

How Star Olympian Gabby Douglas Is Praying Over Her Fellow Athletes

When Olympic gymnast Gabby Douglas listens to her workout playlist, chart-topping songs by Christian music acts are among the ones she hears most.

Douglas, 20, listed “This Is Living” by Hillsong Young and Free and rapper Lecrae when asked by Billboard about her top songs. In a Self magazine interview, she cited Building 429’s “We Won’t Be Shaken” and Veridia’s “We Are the Brave.”

After Veridia tweeted their thanks, she responded: “Ekkkkkkkkk!!! OHHH EMM GEE !! I love you guys! Thanks for making such GREAT uplifting music!!!!!!”

But Douglas, who in 2012 was the first U.S. gymnast to receive both the all-around gold medal and the team gold in a single Olympic Games, also has connections to Judaism.

“My faith is very important to me. I love spinning the dreidel during the holidays,” she said in a recent Teen Vogue video highlighting her 18 favorite things.

She spoke of her eclectic religious life with RNS after returning from the London Olympics four years ago.

“Faith plays a very big role in my life,” she said. “I don’t know where I would be without it today. I’ve always been praying for everything. And my mom always exposed me and my siblings to being a Christian and the Bible. I was watching back and looking at the Olympics and my mouth is moving – and that’s me praying.”

She wrote about attending a Pentecostal megachurch in her hometown of Virginia Beach, Va., in her book, “Grace, Gold &

Glory: My Leap of Faith.” She also recalled how in 2004 her mother took an interest in Judaism, observing Shabbat on Friday evenings and driving her and her siblings to a Conservative synagogue.

Douglas told RNS she embraces parts of Jewish culture.

“I really love matzo ball soup and I just had matzo ball soup recently and it’s just one of my favorite Jewish meals,” she said. {eo}

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