

Pride and PreJewdice

JQYU's Jewish Queer College Newsletter

A College Outlook

Hello all! We feel very privileged to give you the first edition of the Pride and PreJewdice, a newsletter dedicated to JQYU members in various colleges around the US! With it already being halfway through summer vacation, we're starting to think about this upcoming school year. In addition to getting a degree, college is also a chance to expand your horizons. College can often be the turning point for LGBTQ+ students with the first opportunity for a community of like-minded peers, seek them out! Stay tuned for an upcoming list of Jewish queer college specific resources.

We look forward to seeing what's to come!

M. Lattin (she/her) and Mic Braun (they/them)

Transitioning and Transitions

Parshat Beha'alotecha

Sheva Friedenberga (she/her)

In last week's Parsha (Torah portion), there were numerous cases of the Jewish people complaining and expressing overall dissatisfaction. One of the most well-known examples of this is when the nation complained to Moshe (Moses) about the maan (sustenance) they were provided with during their 40 years in the desert. Although commentators say this "bread from heaven", as it was known, could taste like any food they wished for, the Jews demanded that Moshe provide them with meat. They reminisced about being in Egypt, where they had fish, cucumbers, melons, and other foods they now missed (Numbers 11:4-5).

What makes these complaints so surprising is that the Jewish people knew that they were headed to the place that they so deeply wanted to be: the Land of Israel. They chose to take part in the journey, they wanted more than anything to be close to G-d. So why all the complaining? How, after wanting freedom so badly and for so long, could the nation look back on 210 terrible years of being enslaved in Egypt and remember it fondly?



While considering this question, I began to think about positive transitions within our everyday lives—moving to your dream city, or starting your first semester at the college that you've been praying to get into since your first year of high school. Once you move to the city of your fantasies, however, there's a good chance that you don't know anyone there yet. Perhaps you can't find the laundromat, the public transportation is off schedule, or maybe you just miss home. Starting out freshman year at the university of your dreams, you may be unhappy with your roommate, the classes may be difficult, and you may miss having fresh laundry ready without having to bat an eyelash. But does all this make what you've achieved any less great?

This subject can be particularly relevant to those going through a gender transition. Trying out names to see what suits you, starting to use your gender-affirming name and pronouns, being able to buy clothing that make you feel like you, perhaps even starting on those long-awaited hormones! These are all such positive and wonderful things, but the journey can be difficult. Does having a rough time adjusting to these new changes invalidate what you want or who you are?

The concise, right, and only answer to the above question is 'no'. Not only does it not invalidate who you are, rather it turns you into someone so much stronger than what you could have otherwise been. There's a Jewish saying, "lafum tzarah agrah," which means "the greater the struggle, the greater the reward." It's not that the transition itself isn't positive, but rather that there are a few bumps in the road making the present potentially difficult, and the outcome all the more fulfilling. May we all see our lives continue to be filled with positive transitions and the strength to overcome them.

LGBT Terminology

While LGBTQ+ individuals have existed since the dawn of civilization, our unification into a community is, historically speaking, a pretty recent development. As such, the terms we use to describe ourselves and each other are constantly changing and updating as we welcome new individuals and embrace our diversity. The following terms are only a handful of the many being used within LGBTQ+ spaces:

Yacov Steinberg (he/him)



- 1. LGBT (acronym):** Short for Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, these four letters refer to some members of our community.
 - While this four-letter variation used to be the standard, other letters and symbols have since been added to make the acronym more inclusive. Some variations include Q, I, and A, for Queer/Questioning, Intersex, and Asexual, respectively, and a "+" symbol after to include additional identities.
- 2. Personal Gender Pronouns (noun):** Abbreviated as PGPs, these are the pronouns with which one identifies, e.g. He/Him/His, She/Her/Hers, They/Them/Theirs, or something else entirely.
 - For many individuals, being referred to by pronouns that align with their identity is very important. If you don't know which to use, don't be afraid to ask!
- 3. Queer (adjective):** Generally refers to a fluid or non-binary sexual orientation or gender identity; Someone with such an identity (noun). **Alt:** Used as an umbrella term in the place of LGBTQ+ or any of the individual identities within the acronym.
 - The word was historically used in a derogatory form to attack people, LGBTQ+ or otherwise, especially effeminate men. Being the badass community that we are, many have reclaimed the term and now use it loudly and proudly. While you might see the letter Q at the end of the LGBT acronym, it is important to note that the term's use can still feel potentially controversial to some.
- 4. Cishet (abbreviated noun/adjective):** Short for Cisgender-Heterosexual, this term references non-LGBTQ+ (cisgender-heterosexual) identified people or institutions.
- 5. Ace (abbreviated adjective/noun):** Short for Asexual, Asexuality or such identified people.
 - Asexuality covers a wide range of individual experiences, generally defined by limited or varied levels of sexual attraction. It is important to note that many asexual individuals do experience attraction on some level, but do not feel a need to express it in a sexual manner.

