

MAZON NEWS™

SPRING 2021



**REFLECTING ON 10
YEARS OF LEADERSHIP**

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LETTER FROM LEADERSHIP

At MAZON, we love good news and an occasion to celebrate. Our work is serious and often heart-wrenching, so it is with great pleasure and pride that I write this piece in honor of Abby J. Leibman's tenth anniversary as President & CEO of MAZON.

From her first days in this role, Abby recognized that MAZON was uniquely poised to distinguish itself as a powerful and resonant voice in the anti-hunger movement. By tapping into MAZON's network of longstanding partners in almost every state and launching strategic initiatives, Abby built the organization's capacity to listen and synthesize, identify trends, and develop tailored solutions to end hunger. She has always understood the importance of federal policy solutions as well as the interplay between federal safety net programs and the states that administer them.

Abby's strategic focus, leadership, and passion have built an incredible engine for policy changes that have positively impacted millions of people who struggle to put enough on the table each day. Her vision has led us to approach hunger as a civil rights issue, grounded in a fundamental belief that inadequate access to food undermines a person's opportunity and weakens their ability to succeed in life.

Over the last decade, Abby has significantly strengthened MAZON's financial and programmatic capacities. Her many accomplishments include strategically adding staff and opening satellite offices in Washington, DC and Israel. Under her leadership, MAZON has embraced its unique role within the anti-hunger community, not only as the Jewish voice at the table, but also as an organization willing to shine a spotlight on issues and populations where other advocates and policymakers have yet to focus. We refer to this as Abby's "superpower."

COVID-19 has presented myriad economic challenges for most Americans, and the hunger crisis has been front and center. Abby recognized that this increased exposure made MAZON's work even more important and resonant. The urgency with which we tackle our work to make nutrition safety net programs stronger, more accessible, and more substantial went into warp speed. Abby did not falter. She led her team through these tumultuous times with aplomb.

In every sense, Abby's work at MAZON profoundly models an inclusive, values-driven method of leadership — to the Board, the staff, and all MAZON supporters. Her clear goal is to pursue justice, and, in turn, to strengthen others' capacity to pursue it. She is a powerful, dynamic, and collaborative force for social change. We are so fortunate to have her leading our team.

Abby, congratulations on an amazing ten years with MAZON!

Liz Kanter Groskind

Liz Kanter Groskind
BOARD CHAIR





This Is Hunger: Pamela's Story

Nearly 40 million Americans struggled to put food on the table before COVID-19. The pandemic has exacerbated their hardship and it is now well understood that America faces a true hunger crisis.

With millions of Americans newly unemployed, underemployed, or unable to work due to health concerns, we expect the number of people struggling to put food on the table has more than doubled. This harrowing reality is illustrated by the story of Pamela, a 53-year old travel agent in Los Angeles.

“My stress level is high because there is no end in sight. So, with no income coming in and my savings are dwindling away, I need some help for the first time in my life.”

“It is shocking that we're in a situation where if a person loses a job for more than two weeks, their entire life can be disrupted.”

“If you don't have to worry that you're not going to starve to death, you can make much more level-headed decisions about other things in your life, you know, paying your healthcare, paying for your house, paying for, you know, children, school supplies, whatever it is. It takes that burden off if you have access to food. Food is the one thing every day that everybody has to do. There's not one person who can go without food, you know?”

While Congress and the Administration have taken some important steps to address hunger in the wake of COVID-19, we are urging policymakers to extend the critical improvements to federal nutrition programs like SNAP (formerly food stamps) through the duration of our national economic recovery. Learn more and take action at mazon.org/snap.

THIS IS HUNGER

is a powerful, immersive digital video experience that explores who struggles with hunger in America and why. Available for your group and individual viewing with accompanying curriculum at mazon.org/this-is-hunger.

From the Desk of Abby J. Leibman: Reflecting on a Decade of Leadership at MAZON



Abby J. Leibman testifying before Congress in January 2016

When I was hired by MAZON's Board of Directors in 2011, I was already familiar with the unique role MAZON played in the Jewish community and the importance of its mission. I spent my initial weeks reading, learning from long-time Board and staff members, new colleagues who had spent decades in the anti-hunger movement, and MAZON's founders — Leonard Fein (z"l), Irv Cramer, and Ted Mann (z"l).

I was asked to develop a new vision for MAZON — one that honored its past and also prepared it to respond to an evolving set of challenges and opportunities.

I wanted to give life to MAZON's mission — to show that Jewish values not only teach us how to respond to others but that they have meaning and impact in a modern world. I wanted it to matter that MAZON was a part of the anti-hunger movement — that it had a powerful role to play in ending hunger in America and Israel.

I thought about what it means to be guided by Jewish values, caring for the stranger, being a part of a community, ensuring that the most vulnerable people have what they need to survive. I looked at the vital, yet

narrow, scope of the anti-hunger movement in the U.S. — defending the nutrition safety net — and I thought, we can do more. I thought about those who are too often left behind when we set policy for the majority without regard to the needs of those who do not match our generalized assumptions about the poor. And I crafted a vision for MAZON that embraced the acceptance that no one should be left behind when we respond to hunger; seeing all people as being *b'tzelem Elohim* (made in the image of God) but also understanding that people reflect the many faces of God, each with a distinct set of possibilities, some stymied by barriers not experienced by others.

