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Idit Klein to Leave Her Role as Founding President & CEO of Keshet, the Nation's Leading Jewish LGBTQ+ Equality Organization

After 24 years under Klein's leadership, Keshet is poised to strengthen Jewish communities and advance LGBTQ+ rights and belonging for LGBTQ+ Jews

Boston, MA, October 15, 2024 — In her 24th year at the helm of the nation's leading organization working for LGBTQ+ equality in Jewish life, Idit Klein announced she will be stepping down as President and CEO of Keshet effective July 31, 2025.

Klein is widely recognized as an unparalleled leader in the Jewish and LGBTQ+ worlds. She built Keshet from a volunteer group in Boston with an annual budget of \$42,000 to a national organization with offices in six states, a multi-million dollar budget, and an impressive set of victories for LGBTQ+ equality in both the Jewish community and the broader world. With her vision and dedication, Keshet has advanced equality within Jewish institutions and transformed many areas of Jewish communal life that now consistently affirm and foster belonging for generations of LGBTQ+ Jews.

Today, Keshet mobilizes tens of thousands of Jewish leaders annually to make LGBTQ+ equality a communal value and priority for action, helping millions of Jews across the country and across denominations lead integrated Jewish lives. Keshet has also organized Jewish communities nationwide to join the fight for LGBTQ+ rights—and win.

When Klein began building Keshet out of a room in her home in 2001, she discovered that many Jewish leaders didn't understand why Keshet needed to exist. They minimized how LGBTQ+ Jews were excluded from Jewish life. Undeterred, Klein demonstrated that vibrant Jewish life and meaningful Jewish values require the full embrace of LGBTQ+ Jews, families, and communities. She further inspired Jewish community leaders to recognize why they needed to take action as Jews to advance LGBTQ+ civil rights.

Under Klein's leadership, Keshet has developed national programs for LGBTQ+ and ally Jewish teens, Jewish communal leaders, and LGBTQ+ Jews of Color through engaging with synagogues, schools, camps, JCCs, and an array of other Jewish organizations.

Keshet achievements and advocacy wins under Klein's leadership include:

- Successful organizing efforts to support the creation of the first Gay-Straight Alliance at a Jewish high school (2001).
- Production of Keshet's ground-breaking documentary film "Hineini: Coming Out in a Jewish High School" which has reached hundreds of thousands of viewers and inspired the formation

of GSAs in Jewish schools around the country (2005).

- Organized Jewish communities to preserve first-in-the-nation marriage equality in Massachusetts (2007).
- Launched the life-changing and life-saving Keshet Shabbaton for LGBTQ+ and Ally Jewish Teens, nationwide retreats that create spaces where queer Jewish youth are affirmed as their full authentic selves (2012).
- Inspired and then partnered with Kar-Ben Publishing to publish *The Purim Superhero*, the first Jewish children's book to feature a gay Jewish family (2013).
- Mobilized over 70% of all Jewish institutions in Massachusetts to join the campaign to uphold transgender rights on a Massachusetts ballot question. According to the secular civil rights organization Freedom for All Americans, this constituted the largest faith or ethnic group mobilization for trans rights in American history (2018).
- Launched the Thrive Jewish community coalition to defend the rights of trans and LGBTQ+ youth, now with over 240 Jewish organizational partners (2022).
- Created the nation's first community-building program for LGBTQ+ Jews of Color (2024).
- Successfully defeated 21 of 22 anti-LGBTQ+ state bills with coalition with our partners in Florida (2024).

In recent years, Klein has expanded Keshet's presence nationwide to parts of the country where LGBTQ+ rights are most under attack and where there are large Jewish communities to engage. Keshet now has a presence in both Florida and Texas, in addition to its offices in Boston, New York, Chicago, and the Bay Area.

Keshet is supported financially by some of the most significant funders in American Jewish life, including the Charles and Lynn Schusterman Family Philanthropies, the Jim Joseph Foundation, and The Harry and Jeanette Weinberg Foundation. Keshet partners with dozens of local and national Jewish organizations such as the JCC Association of North America, the National Council of Jewish Women, the Foundation for Jewish Camp, as well as with every major denomination.

Klein has created an organization with a history of continuous growth and impact—a trajectory that is poised to continue well into the future. A testimony to her vision and ability to achieve it, Keshet is thriving programmatically, financially, and with a staff and board that are stronger than ever.

