

## J.J. Greenberg Biography

J.J. Greenberg, z.l., was a young modern Orthodox activist who embraced and served all of Clal Yisrael.

Starting as a teenager, he served as a guide/madrich at National Council of Synagogue Youth (NCSY) retreats. He particularly looked out for the 'outsiders', the shy or withdrawn and brought them into the circle of activity. He struck up friendships and mentored many NCSYers for a lifetime.

From childhood, J.J. loved popular music of all forms. He joined Shlock Rock, a modern Orthodox musical group that took popular music songs and wrote Jewish lyrics for them to communicate Jewish values and observances. (He wrote lyrics, performed - including rapping - and played 'air guitar'). He taught that the goal of outreach was not to bring people from 'off the derech' to the derech; nor was it to save Judaism from assimilation. The purpose was to share an ethically inspiring, humanly inclusive and ritually rich values system, in the belief that people exposed to this joyful way of life would choose it for themselves.

At the age of 18, he volunteered and then joined the staff of Jewish Public School Youth (JPSY) offering Jewish programming for students in the public school system and in private schools. In that role, he discovered that the charismatic founding rabbi, Rabbi Mordecai Winiarz (Gafni), was sexually exploiting teenage girls reached by JPSY. When confronted, Gafni denied everything and impugned the young women who reported him. J.J. organized the other madrichim - almost all teenagers - and they forced the Board not to cover up the issue. Rabbi Shlomo Riskin, Gafni's rebbe, was called in and he confirmed the truth of the charges. Unlike NCSY under Baruch Lanner's leadership, the JPSY board had to discharge him.

J.J. was a feminist and environmentalist from his earliest years. At Jewish Life Network, he established a policy that all paper used in internal communication be reused on the second side before being recycled. He respected, mentored and worked with women as equals. A number of JLN female staff and coworkers whom he mentored went on to become leading professionals in the Jewish community. He insisted that social justice and tikkun olam were essential elements of the Torah and markers of the integrity of an Orthodox commitment.

Starting in 1993, J.J. created and served as Executive Director of pioneering entrepreneurial educational philanthropy, Jewish Life Network/Steinhardt Foundation. JLN/SF led in the formation of the Partnership for Excellence in Jewish Education (PEJE) which enabled start-up and expansion of day schools in every community (on the grounds that day schools were needed and good for all Jews).

He spearheaded the creation of Makor, a popular music/nightclub/restaurant venue in New York that also offered Jewish studies classes and Hebrew cultural arts to reach out to young Jews in their 20's and 30's. He conceptualized Taglit/birthright Israel

as a group educational trip to Israel. With professionals from partner foundations, he staffed its creation, including engaging the Government of Israel and worldwide Jewish communities. He pushed through policies that incorporate and serve Jews of every background. This included Orthodox Jews [some philanthropists who wanted to save money, argued that the Orthodox did not need it], and patrilineal Jews [some donors said that they were not Jewish and should be excluded].

He loved Israel and spent a minimum of two of the three regalim there every year. In 2002, approaching the age of 36, he was biking from his brother's house in Ra'anana to his sister's house in Zichron Yaakov when he was struck by a pick-up truck that ran a light. In accordance with his previous instructions, J.J.'s kidneys, corneas and liver were donated to save others. He is buried in Har Hamenuchot in Jerusalem.