For 16 months, *This Is Hunger* toured the U.S. in a big-rig truck, educating and engaging over 15,000 people around the country





MAZON's groundbreaking exhibit, This Is Hunger, is now permanently housed in Los Angeles

I am someone who listens, learns, and then acts, and I have always made that central to my work at MAZON. The issue areas that MAZON has made its key priorities are not new challenges; indeed, many of them have languished for years, perceived as too complicated to address or too narrow to merit a national response. But when we listen, we hear the anguish of struggle too long overlooked. We can conceive of policies, laws, rules, and regulations to address the challenges we've heard. And then, we act to make those a reality.

We committed to lifting up particular issues or populations, to leading where we see an opportunity, and being gratified when others embrace these priorities, too. MAZON currently focuses on food insecurity among military families, single mothers, Native Americans, veterans, LGBTQ older adults, and the people of Puerto Rico.

The vision I articulated 10 years ago was rooted in MAZON's mission, its history, and the promise that the organization held for the future. The essence of this mission has not changed in MAZON's 36-year history, and I am proud to continue this critical work with each of you to transform **how it is** into **how it should be**.



Abby J. Leibman and Rabbi Joel Pitkowsky led MAZON's 12th annual (and first virtual) National Hunger Seder in March 2021



Abby J. Leibman

Abby J. Leibman
PRESIDENT & CEO

Devastation & Resilience in Indian Country



COVID-19 has been devastating in so many ways, but perhaps nowhere more than in Indian Country. Native Americans have been impacted by the pandemic more than any other community in the U.S., with a death rate almost twice that of white Americans. Due to the federal government's failure to meet its treaty obligations to sufficiently fund basic services in exchange for vast amounts of Tribal land ceded long ago, these communities face chronic structural, economic, and health inequities — this includes challenges related to housing, healthcare, and of course food security.



Families living in Indigenous communities are twice as likely to experience food insecurity, even before the pandemic.

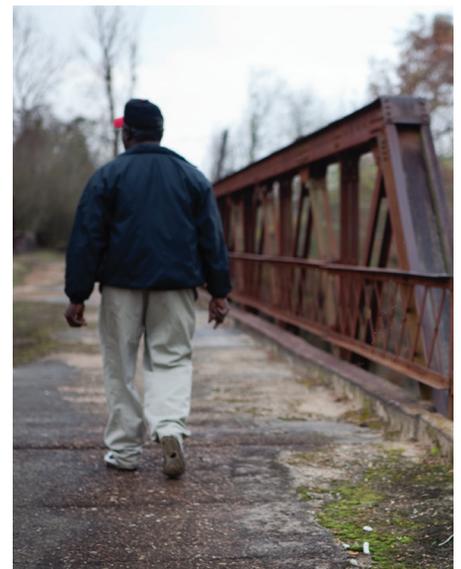
About one in four Native Americans participate in SNAP,

and many others participate in a commodity box program called the Food Distribution Program on Indian Reservations (FDPIR). However, many Native Americans experience hunger because of the simple and unjust fact that the federal government bars Tribes from administering critical nutrition programs like SNAP and school meals.

While COVID-19 has clearly shown how vulnerable Tribal communities are to public health emergencies, food insecurity, and economic downturn, it is remarkable to see that Tribal Nations responded more effectively than federal and state governments in many communities. Tribes took immediate action to protect their people by exercising sovereignty when states disputed their responses. While many states and non-Tribal citizens chose not to comply with CDC guidelines, many Tribes like Navajo Nation and Shinnecock Nation complied with CDC public health guidelines to keep their people safe. And with the arrival of vaccines, Tribes are navigating hurdles to efficiently and effectively vaccinate their people.

Tribes and Native communities have their own solutions — including

for how to address food insecurity. The devastation of COVID-19 also underscores the importance of the growing Tribal food sovereignty movement, which aims to reclaim food systems, protect food traditions, and enable Tribes to feed themselves in good times and bad.



MAZON is proud to partner with Tribal leaders in seeking to strengthen food security, bolster and expand public health infrastructure, and build vibrant Tribal agricultural economies. Learn more and get involved at amazon.org/indian-country.

THE GREAT AMERICAN DELI SCHLEP



mazon.org/delischlep

This summer, longtime MAZON supporter Steve Goode is setting out on a **16,000-mile, 75-day motorcycle adventure** to visit one Jewish deli in nearly every state. The Great American Deli Schlep will offer an exciting opportunity for communities across the country to learn about MAZON's fight to end hunger.

Learn more and get involved at mazon.org/delischlep. And follow along on social media this summer — [@MAZONusa](https://twitter.com/MAZONusa) — for updates from the road!

MAKE A GIFT TODAY

Join MAZON in ensuring every person can meet their most basic of needs — food on their table and confidence in a better tomorrow.

Your support is both a commitment to immediate assistance for those facing hunger and to future action to protect the most vulnerable among us.

Donate today by visiting mazon.org or calling us at (800) 813-0557.



10850 Wilshire Blvd #400
Los Angeles, CA 90024
mazon.org

BECOME A MONTHLY DONOR!

Invest in the fight to end hunger. Please call us at
(800) 813-0557 or visit mazon.org to join our
monthly giving program today!

LEGACY GIVING AND GIFT PLANNING

Find out about giving through your will, life-income
gifts, or other creative ways to support MAZON.
Please contact Sarah Pratter at spratner@mazon.org
or by phone at (424) 208-7228.

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WHO IS MAZON?

Inspired by Jewish values and ideals, MAZON is
a national advocacy organization working to end
hunger among people of all faiths and backgrounds
in the United States and Israel.

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