Interview with Misha Osherovich about his new short film, "E.very D.ay".

Kevin Lubin (he/him)

Q: You created and acted in an incredible short film by the name of "E.very D.ay" alongside Angelica Santiago. Can you give us a quick summary as to the content of the film and why you felt it was important to create?

A: Sure. Our film "E.very D.ay" puts the audience inside the minds of two individuals living with active eating disorders. Due to my and Angelica's personal experience with eating disorders and recovery, Angelica and I essentially play versions of our past selves in the film. The title comes from a belief that Angelica and I share that both the struggle and recovery aspect of eating disorders is something that is an everyday battle.

I consider myself in "active recovery"—meaning I choose, every day, to live a healthy life.

Q: You've been open about your own personal struggles with eating disorders and how "E.very D.ay" relates to your own story. What was your experience working on a project that hit so close to home?

A: I wasn't sure what to expect diving into a project that hit so close to home. Both Angelica and I did have to go to some dark places to re-live some of our past on-camera. Overall though, it's been incredibly empowering. Using my story to put a message of awareness out into the world has been incredibly cathartic and has brought about so much good so far. I'm very happy I made the choice to write and act in the film.

Q: What do you feel is the most important takeaway for those who see your film? Is there a specific message that you hope is clear to every viewer?

A: Two things. One: Eating disorders are messy, real,

and can affect anyone, regardless of race, gender, orientation, or any identifying characteristic. Our film highlights that this disease does not discriminate, and it can (and does) affect every part of a person's life. Two: Ask questions. Part of the problem with eating disorders is that they are seldom talked about in the mainstream media—and when they are, they are often misrepresented. Part of this has to do with people not fully grasping what it means to live with this disorder, but also the disease itself is usually shrouded with a lot of secrecy and shame. Those struggling with ED often don't feel comfortable asking for help because there is so much stigma surrounding it. We hope this film provokes questions, comments, and even arguments. Our goal is to spark a conversation about mental health.

Q: Some time ago, your short film was presented at a JQY Drop-In along with a Q&A. What do you think of that experience?



A: I'm so glad that I swung by JQY to screen and chat about my film. A lot of the Q&A centered around body image, especially within the queer community. It was so enlightening to talk about the film through a different lens and discussing what it means to feel comfortable (or uncomfortable) in your own skin. Especially growing up queer in an environment where your identity may not be fully accepted by your loved ones, like many of the brilliant youth I spoke to at JQY.

Q: "E.very D.ay" is one facet of your line of work; what

are other projects that you are a part of nowadays? Any recent acting, directing, or other works that you would like to make known?

A: I go absolutely nuts if I don't have multiple pots boiling. It's both a gift and a curse. Currently, you can catch me acting in AMC's new TV series NOS4A2. I will also be appearing in theaters later this year, in the film THE GOLDFINCH. For Pride, I'll be playing a fabulous queer role in New Wave Theater Collective's short play festival, and I'll also be speaking about queer body image at

VideoOut's event at BK Brewery! I'll be performing in the off-Broadway US premiere of "Decky Does a Bronco" later this year as well.

Q: In addition to being open about your recovery from an eating disorder, you are very open about your queer identity and your Russian-Jewish identity. How do you feel that these relate to one another? On a deeper level, how do all of these connect to who you are?

A: I feel like they all absolutely connect. And as an artist, I'm so excited to

explore how they do. Growing up queer in a strictly conservative Russian-Jewish household absolutely influenced who I am today—and arguably was a contributing factor to my developing a warped relationship with food and my body. Stay tuned for more projects that explore this intersection of queer identity, immigrant culture, and mental health. On the down low: the next film is already in the works!

Q: That was an intense question, so I'm going to pull back a bit. How did you first hear about JQY, and what is your connection to the organization?

A: If I recall correctly, I was introduced to JQY through a friend of mine, who is also in recovery from an eating disorder—she brought me as a tag-along guest to the Drop-In Center. That was a couple of years ago. Since then, I've been very happy to come back and run my own sessions at JQY.

