those challenges?**

**AH:** Bandwidth and resources. We are a relatively young organization that is operating in as lean a manner as possible. We need to be mindful about how we proceed and may, at times, have to limit our availability in order to make sure that the quality remains as high as possible.

**AM:** When SIJCC received its 2012 Cutting Edge Grant from the Jewish Community Foundation to establish Culture Lab, it came at a time when our community was ready for something to push us to the next place. The Culture Lab has been effective in repositioning the SIJCC as a compelling part of the Jewish as well as arts and cultural landscapes in the city.

“When Rosh Hashanah approaches, the shofar is sounded every day during prayer services to awaken us. Every year we are reminded of the need for personal introspection. You are the communal shofarot. You are immersed in the Jewish community; you are a reminder that we need to innovate and transform ourselves and our community.”

– Marvin I. Schotland, President & CEO, Jewish Community Foundation of Los Angeles





Our gracious hosts  
Mary & Allan Cutrow

**EW: What is the role of mentorship in developing a leadership pipeline for young people within Jewish organizations?**

**JF:** Mentorship is incredibly important, but right now the new buzz word and approach to leadership development is “coaching.” We see mentorship as a long-term and very personal relationship that must be a two-way relationship. With coaching, we are talking about a process that could be done in a few sessions or over the course of a year. It can be project-specific and most certainly dives into the personal aspects of professional challenges. Moishe House has started to use executive coaches in its leadership training, and we have received incredibly positive feedback so far.

**AM:** Opportunities for mentorship are always valuable, and finding ways to involve younger people in decision-making processes is a great way to gain buy-in and support from them. Our structure is set up to include multiple engagement points from the community, from open-invitation brainstorming sessions, to joining events and program committees.

**EW: How can older, non-millennials find a place in your programs and projects?**

**AH:** While our focus is “next gen,” our programs are open to people who have an interest in meaningful creative experiences. We provide multiple points of entry—educational

workshops, holiday programming, performances, and professional development—and have found that participants come from a variety of perspectives and backgrounds.

**AM:** Our programs tend to appeal to people who are creative, curious, and seeking a deeper connection to their community and tradition. Our core audience is generally in its late 20s to mid-40s, but we have a strong showing of people both older and younger.

**EW: Your organizations have limited resources yet you’re willing to embrace risk. How do you balance the need for consistency with innovation, and how do you learn from those experiments that don’t work out?**

**AH:** Coming from theatre, I take the attitude that most things are “rehearsal,” meaning that they are opportunities to experiment, to learn what “serves the performance” and will continue to be used, and what doesn’t but was worth giving a try.

**AM:** We are not afraid of trying new things and giving them space to breathe and evolve. We also encourage our community to be involved in every step of the way, as we plan events and launch new programs, so that successes and failures are shared by all of us in a connected, meaningful way.

**JF:** We love a little risk. We are constantly experimenting and have a structure around our innovation so that it is tested and housed in one department at Moishe House. We have to learn to be more humble and honest about our mistakes and mess ups. We have to keep trying lots of little solutions and scrap the ones that do not work and invest in the bright spots. Software developers are mostly moving toward this agile framework for growth, and Jewish organizations could gain a great deal from this experience.

## CUTTING EDGE GRANTS

The Foundation’s Cutting Edge Grants program supports new and innovative programs that address critical needs in the Los Angeles Jewish community. The 2016 Cutting Edge Grant recipients pictured below represent 12 programs working to transform the community in several areas, including next gen engagement and leadership.



Photo: Gary Leonard for HP Photography

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RECENTLY SEEN....

1. Adlai Wertman, Allan Cutrow, Marvin Schotland, Sam Yebri, and Evan Schlessinger
2. Virginia & Arthur Kahn
3. Evan Schlessinger and Elana Wien
4. Lew Groner and Rick Labowe
5. Nora & Mike Raffi, Pari Cohen, and Jill Ruben
6. Bob Goldstein, Judith Lipkin, and Susan Mattisinko
7. Adlai & Janet Wertman
8. Elizabeth Austin and Rae Gindi
9. Janet Papkin
10. Davia Rivka and Katie Burns
11. David Abecassis, Rachel Richman, and Marvin Schotland
12. Susan Mattisinko, Arthur Greenberg, and Sue Rosenwasser
13. Allison & Randy Levine



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## IN THE SPOTLIGHT

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