

00:00:13. - **Moderator Cori**

Welcome to... Building rainbow bridges. Beyond the binary. This is our first panel event, this is a collaboration between a number of inclusive heathen organizations, including The Troth, The Asatru Community, Heathens Against Hate, and The Fellowship of Fire and Ice.

00:00:38.000 - **Moderator Cori**

I have the honor of being. Your moderator for today, so I'm going to introduce myself, and then we'll go ahead and get our panelists introduced. So - I am Reverend Cori Greyhawk. My pronouns are she/her. I'm an ordained githa of 2 years, and I currently serve as the president of the Asatru Community, I'm also a member of the Troth. In relation to today's panel, I am the proud big sister of a gender-fluid non-binary witch, and I have the honor of being a bonus parent to a transgender teenager, and the surrogate mom to a trans non-binary adult.

00:01:19 - **Moderator Cori**

So we're gonna get started, by having each of our panelists briefly introduce themselves with their pronouns, & their connection to this panel. Alix, would you like to get us started?

00:01:34 - **Alix**

Yeah, sure. Hi, my name's Alix. My pronouns are she, her. And I'm a woman of transgender experience. I'll be turning 45 next weekend. And I've been a heathen for about half as long. I'm a board member of the Troth and I'm also serving as chair of the Community Relations Committee. I'm very pleased and honored to be here today. Thank you.

00:02:00 - **Jackson**

Hi, I'm Jackson, they / them is fine. I've known Cori since college, we're in the same pagan circles. back then. And, um... I've been, Heathen for... since... high school-ish, I kind of went through a lot of, a few different, like, the Wicca and the generalness to Heathenry.

00:02:30- **Moderator Cori**

All right. Garrett? Sorry, Jai.

00:02:33 - **Garrett**

I believe it's Jai next.

00:02:36 - **Jai**

I'm Jai, I use he, him, or any variation of Z pronouns. I'm on the ritual team at the Fellowship of Fire and Ice. I believe I heard about this event through Mish originally. And I'm gender fluid.

00:02:56 - **Garrett**

Okay, now I can go. My name is Garrett White. I am a leadership member in Heathens Against Hate and I'm also a co-chair for the Education Committee in the Troth. I've been heathen for... probably less than many of the other people on this panel. Probably a few years now, but agnostic... slash, like, leaning toward animist vibes probably since high school. Um, and I'm very grateful to have been invited and, uh, to participate in this panel by. You know, this inclusive coalition of heathen organizations. I'm excited about it.

00:03:36 - **Miche**

Hi, um, I am Mish, or Miche, uh, either is mine, most of my friends call me Miche, my pronouns are they, them, or he, him. I have been pagan, like, basically since I knew what the word meant, because I was a very weird kid. I grew up in rural southwestern Missouri. And he then sends about 2008, had been in a kindred in Texas, in Austin, Texas for a while that kind of dissolved as everyone left Texas for obvious reasons and we... which we moved up to New Jersey about a year and a half ago now, and. have, uh, are taking our associate membership oaths with, uh, Distelfink, which is an Urglaawe kindred. in like, a month. Uh, so... Yes, I'm also a member of one of the leadership Heathens Against Hate, and also a member of the Troth and of Fellowship of Fire and Ice count my fingers in a lot of pies. Oh, and I'm, yes, trans masc, non-binary.

00:04:34 - Moderator Cori

All right. Well, thank you guys for all introducing yourself. So our first question is - How and when did heathenry intersect with your transition, and identity journey? Did you find this path before your transition, or as... Or did you find Heathenry afterwards?

00:04:59 - Alix

So, I'd say, um...that both my spirituality and my gender identity developed alongside one another from my earliest memories on. When I was very young, I was absolutely certain of two things. That I was a girl, and that the world was full of spirits. And this was long before I came to understand myself as trans, or as a heathen specifically. But my basic understanding of both Gender and animism was fully developed by the time I was, like, 4. And there was this...small tree-lined river not far from my house, and I always felt a...pull towards it. One of my favorite things to do without...Consciously understanding why at the time, was to make little offerings of flowers to the river and the water spirits. and Father Rhine, who my maternal grandfather told me many stories about.

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So that really became my first devotional practice. But by the time I was 10, a lot of things changed, and...school, I was forced to contend with a lot more with being assigned male at birth. And my parents had me going to Sunday school, so I would be confirmed in their Christian faith. And that was a pretty challenging period in my life, for a lot of reasons.