Q: Your career has been very successful so far and is only growing. Where do

you see yourself headed in the near future?

A: First off, thank you! (And fingers crossed, hah.) The next move after the off-Broadway show will be LA! Moving out there to dive deeper into TV/film in October.

Q: Thank you for taking part in this interview! Do you have any final words that you'd like the readers to know?

A: Yes! Be honest with yourself about what you want/need mental health-wise. Especially when it comes to identity—queer or otherwise. Only you will ever truly be able to advocate for yourself and your needs/hopes/dreams.



Misha Osherovich (he/him or they/them) is an actor, writer, producer, filmmaker, and activist. His short film "E:very Day" recently received its premiere screening.

LGBTQ+ Hero: Dana International

Samara Karow (she/her)

It has been twenty-one years since Dana International cemented her epic victory at Eurovision. Her winning song, "Diva," granted Israel a chance to host the famous singing competition. Similarly, this year Israel hosted Eurovision—Dana International not only performed at, but introduced the event. This year's competition may have just ended, but Dana International's legacy lives on: a music icon inspiring young girls to follow their artistic passions and express themselves creatively. In a way, Miss International's danceable beats serve as a voice for the voiceless, allowing young girls, trans and cis alike, to let the rhythm move them all the while serving as a successful pop-star represented in media.



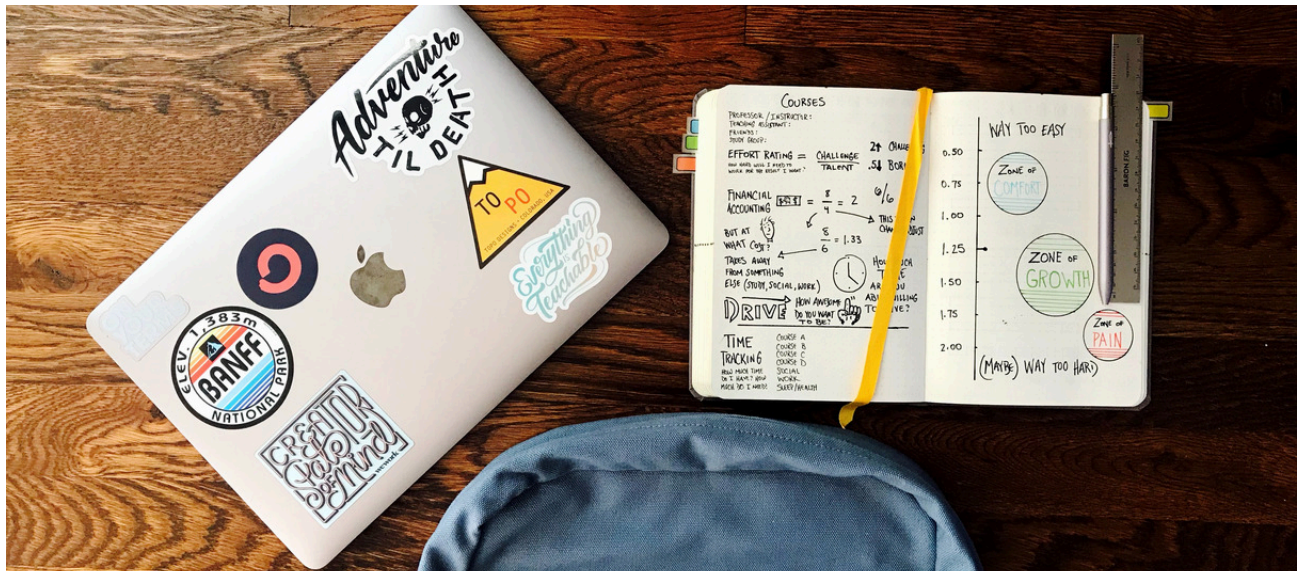
Just like the lyrics in her 2011 Eurovision song, "Ding Dong,": "If you have a dream of your own, don't be afraid. Go on with your heart," Dana International is truly inspiring the next generation. This year, though not a competitor, Miss International sang "Diva", once again; this time, complete with a lavish hip-hop dance crew. In perfect Eurovision style, a three-minute-long electronic intro started to accompany the dancers. The routine began with two masculine-presenting dancers performing nearly symmetrical movements before the rest of the mixed-gender crew until Dana International arrived onstage. She wore a beautiful, floor-length, moss-colored dress, starkly contrasted with the dancers' black uniforms and the flashy background. Electronic plumes of fire backdropped the scene.

