

Shlomo Gleibman

When I was 16, still in Ukraine, my grandfather, a Holocaust survivor from a Hasidic family, passed away, and I started going to a Hasidic synagogue to learn more about my family heritage. I spent some time studying in yeshivot in New York and in Israel. After I moved to Toronto, I attended Modern Orthodox, Litvitshe, and Chabad shuls, and actively engaged in planning, promoting, and facilitating their educational, social, and outreach programs. I valued their commitment to Jewish knowledge, as well as the warmth and mutual support in a community that felt like family. However, I did not share the dominant values and social norms of these communities. For years, I had to sacrifice big parts of who I was and what was important to me. I never felt that I fully belonged. When I hit my 30s, I “broke up” with Judaism, I left the community where I had spent almost a decade, and I came out as gay. It took me several years to reconnect to Judaism and to begin attending liberal synagogues. I was comfortable there, I shared their modern liberal values, I appreciated their openness and acceptance, but I was still longing for a sense of community that would also feel warm and heimishe, in addition to commitment to inclusiveness, social justice, and Jewish spirituality that would creatively synthesize the traditional and the new. I found this in Shir Libeynu and became a member several years ago. I was glad to offer several workshops on Jewish and gay cultures for Shir Libeynu members throughout these years.

I have an insider knowledge of Jewish and LGBTQ communities. My professional experience includes teaching, research, writing, editing materials for publishing, updating websites, developing new programs, planning events and doing outreach and educational work for Toronto Jewish and LGBTQ organizations and community groups. I have taught Hebrew language and Jewish history in Jewish schools. I have also taught Jewish history, religious studies, and gender studies at York University and Trent University.

In 2012 – 2015 I served on the executive committee of Kulanu Toronto in the capacity of Director of Education. I have also spent several years on Jewish Diversity Committee at Congregation Darchei Noam and on planning committee at University of Toronto Qu(e)rying Religion. In 2011, I organized and led Queer Academia Discussion Group on Meetup, Facebook, and at The 519 Church Street Community Centre. In 2013, I was a member of GLBTQ Jewish Forum at Miles Nadal JCC in Toronto. In 2014, I was a co-organizer of the panel “Toronto Queer Jewish History” at University of Toronto.

I hold a Master’s degree in Humanities from York University and a Graduate Diploma in Jewish Studies from Israel and Golda Koschitzky Centre for Jewish Studies at York. I am currently finishing my Ph.D. in the same program, with concentrations in Jewish studies and queer studies. My studies and research focus on Jewish queer culture and community. On this subject, in 2012-2016 I have delivered 5 papers at Jewish Studies conferences, panels, and seminars and 27 presentations, lectures, and workshops in synagogues, JCCs, and Jewish groups and events across the United States and

Canada. My award-winning essay “Study and Desire: Jewish Queer Continuum in Yeshiva Narratives” has been accepted for publication in *Shofar: An Interdisciplinary Journal of Jewish Studies*.

My major areas of contribution as a Shir Libeynu board member could include adult education programming, outreach, community/membership engagement, and marketing/promotion. I believe that developing strategies for increasing our profile in Toronto Jewish community and for greater engagement of members should be among our priorities.