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And then at 16, I rejected Christianity. And a couple years later, when I went away to college, I had my own private living space, and I started to really explore my gender more. So I experimented with makeup and feminine fashion. that was in the midst of all this when I suddenly felt a...Longing for something spiritual. Which had kind of been lacking in my life for a while. And it was in the winter of, like, 2002, I think. when I bought Sequentia's Edda CD. And I was immediately struck by...power and beauty of it, especially their performance of Voluspa.

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And just as I was growing more comfortable in my gender expression, I found something that brought comfort to my spirit, and...a really profound way. So I became a heathen and as I delved deeper into the religion, I started making connections between my new faith and my old experiences in animism and gender expansiveness. And even now, I'm still learning new things and making new connections.

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Like, a few months back, I started thinking about... How the Old Norse concept of being "hamstoli" could explain the feeling of severe gender dysphoria. and how experiencing trans joy is kind of like being..."hamramr". Shape Strong.

So, like, again and again, I've found that my gender experience and my spirituality are always kind of co-evolving and informing one another. basically at every major stage of my life. So, yeah.

00:08:00 - Jackson

So, I, like you kind of, uh, my identity Heathen and my Queer identity kind of grew together, This was in, like. late high school, early college, I lucked out and was surrounded by a lot of people who are all discovering themselves in different ways at the same time, and kind of bouncing off each other, and that led to a lot of. experimentation with identity and experimentation with religion, playing with different, like. different concepts and figure out what I want to do. integrate into what was, you know, essential for myself. And, I think I'm glad of that, but I think every time that I every time that I wanted to grow, there was someone around me, you know, the queer community, the pagan community, or the queer pagan community that, uh, helped me in that journey.

00:08:52 - Jai

I started coming out when I was around 17 and at the time. I mostly spiritually identified as a Hellenic polytheist. In the time since then, my gender identity and my spirituality have shifted a lot. But they've definitely grown alongside one another and intersected with each other. I practice Seid, and I find that my experience of gender interacts with my experience of trance work. In very clear and concrete ways, where, the way that I am presenting myself or the way I understand myself will impact my mindset when I'm doing that kind of magical work. Yeah.

00:09:45 - Garret

Um, I think that I'm... might be a little bit different in that. I don't feel like my spirituality and my... gender identity kind of grew together, I feel like more... my gender identity had to... come together in order for me to feel, like, comfortable enough for myself in order to decide, kind of, what spiritual path I wanted to follow. I always kind of knew something was up, something was different about me. Thought I was a lesbian for a very long time. Um, and was into, like, dabbled in Wicca in high school and some other, like, witchcraft elements. But then just I think I set a good portion of that aside to sort of figure out my personal stuff that was going on, and I just called myself agnostic. I think that once I figured out, '*oh, I'm trans*' and I kind of got started on that journey. Then I started attracting the things. that were meant for me, and I think including in the spiritual, you know, space. and I met people. who would talk to me about animism, and, you know, I got together with Mish, I'm Miche's partner as well, for those who don't know,

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Just through conversations, I realized ,oh yes, like, I remember a long time ago. One of the questions I asked, like, when I was very young to my mom was. You know, like, wasn't paganism the first religion? Like, why do you say Christianity was the first religion? Because wasn't it this? So I knew that it was there, um, like Jai, I actually my first introduction into, not my first, but an early introduction, into paganism for me was more of the Hellenic side. Dionysus and Apollo are deities that I work with, um, Dionysus

especially to me feels like a deity that is related to, sort of, gender expression, and non-conformity. So it started there, and then over time, I've become more and more comfortable calling myself a heathen.

00:11:55 - Miche

Yeah, um, I think that kind of like Alix, that... It's a weird like, for me, it's interesting because looking back, I can see a connection. I don't know if that's me just pattern matching in hindsight, But I think that, I always knew that I was, weird and, different, but I thought that that was, like... in the way that, for example... like, I grew up in the woods, and remember, talking to the trees from a very, very young age, and wanting to take care of the trees from a very young age, and things like that, um, like animism, I think probably came very, very naturally to me. And things like seeing or sensing spirits, or knowing things that, you know, I wasn't supposed to know, or having dreams about things, and then they would happen, stuff like that kind of was a pretty big mainstay for a lot of my childhood and adolescents, and I found paganism, like I referenced, I was probably, like, I don't know, like, 12, 13, 14.