Dana International's 2019 Eurovision performance dismantled our youth-centric culture. Performing at fifty years old, she dismantled ideas steeped in ageism and transmisogyny. Similar attempts this year within the LGBTQ+ community to dismantle ageism in media have been made throughout the United States. Amy Poehler's *Wine Country* defied expectations and succeeded despite the ages and sexual orientations of the characters—the movie's main characters were all in their late forties and the only relationship was a lesbian one.

Nothing unites people like upbeat, Eurovision pop music—regardless of identity; it is a communal, driving force.

College Tips

Kevin Lubin (he/him)



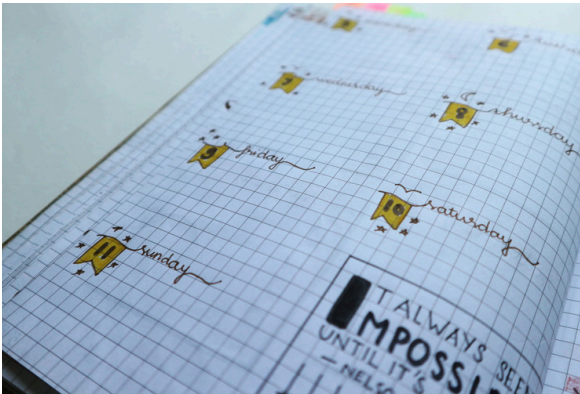
Hello everyone and welcome to the very first edition of "College Tips," brought to you this week by Kevin!

This will be a platform to discuss those important general college questions such as applications, registering for classes, finding Jewish and/or queer life on campus, and more. This week's topic is about scheduling!

Although summer's only just begun, there's no reason not to start thinking about organizing your time next semester in a healthy and productive way. You've probably registered for classes already and have a tentative schedule in place. That's great! If you haven't yet, make sure you know when all the deadlines are for registration so you don't fall behind. And don't forget that even though it is summer, you are still free to email your professors to ask them for help with any issues if needed. (Just don't always expect them to answer so quickly; it's vacation for most of them too!)

Usually, a big problem with scheduling is finding the balance between what you have to do and what you want to do. This means that aside from your required classes and work, you still need to make time to relax and not worry about college. It's helpful to get all of your priorities in order and work on the "have to do" section first: plan out when your classes are, make set times to do classwork, and if you have a job, see to it that it doesn't conflict with class. Now you have a schedule that probably already looks a little terrifying, but this is where I'm here to help!

Let's just say that you have three classes on a Monday between 9:00 a.m. and 1:00 p.m., along with a job that's from 5:00 p.m. to 8:00 p.m. (All of these times are entirely



random, I promise I'm not trying to tell all of you my schedule.) Of course, you're able to use those four free hours between for studying, but maybe that's not in your best interest. Between college and work, you deserve time to rest your brain so that you carry out all of your responsibilities efficiently and productively. Studies show that people who have set times to relax and unwind are happier and able to work better!

You may still feel the need to get some schoolwork done on this day. Depending on whether you're more efficient in the morning or the evening, feel free to set aside an hour or two before class or after work to catch up on whatever there is to be done.

And what, I hear you asking, do you do during those rest periods? Socialize, watch Netflix, play Solitaire? Sure, you can do any of these, but it's also great to have your brain working even during your time to relax. Are you artistic or musical? Drawing, painting, and practicing music skills are wonderful activities to do daily. Maybe you're more athletic? Go for a run! Being in college may feel like you're being forced into a mechanical work routine, so you should definitely try to break the monotony in any way you can and stay physically, mentally, and emotionally healthy.



As a college student, it's your job to beat college! Tiring yourself out is too easy, and it takes hard work to truly succeed and accomplish what you came to college for in the first place. Stay happy, stay healthy, and never be afraid to reach out to a friend, advisor, or anyone for help if you need it.

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JQY (Jewish Queer Youth) supports and empowers LGBTQ children, teens and young adults in the Jewish community, with a special focus on those from Orthodox, Chassidic, and Sephardi/Mizrachi homes. JQY promotes the mental health, emotional well-being and physical safety of these individuals by providing national crisis, communal, and advocacy resources, as well as in-person support programming in New York.

JQYU (JQY University) is a cross-campus network for LGBTQ Jewish college students. JQYU serves as an umbrella community for queer Jewish campus organizations as well as queer Jewish individual students.



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