

Reflections from the Table

We Need a Trans Spirituality Movement

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The past five years have seen an increase in what can only be thought of as a “Trans Spirituality Movement.” There is a growing number of out transgender faith leaders, transgender-led spiritual communities, and spiritual discourse within trans-specific spaces (i.e. conferences), as well as a growing body of literature on the spiritual lives of transgender people. This increased focus and visibility of trans people of faith is essential in this moment in history.

Transgender people have often been denied spiritual community. Spirituality is an integral part of the lived experience because it gives practitioners a sense of hope, possibility, and comfort. And given the significant social and economic marginalization transgender people’s experience, faith and spirituality may contribute a greater feeling of hope, resilience, and strength.

“It is my hope that our people have a fighting chance – that those of us that are able, continue to use our strengths to pursue life and ensure that all of us have a chance at the lives that we dream of.”

– Elle Hearn, 2016 Grantmaking Panelist

Many spiritual and faith communities serve as social and identity networks for transgender people. Faith and spirituality do not exist in a vacuum. Instead, they can be connected to specific racial, ethnic, and geographic communities. Thus, continued participation in faith communities is an integral part of authentic self-expression and identity for many transgender people, especially people of color.

Yes, we have seen faith communities commit spiritual violence, or use religion to harm transgender people. But as we see a growing community of transgender people engage in spiritual activism and spiritual liberation work through worship, ritual, contemplative practice, and spiritual leadership, we challenge cissexism and create a counter narrative of spiritual flourishing and survival.