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And kind of did, like, sort of generic, like, Wicca-flavored paganism for a while, and then was actually pretty Kemetic-focused, and it's funny, because I joke that, like, I turned 18, and they, like, handed custody over to the Germanic deities because..within, like, 6 mo... which is unfortunate, because I got a tattoo dedicated to Aset / Isis for my 18th birthday. And then within 6 months, all of the Kemetic deities kind of just, like, went silent. And Freya and Loki showed up, and it's also very funny in hindsight because I bought into some propaganda about Loki. So Loki showed up, and I freaked out, and was like, "*no, I don't want you around here*". Which he completely respected that boundary until, like, 10 years later, when I was like, "*hey, wait, actually, maybe I was too hasty*." So there is a part of me that's like... which actually, now that I'm thinking about it, I think that happened after I came out as bi, but before I put together the gender stuff, because kind of... I think, another place where I see overlap is that, gender and sexuality are, layered in the same way that, aspects of spirituality or spiritual experiences are for me.

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So it was like, I had never really thought critically about gender, like, if I thought anything was, like, I said, I always had a hard time fitting in, I always kind of felt like I existed in this, weird third space in a lot of ways and a lot of places, but I chalked it up to, like, you know, I would have chalked it up to neurodivergence if I had the language for that, or, seeing ghosts and talking to trees and things like that.

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But I didn't even think to chalk it up to gender because, like, I didn't have the language to describe a non-binary gender identity when I was a child. So, when I came out, I came out as bi, uh, after Pulse happened, and, within like, 6 months, I don't even think it was 6 months, I think it was literally, 3 months. I was like Oh Shit, kind of started trying to figure that out, so I've been, you know, using... I started using they-them pronouns in late 2016, early 2017? Like, online at

first, and then kind of expanded, And I think that probably the other parallel that I see is that it has got a lot easier to.

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Um, that I have got a lot more comfortable, like, being pretty open about both of those things, instead of trying to hide it behind a curtain or something. Which is not everyone needs to know or hear, the details of your spiritual experience or your gender experience, but...I think that, especially growing up where and when I did, surrounded by, so my parents are pretty chill, but I went to school with people who are not very chill. I have a very distinct memory of telling someone that I was pagan in high school that I was friends with, and she stood up so... this was at lunch, she stood up so fast, her chair fell over, and was like. **“DON’T YOU KNOW THAT ALL ACTS OF WITCHCRAFT ARE... COME FROM SATAN AND WILL SEND YOU STRAIGHT TO HELL”** And I was like. **“WOW, this is a lot, bro, I don’t know... what to say to that.”** So I think that there is some overlap there, but I think that that covers it. I found paganism and then heathenism before I put together the ginger stuff, but looking back, I do see overlap.

00:16:32 - **Moderator Cori**

Do any of our panelists have any more they want to add on this before we go on?

00:16:37 - **Garret**

I just wanted to say that the concepts that Alix mentioned in the very beginning, are very interesting to me, and I want to now look them up, because I'm... You used words, and I was like, dang, I need to learn those words, I need to read more, so thank you for referencing them

00:16:56 - **Alix**

Yeah, yeah, hamstoli, it means, like, you know what the hamr is, the part of the soul. It means hamr stolen. So it was like this idea, you sometimes come across in some of the sagas of somebody who's, like, has these kind of symptoms where they're kind of out of their mind, they're weak, sickly, desperate, something like that. It's basically attributed to witchcraft. I think there's something in Egils' saga about that. Where he's traveling to this farmstead, and he finds this girl who's very sick. And there's, a piece of wood or something with these runes carved on it, and he figured out, like, this kid from another farm put a love spell on her, but it was a bad spell, which made her sick, and it caused her Hamr to go missing, or whatever. So that's how it's used originally, but I kind of, like, extended the concept. Where if it's this part of your soul that, like, determines your shape, then it makes sense if you're experiencing gender dysphoria that something's amiss. Something's wrong. And it causes a lot of distress and pain, and...Yeah, so it seemed... it was just like a connection that suddenly came to me.

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And the other one, Ham-ramr, that means shape strong, it means, they use that to describe witches and stuff that can change their shape. So I think that's super appropriate for... Like, gender euphoria, or trans joy in general.

00:18:20 - Jai

A term I came across recently is hamr- rami, which means. To shape change, shape shifting. Which is very much how I experience myself. Which is just amazing for me.

