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CUC in Solidarity with Trans and Nonbinary UUs

A recent article in *UU World*, “[After the L, G, and B](#)” published on March 1, 2019, harmed and further marginalized transgender and nonbinary UUs and leaders, their families and allies. Through one family’s experience, the article was meant to model ways for *UU World* readers to engage respectfully with transgender and nonbinary people. Instead, it caused pain, and for many, served to increase isolation.

The Canadian Unitarian Council, the Unitarian Universalist Ministers of Canada, and the Canadian Unitarian Universalist Religious Educators wish to express our sadness that transgender and nonbinary UUs have again been marginalized within our faith community spaces. In choosing to commission one of its first feature pieces about trans issues in Unitarian Universalism from a cisgender person, the *UU World* centred cisgender discomfort and fragility around trans identity, instead of focusing on the enormous contributions that trans and nonbinary UUs have made to our faith. The editorial staff chose to run the piece, despite being advised by a prominent trans UU leader that the article as conceived would cause harm.

In the face of this harm, we wish to reaffirm our commitment to trans and nonbinary UUs in Canada and in our movement at large: to radical inclusion, love and justice. As largely cisgender-led institutions, we strive to continue to be in right relationship with our trans and nonbinary UU siblings and to be honest in our communications with each other, even when (or especially when) we make mistakes that hurt each other. We call on cisgender leaders and people in our community to journey with and lift up the voices and experiences of transgender and nonbinary people in our UU communities, recognizing that in this interdependent web of existence, what affects the one affects the many.

[TRUUsT](#) (Transgender Religious professional Unitarian Universalists Together) members, and trans UUs widely, have responded to the article, sharing the hurt and the further marginalization which occurs when trans people are viewed as exotic “others.” TRUUsT issued [a response](#) to the *UU World* article. In part, the response states, “*We are living in a UU faith community full of people with whom we have covenanted to live into our best selves, our authentic selves, in a multitude of expressions and complex realities, but who continue to deny us a place at the table even as they examine their internal systems of oppression on other matters.*”

Alex Kapitan, trans UU leader, activist, co-leader of the [Transforming Hearts Collective](#), and steering committee member of TRUUsT, was quoted in the *UU World* article. Kapitan had urged against the publication of the article, and reflected: “I could not be more disappointed or pained by the harm



and the lost opportunity this article represents. The *UU World* could have uplifted the spiritual gifts of trans UUs and provided the call our movement desperately needs to address the failures of this religion with respect to trans inclusion. Instead, the publication of the article continued the current trend of marginalizing trans people and supporting cis UUs in their resistance to creating basic access for trans UUs, much less fully inclusive and affirming spiritual homes.”

In speaking with the CUC about what’s required of cisgender UUs in the aftermath of this article, Kapitan emphasized that a faith-grounded approach is necessary, rather than a purely intellectual approach to learning about trans/nonbinary identities - and so are heart-centred spiritual practices that allow people to become more comfortable with being uncomfortable. Kapitan adds that to truly be in solidarity and right relationship, cisgender people need to resist the desire to centre life around their own world view and to ‘fix’ others or the situation, and dare to shift away from a desire to avoid “offending” trans people to a desire to offer care toward trans people.

In the days following the publication of the *UU World* article, both UUA President Rev. Susan Frederick-Gray and *UU World* editor Christopher Walton responded with apologies and an [acknowledgement that hurt has been caused](#).

~ From the CUC Board President and Executive Director, the UU Ministers of Canada, and the Canadian UU Religious Educators, with thanks to Katharine Childs, Arran Liddel and Alex Kapitan ~

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During this year, the CUC will feature a series on trans and nonbinary UUs, their lives, work and experiences. We ask that congregations which display the UU World article also include Alex Kapitan’s statement and CB Beal’s Medium article, and delve into understanding how the article is harmful.

Quick links:

- [TRUUsT](#) response to *UU World* article: [Putting the “T” First](#)
- [Alex Kapitan’s statement](#): What It Takes to De-Centre Privilege: The Failure of This Week’s *UU World* Article
- [CB Beal’s Medium article](#): Centering the Marginalized: Symphonie and Triptych
- *UU World* article “[After the L, G, and B](#)”
- *UU World* Editor [Christopher Walton’s apology](#)
- UUA President [Rev. Susan Frederick-Gray’s apology](#)
- TRUUsT Report on the [Experiences of Trans Unitarian Universalists](#)
- TRUUsT Call to Action: <https://transuu.org/support-us/>