The Keshet Board of Directors will oversee a search for Klein’s successor and work with an executive recruiting firm. A formal announcement with further details will be shared in the coming months as will opportunities to celebrate Klein’s leadership. For more information about the process, email boardchair@keshetonline.org.

National Leaders Reflect on Idit Klein and Keshet’s Impact

“Idit Klein is a leader's leader. It has been an honor for me to work closely with her and watch her transform the world. Idit understands the power and possibilities in community and in struggle. Idit is dedicated to Jewish values, texts, and traditions. She is unfazed by challenges and insists on facing them as opportunities. Idit inspires, motivates, and does the hard work to redeem our broken world, one relationship, one conversation, one meeting, one donation, one speech at a time. I am so grateful to call Idit, a beloved colleague and a dear friend.”

- Rabbi Sharon Kleinbaum, Senior Rabbi Emerita, Congregation Beit Simchat Torah

“Idit is a powerful voice for the forgotten, the outlier and the maligned; the personification of the still, small voice. Because of her leadership young queer Jews, their allies, and beyond have a way to safe spaces, to wholeness and peace, and because of her strength and compassion we are all the better for it.”

- Michael W. Twitty, Author and Culinary Historian

“Idit Klein's groundbreaking work has permanently transformed the Jewish American world, inspiring and enabling hundreds of Jewish communities and institutions to move toward full inclusion of LGBTQ+ Jews and improving the lives of countless Jews who, without her contributions, would have no Jewish place to safely, joyfully be fully themselves. As Keshet continues to thrive and grow under Idit’s successor, so will Idit’s legacy and impact.”

- Joy Ladin, Trans Author and Speaker, *Once Out of Nature* (2024), *Family* (2024)

“Under Idit's leadership, Keshet became a powerful force for mobilizing American Jews in the fight for LGBTQ+ rights. In my time as executive director of the National LGBTQ Task Force Idit was a key thought partner to me, a leader who connected leaders when we’ve needed it most, and an extraordinary and respected bridge builder in challenging times.”

- Rea Carey, Former Executive Director, National LGBTQ Task Force

"Idit Klein has been an extraordinary leader over many years — with the vision to do something that needed doing, the determination to see it through, and the endurance to help it grow. She has the all-too-rare ability to lead in smooth and challenging times. More than most, she knows when and how to take risks, to exercise moral courage, and when to step back to let others organize themselves. Most importantly, under Idit's brilliant leadership, Keshet has helped thousands of LGBTQ+ Jews live more meaningful and integrated lives."

- Ruth Messinger, Social Justice Consultant

"Over the past 24 years, under Idit's steadfast leadership, Keshet has shaped a more welcoming and inclusive Jewish community, centering Jewish values to ensure everyone feels they belong. Keshet has become a beacon of hope for the LGBTQ community and a powerful voice for the Jewish community in the national movement for equality. Idit leaves a strong, thriving organization, and I know she will continue to inspire future generations to lead with compassion and a commitment to justice."

- Stacy Schusterman, Chair, Charles and Lynn Schusterman Family Philanthropies

"When I was 16, I reached out to Idit at 10pm on a Sunday. It was the night before I would meet with the dean of my school to pitch the idea of a GSA. Idit's guidance helped us start the first GSA at a Modern Orthodox day school. I then attended Keshet's first LGBTQ Youth Shabbaton in 2012. It was the first time I was in a space that was both Jewish and queer.

Now, on staff at Keshet, I get to lead those same Shabbatonim. Through Idit's vision, leadership, and deep commitment to young people, year after year we host the largest overnight gatherings of LGBTQ+ Jewish teens in the Western Hemisphere. Because of Idit and Keshet, I carry a deep feeling of unconditional belonging — that the Jewish community is mine and always will be."

- Amram Alzman, Keshet Shabbaton Alum and Associate Director of Youth Programs

About Keshet

Keshet envisions a world in which all LGBTQ+ Jews and our families can live with full equality, justice, and dignity. By strengthening Jewish communities and equipping Jewish organizations with the skills and knowledge they need to make all LGBTQ+ Jews feel welcome, we work to ensure the full equality of all LGBTQ+ Jews and our families in Jewish life. We also create spaces in which all

queer Jewish youth feel seen and valued and advance LGBTQ+ rights nationwide. Visit keshetonline.org to join us.

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