00:18:36 - Moderator Cori

Awesome, those are, That's some really beautiful insight into spirituality, identity and presentation. I really love that. Thank you guys so much for sharing that.

00:18:50 - Moderator Cori

So my next question actually came from something in my experience. And that is that Loki is often referred to as a god related to transness, due to his shape-shifting. And some of his other aspects. Has Loki been a significant part of your experience with the connection of your faith and trans identity. If not or if so, what other gods and goddesses have played a significant role in your transition, and life as a transgender or non-binary person.

00:19:33.000 - Alix

So, I've never really been super close with Loki myself. Um, but my practice is really more continental, and of course, Loki's not really existent in the continental lore that we have left over. But I was always super close to Father Rhein, and I've always felt that his energy is very non-binary.

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But more than that, I felt especially close with Freya. Especially in her form as Ōstara-Frouwa as the dawn and spring goddess. And she represents, powerful, liminal, and I'd say liberating force. If you look back at the history of religion, All the way back to ancient Mesopotamia, the Venus-like goddesses have always been associated with gender diversity. Inanna famously had the power to turn men into women and women into men. And the beings who helped liberate her from the underworld were said to have no sex.

The surviving lore for Freya isn't quite as explicit, but we do have hints. like in... what's that story? Thrymskviða - That suggests there might have originally been some kind of connection there with non-binary experience. And Freya, like Innana and similar goddesses, she has domains and associations which go beyond the gender binary. as it was understood in heathen times and even today. And for myself, she, like, perfectly represents - both trans joy and sadness.

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And after transitioning, I definitely feel like... even my tears sometimes are golden, or at least, like, watering the seeds of some future happiness. I hope. But, especially since the 2024 election, I've been really relying on Freya for comfort and hope, and um...It's funny, the day after the election, I started to have these regular visits at my house from rabbits. I've never seen a rabbit before in real life, ever. And all of a sudden, they were always swarming around my house, and I really felt like that was a sign from her. At that specific time, especially.that she's there for us. Things will be okay, no matter how scary or trying they've been. And that's been a huge comfort.

I think you might be muted

00:22:01 - Jackson

I was. Um, I was just saying that I don't know how to follow that. That was beautiful. Also that I also haven't worked with Loki very much. I think maybe the... the guys that I work close with kind of give off a *you can't sit with us* vibe with Loki, so that's not, like, it doesn't really come up very much with the deities I work with, but, I also experienced a lot of I think gender

affirmation from Freya, In addition to a lot of what Alix was saying. I feel like Freya is often a goddess of having the permission to take up your whole space, you know? It's loving yourself and owning who you are. And she has always been someone who's very supportive when I'm in a space of not knowing who I am.

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Also, a lot of my gender tends to be oscillating between being... feeling very strongly gendered and being very genderless, and a lot of my work with Odin is in a sort of is in a space of - Gender is a thing that is just a mask you're wearing because you have to have one to interact with the world. A lot of my work with Odin is kind of this, Just, a gray cloak full of whispers that doesn't really have that much of a gender beneath it. And so I think that a lot of the shape-shifting stuff that folks might learn from Loki, I've more learned from Odin.

00:23:54 - Jai

My hot take is that you can view pretty much any deity through a trans lens. With Loki, it's more obvious because of stuff in our myths. grammatical stuff in the Þrymskviða. But you can have that with any deity. You can... because transness, it's not... just the obvious things. Anything can be experienced through a trans lens. With regards to Odin specifically, I do work very heavily with Odin. And I tend to view Odin as a god of transition.

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Because this is, like, one of my pet projects. In the Havamal, when he's talking about hanging on the tree. That is transition. That is what my transition has been to me, a sacrifice of myself to my future self. Spear wounded, that's just me doing my T-shot every week.

