

PROPOSAL

Youth Monthly Webinar: Empowering the Activist in You!

Summary:

In line with the mission of Keshet, which is to strengthen Jewish communities and “equip Jewish organizations with the skills and knowledge to build LGBTQ-affirming communities; create spaces in which all queer Jewish youth feel seen and valued; and advance LGBTQ rights nationwide,” this proposal is to further the Keshet youth’s self-awareness, build self-esteem, empower champions of our intersectionality, and activist in their own communities.

Current State:

Currently there are 15 million Jewish people in the world according to the Jewish Virtual Library, a fact-based research organization. Without the Holocaust, we would have 30 million Jewish people which, as we see a radical change in the doubling of our population in 1943 with the loss of 6 million Jewish people. This created the ever-present awareness that our ‘people’ were slated for annihilation. Sadly, this hatred sometimes turns on ourselves as self-loathing. This is only one piece of our self at Keshet because we also represent the queer population. It’s not easy to get an accurate percentage of queer people across the world, however, it’s stated according to Gallup polls that 25% of the population would be a fair estimate. The Keshet population for which this proposal is intended is ages 18-23. The population between the ages of 16-24 is 15 % of the general population, as reported by Youth & The 2030 Agenda for Sustainability Development Report (Bas, 2019). In calculating a guesstimate on the intersectionality population of Jewish, LGBTQ, Youth, between the ages of 18-24, we arrive at the number 562,000. This means that our intersectionality equates to .007% of the world population. This is a small intersectionality. Keshet is the only global

Queer Jewish Youth Program that serves this population. The attendance at our adolescent meetings monthly ranges from 5 – 40 people. When those adolescents turn 18, they are no longer in the program. The assumption is that these youth enter colleges or continue with their Synagogues and enter smaller organizations locally. If the University of Maryland, College Park, which has 6,000 Jewish people hasn't had a post in their Jewish Organization of Hamsa since 2020, then we can surmise that other institutions and areas with Jewish people are also lacking in support for this population.

Needs:

There is a need for a youth group for the ages of 18-24, not just for their support, but for the betterment of society. Understanding ourselves, growing in our identity, allows us to reach out and influence local, national, and international attitudes and politics. Based on Cathy Cohen's book, "Punks, Bulldaggers, and Welfare Queens: The Radical Potential of Queer Politics?" one of the issues surrounding youth is the intersectionality of ourselves and understanding how to self-identify and to further understand how we as Queer Jewish people have a unique identity in oppression and discrimination. We need to learn how we connect within the U.S. and build our historical knowledge and use education to guide rather than strictly divide ourselves from heterosexuals (Cohen, 1997). We need to empower ourselves with knowledge in order to transform grassroots organizations through education. We need to change the system from the inside, however, this requires a very structured process. First, we educate ourselves, then we educate our local communities forming additional championed cohorts. Those cohorts need to form relationships with other organizations with similar interests in changing the systemic racism and oppression in our political system. A popular buzzword in educational circles today, even from the USM Chancellor, as it's stated in his mission this year, is *systemness*. We are better together than apart is the definition of systemness.

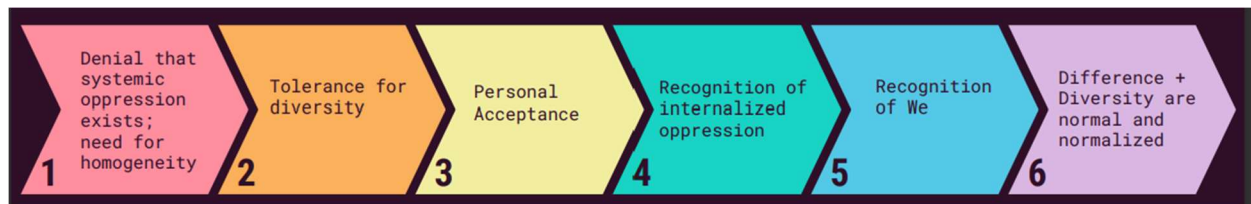
Keshet pulls us together. This global opportunity to connect, awareness of intersectionality, and empowerment of 'champions,' is needed for our population to live in peace.

Detailed Proposal:

A monthly webinar for youth ages 18-24, led by myself, and co-led, once trained, by another LGBTQ Jewish youth advocate. The first three meetings will be a process of self-discovery. We will learn about terminology, utilizing the book, *The A-Z of Gender and Sexuality: From Ace to Ze* by Morgan Lev Edward Holleb. Understanding the terminology to appropriately address ourselves and others is a first step in owning our own identity.

Future webinars would address the process that one goes through for self-acceptance and then interconnectedness with the greater population.

The following stages were presented at an LTHJ Global presentation defining these stages from Denial to a Normalized community:



These stages begin with the understanding that we are touched by self-loathing through systemic conditions and the first step to healing is becoming aware of those feelings. Audre Lourde was a black, lesbian, mother, activist and poet stated, "For the master's tools will never dismantle the master's house. They may allow us to temporarily beat him at his own game, but they will never enable us to bring about genuine change. Racism and homophobia are real conditions of all our lives in this place and time. I urge each one of us here to reach down into that deep place of

knowledge inside herself and touch that terror and loathing of any difference that lives here. See whose face it wears. Then the personal as the political can begin to illuminate all our choices.”

Once we move through the six step process we will discuss more about what we can do in our communities to advocate.

Through monthly forums, posted on the Keshet website, supported by the Keshet Board, we are able to reach a wide audience of Jewish queer youth, and come together to learn. I have already received approval for these monthly webinars, held the first meeting in November, and we decided collectively that although we have a global mission, we need to start with ourselves. Many of us were kicked out of our homes, forced to figure things out on our own and struggle with simple life skills that should have been taught to us at home with our families. We have recruited a number of professionals to come and speak at our webinars on basic financials, business opportunities, resume writing, networking, and other professional topics. We are creating our own family and building ourselves back up.

Note: What started as a project in LGBTQ class at UMD has turned into an actionable, life-changing monthly collaborative that is making a huge difference in the lives of Jewish queer youth.

Bas. (2019, February 20). *World Youth Report: Addressing the complex challenges facing young people today*. United Nations Sustainable Development. Retrieved December 20, 2022, from <https://www.un.org/sustainabledevelopment/blog/2019/02/world-youth-report/>

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Gallup, Inc. (2022, September 8). *What Percentage of the Population Is Gay?* Gallup.com. <https://news.gallup.com/poll/6961/what-percentage-population-gay.aspx>

Holleb, Edward Lev. (2019) *The A-Z of Gender and Sexuality: From Ace to Ze*

Keshet. (2022, November 23). Keshet - For LGBTQ Equality in Jewish Life. <https://www.keshetonline.org/>

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