00:24:59 Garrett

That's really good. Yeah, that's actually... that's really good. I actually got, like, chills when you said that about the... sacrificing himself to himself thing. I would say, like, so... Loki, I think, is a part of my life, and will become a bigger part of my life, but it has been Mostly through Miche that he has been part of my life. Um, but I do see both Loki and Freya, and Freyr actually, too, as very strong protectors of the trans community. Um, I actually had a dream. A while back, where what I ascertained to be Freyr and Loki were working together. Loki was sort of in charge of taking people who were kind of on the margins of society. And making sure that. they were still able to experience like human joy. And just humanity in general, it was at this time, they were allowed to, like, swim in some rich person's pool or something like that. You know, it was not... in the dream, it was more metaphorical, but...I took it as this idea that Loki sort of brings a little bit of fun, and reminds everybody not to not to take things too seriously. But also, that Freyr was in that dream and was actually, working together with Loki on this, and I felt Frey really, really powerfully in my life as a trans man. I view Freyr as sort of, like a mindful watcher of, like, the border between civilization and nature

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I sort of feel that liminality extends into the gender experience as well. Experiencing things on the edge of what would be deemed, like, taboo. There's a lot of you know, myths about, you know, even in Shakespeare, like going into the forest, and there's a lot of queer metaphors about what happens in the forest,, Freyr sort of being on the edge of that, and bearing witness to it. And then sort of translating it in a way. That can help other folks see it. So I really do see Freyr as a bridge builder in a lot of ways, and sort of, like, that peacemaker between helping others to also understand the trans experience, and helping people understand themselves if they happen to be somebody of trans experience, so... That's sort of my take on it, and I think that. Yes, I agree with Jai, that Loki gets a lot of the attention, because... of some of the things in the myths, and sort of the stigma around Loki resonates with a lot of marginalized people, because... **the stigma** of being out and proud as a trans person, but that doesn't mean that Loki is the only one doing that work, even though I do believe that he does do that work.

00:28:20 - Miche

Yeah, I definitely agree with what Jai said about how I think you can look at any deity through a trans lens. I also agree with Garrett that I view, like I said Freya was the first Germanic deity who showed up for me with Loki soon after. I think that for me part of why Loki resonates so much is because, I read this really interesting paper... sorry, I'm trying to, make my thoughts coherent -I read this really interesting paper called, "Loki, Vätte, Ash Lad", which I can put the name and the author and put it in the comments so that people can look it up.

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Um, but one of the things that the guy, essentially the guy is saying that we hear that his theory is that, like, there was a sort of, like, a hearth cult, almost, for Loki. Pre-Christian, like, Germanic and Scandinavia, uh, areas, because you know, we've all heard the argument that, like, Loki is ahistorical, there was... there's no historical evidence, um, but there's a lot of, like, surviving folklore that is, like, very, very, like, beat-for-beat similar, but one of the guys. conclusions about Loki is he talks about Loki as, like, being a threat to established order. Thank you, Jai. I think that that is part of why, Loki resonates so much for me because, I'm still breaking the association, I'm still working on making my associations with Odin more of a healthier thing versus, very authority-focused, which is something that I picked up a lot, especially in, like, heathen circles in Texas. Odin and Tyr, lots of baggage around there, coming from Texas specifically, but Loki... to me, I see a lot of, in the stories about him, and in the way that people react to him, like, so viscerally and so angry. I see a lot of, like, the way that people react to my gender... when they can't figure out, like, how to gender me, or, like, what's my whole deal, and, like, the way that people get, like, angry about, not being able to, you know, immediately assign, like, a specific label to me. or, the way they get angry about, like, me talking about my experiences, and I think that that's part of why Loki resonates for a lot of people. Which is not to say anything that I... I think that that is

a pretty universal trans experience, regardless of whether they work with the person who works with Loki or not.

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But I do also view Freyr and Freya, um, I think that Freyr is a really good model of healthy masculinity that we don't have a whole lot of, and while I have seen people twist, like, Odin and Tyr into very, authoritarian-friendly deities. I feel like. it's really hard to make Freyr like... I have not really seen anyone successfully paint Freyr as, like, this annoying college frat bro or something. And so maybe that's part of why, to me, he feels like a very healthy model of masculinity, which is, like, I think good for. When you're sort of reforging your perceptions of gender, especially because there's so much toxicity around masculinity, specifically in our culture.

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I do also view, I think that Berchta is... like, even though she has pretty, like, definitively gendered female, and, like, the surviving stories in lore, and that's, like, how she's always appeared to me. I think that I associate her with, like. Marginalized people in general, and, like, also, like, you know, trans people as a subset of that, because I view her as, like, a very, like, a very fierce bordering on vicious, said positively, Protectress of marginalized groups or people who are living on the edges, or who are forced into liminal spaces. I view her as, like, a guardian of the people and the animals and the beings that sort of fall through the cracks and get discarded by dominant cultural paradigms. And so for that, like, I also think that. like, I definitely consider, like, trans people as part of / under her, like... when I think about her in the context of trans people, I do not get the "*AH, this is on the same wavelength*", but I do get this is under the umbrella of protection, if that makes sense.

00:32:54 - **Moderator Cori**

Alright, was there more that you guys wanted to... panelists, is there more that you want to discuss with this question?

00:33:01 - **Miche**

Actually, I did have a question. If it's not too much of a pain, uh, Jai and Alix, you both mentioned specific, like, stories or sagas. Could you drop that in the chat? Because my transcription skills for, like, Old Norse words that I don't know is not super hot, and I would love to look those up later.

00:33:17 - **Jai**

I'm gonna make sure I have the spelling correct.

00:33:19 - **Miche**

Okay, very fair. Oh, Alix got it.

00:33:24 - **Moderator Cori**

Yeah. Post-presentation, I'm gonna put together all of our resources, because I love that we're coming up with resources in this panel, an put them together with the recording so that people will have them available. Which I think it's awesome.

00:33:49- Moderator Cori

So... something I have heard a lot, within Heathen Spheres is talk about gender and how it's very prescriptive, like, this is masculinity, this is femininity in Heathenry. Have you found gender norms to be prescriptive within heathenry? And what has been your experience in addressing assumptions about gender? In heathenry

00:34:19 - Alix

Well, I think there are obviously a lot of prescriptive gender norms in the religion. Maybe not so many as, like, in Slavic paganism, Rodnovery, that's a little bit worse. But, they're obviously there. I think if you look back at the history of the religion, Things were never quite so...black and white, or blue and pink, or whatever .It was... I mean...take the whole concept of ERGI, for example. I remember when I first became a heathen, 20-some-odd years ago.I dealing with people online, I would very often be called Argr for, you know, my identity and for my sexuality. And they really treated it almost as a Christian kind of idea, where it was like a religious and moral failing to go against what they perceive as the gender norms or whatever.

But I look at it like... and even back in heathen times, I believe they looked at liminality of that kind as a source of power, in magic or in general. And I've really found that it's been spiritually enlightening and morally fortifying to challenge those gender norms. And really explore myself and everything. I like to think that, for one, I'm less likely to judge people based purely on their individual differences, for one. A lot of people, like I said, use the word like argr, or I felt like they were using it as, like, a dog whistle, or a clever way to get around using the F slur around me, because they perceived me as male, so they considered me gay, because I was attracted to men. And...Yeah. So those ideas are there, but also the idea in the history of the religion that, There is power and there is beauty, and in going beyond them, and not letting that hold you back.

00:36:33 - Jackson

I'm gonna break the mold a little bit in advance by, uh, saying that I have... it's not a thing that I've run into that much.I think I've just been very lucky in that, like, a lot of the communities I've been in were, either already very queer majority, or there's a lot of queer acceptance within them, so... I've lucked out and not had to deal with a lot of gender toxicity within heathen spaces, apart from, online, and I grew up on the internet, so I know how to just ignore and block people, so I don't... It's awesome. It's a thing that my brain immediately doesn't let in so it doesn't stay there. I think the only place that really comes up weird is that there are a lot of folks who, I think want to be... inclusive without necessarily unpacking their stuff of binariness, so they will be like, "ah, Jackson is them, we need slot them into, like, the femme space. That's what affirming looks like," and I think that being put in any box is not what I want, and so the kind of the way I counteract that is by oscillating quickly between, uh, different extremes of, like, femme and masc presentation, and activities, to partly to avoid being locked down into one space.

00:38:03 - Jai

In my experience. So, seconding what Jackson just said about there's a lot of people who want to be inclusive without necessarily doing the work. To understand what that inclusivity necessitates. What I've noticed particularly is that there is a lot of tendency to group people into binaries, particularly when discussing. deities, ancestors, spirits, what have you.

Probably the biggest example I can think of right now is, like. There's this thing where Dísir are only female ancestors, and Álfar our only male, which is. Probably not how it was viewed historically, and also just does not make sense to me. Fire and Ice recently did a ritual... did a couple of rituals around the Álfar and Dísir, And the way we kind of approached it was more that the Dísir here were, like, the norms, the ancestors that are having direct influence on your life, while Álfar are like deified ancestors, elves, that kind of thing.

And I think that worked really well for me, but I do recall. when I was first going to rituals with other people, I think this was in 2021 or 2022, I went to a Dísir blót where it... there was a lot of discussion of these were women, these were your female ancestors, female, female, the people who gave birth to you, blah, blah blah, And that was very alienating for me. There's also a lot of. what Alix mentioned around. people, you know, using the term argr, as almost a slur. And general transphobia and homophobia within heathen communities, but I am lucky that. I have mostly only experienced that online.

00:40:11.000 - Garrett

Um... I feel like being newer, um, into the space, I also haven't had to contend as much with. Uh, very strict binaries, though I agree with, uh, some of the points, that Jai and Alix have made, and have seen it also in... in certain spaces. I think that something that. I've noticed recently is, like, for example, um, I'm lucky to have been invited to join a kindred that I view as very inclusive, Distelfink the one that. Mish mentioned before, primarily, it works with Germanic deities, as seen through a Pennsylvania Dutch lens, and it's called Urglaawe, the name. Of it. And one of the... One of the, like, I've already... I've already

told one of the gods people there about it, so I don't think that they would mind me saying, but one of the things I pointed out was that in their interpretation of Frau. Freya, it's... kind of stripped away a lot of the, like, kind of warrior, like, death elements that we have associated with her as, um, in more of the Scandinavian regions. And I think that it... it makes sense when you think of, like, who the Pennsylvania Dutch people were, and what was important to them, a lot of agriculture, you know, gardening.

And things like that, but... you know, I sort of pushed the envelope and said, okay, but also, like. Just because... these folks were not... Warriors in a traditional, like, battle sense, they were still fighting. in some fashion, and there's a lot of strength in the... and it's so funny because. and, you know, you look at Frid, or Frigg and there's so much power in the holder of the keys, and the person who runs the household, and it is not just, oh, you're delegated to housework, it is everything about the protection of the space, the management of the space, everything there is controlled by the woman in the household, and so it was so interesting to me to see that power and sort of reverence given to Fryd. and then feel a lot of the time, like Fravel was being, sort of. relegated as,

like, oh, like, the garden Goddess, and it's like, okay. But also, like, these people were refugees, they were fighting. They came out of... a war, and then they fled that, and then got here, and then they were, like, fighting about, like for their identity, and... you know, there's a lot of persecution of, like, having to, because of World War I and World War II, having to get rid of, you know, German-sounding names and things like that, and sort of having a very similar experience that other, uh, like, immigrants from Europe faced is, oh, well, you have to blend in and assimilate, and. That's also sort of, like, in my opinion, like, a war on its own, like a battle that they're fighting. And so, I think that one of the things that I... appreciate about Distelfink is that I can say those things, and I don't get. You know, immediately pushed back against, like, ostracized, which has not been my experience in every circle. But also that... you know, bringing our experiences and into the present and looking at it with that present lens and saying, like, okay, like, I can understand why these caricatures sort of formed around this entity. at this given time, but that does not mean that that's all that she was, or all that they were, all that he was, you know, like... And so, I think that there's a lot of opportunity now in the heathen space to sort of push, like, our narratives and start telling our stories and making our myths, and that's something I'm really excited about. I'm lucky enough also to have not experienced a ton of pushback when I have brought these topics to light in heathen circles that I have been a part of, so I'm very grateful for that.

00:44:42 - Miche

Yeah, I definitely also agree with a lot of what Alix and Jai said. I really like that way of thinking of the Álfar and the Dísir, because that's also something that I have struggled with as I've got older, of how to, and I do feel like the Dísir specifically have a vibe of being very medalsome, said with affection. I also forgot to mention earlier that I should that when I was a kid, I was also very into the idea of elves, which I feel like is a very common trans experience, maybe should have been a flag looking back.

I mean I have definitely encountered some of this. A lot of what I have encountered is kind of, like the stuff that I've encountered in person has largely been more of the not necessarily, like, open misogyny or transphobia or anything like that, but like, oh, well, they're not one is it better than the other, they're just very different. Which is one of those things that's very tricky to work with because it's true, people of different genders experience things differently, etc, but also, when you're saying that, and it's, like, what that means is that, li women have to go in this corner and do, like, domestic labor and spinning, and men get to go in this corner and... plan wars, I guess? I'm not really... 100%, make laws? I don't know. Obviously there are problems with that. The kindred that I was in in Texas was also very heavily trans and queer, which is why a lot of people wound up leaving Texas. I didn't experience that a ton of, like. You know, there was maybe, like, a little bit of that, like, at the very beginning towards there but a lot of what I've experienced has been online, or things ...

Sorry, I can't remember who initially referenced this. I know that Jackson referenced specifically the lumping non-binary people in with femmes thing, which I think is something that is so frustrating because I know that when people do that, they're trying to be helpful, but it's like, there are so many different kinds of, like, non-binary experiences, and, I would rather I generally, as a non-binary person, don't want to be in, like, gender-segregated spaces. I think

that there are times when I have been like, it would be really nice to be in a room of all trans people right now, and I've had that experience, but I don't have any, like, I don't even necessarily, like, me being in a room with a ton of other non-binary people doesn't necessarily mean that all of our experiences are going to be the same. Like, there are places where I have talked to non-binary people who I just really cannot relate to a lot of their gender journey, uh... I've talked to, like, binary trans people where, we've been able to empathize on things, but they're also Garrett and I have had conversations.

(Chat comment from Ruin)

The label of "nonbinary" is so incredibly huge and broad! Too much so to be relegated to "woman-lite"

Yes, I definitely agree with the comments in the chat that it's so broad, and it's, uh, very, like... it's too much to relegate to women light. Yeah, I don't know, I know that, sorry, I feel like I just, like, talked in circles, but I think that that's sort of broadly my experience. I've definitely run into shitty stuff online, And have got some pushback when I called it out. A lot of what I have seen is more subtle and or is from people who are trying to help, and just kind of like not quite making it to the finish line, I guess?

00:48:31- **Moderator Cori**
additional thoughts from our panelists?

00:48:48- Moderator Cori

So the next question I had was beyond gender, how do other aspects of your identity such as race, culture, socioeconomic status, or disability intersect with your experience as a transgender / non-binary Heathen.

00:49:07 - Alix

So it doesn't necessarily intersect with my transness, but I grew up speaking Swiss-German, and that's become a really important part of my practice as a heathen. I use it in a lot of prayers and rituals and such. But there was a time when I felt a certain stigma around speaking it. I remember there was this time back in the fourth grade, my best friend at the time had a German-speaking exchange student living with his family. And he had been learning a little bit of the language. Not much, enough to understand, like, what the Nazis were saying in Indiana Jones in the last crusade. And he knew that my family was German-speaking, so all of a sudden he wanted to hear me speak it. And I did, and then he was, like, laughing and saying, that's not real German, you're making that up. And I was kind of, uh...Mortified. Because, you know, it's Swiss-German and Standard German sounds very different, I mean.

00:50:01

They're basically different languages but yeah, it was a pretty mortifying experience. And years later, when I was learning standard German in college, I never mentioned to anyone that I could speak Swiss German. So my professors kind of thought that I was naturally super gifted in linguistics when they saw how easily the language came to me. Having no idea that I was, like, had a pretty strong foundation to build on there. But as I began my heathen journey, I got over that internalized inferiority complex, or whatever. And I started to feel really grateful that I grew up with that kind of cultural link to my ancestors. And I started to appreciate how beautiful my second mother tongue was. So now I'm very proud to bring it into my spiritual practice.

00:50:57 -

Um, I guess talking about class a bit. I'm a fairly working-class person, I do a lot of work in food justice that, you know, interact even more, like, the "working class", as it were. And so a lot of my work with Thor tends to be from the perspective of kind of the working man's god and that doesn't necessarily the intersection of my career identity and my human identity, and working in working-class spaces. don't always, like, overlap at the same time, but it does kind of lead into complications of how to interact with strong Christianity and strong gender norms that kind of often exist in some working-class spaces, and how-to balance all its identities in a way that... where we are knowing what parts of myself to kind of put aside for now, because I'm working on solving the immediate problems, not the broader social problems that we will get to down the road.

00:52:09 - Jai

I am South Asian and the child of two immigrants. I'm also disabled, and at the moment, mostly housebound due to disability. And the thing that I've noticed in heathen spaces is that.

Sometimes I will enter a space. And as soon as I say anything pertaining to any of those elements of my identity. People will instantly stop listening to me. People are very... They want to say they are inclusive. But then I don't want to do the work around unpacking internalized racism, internalized misogyny, things like that.

00:52:54.000 --> 00:53:02.000

There's a lot of ingrained colonialism and I think a lot of what's important about becoming inclusive is unlearning the things that you are taught as you grow up. There's definitely been a lot of heathen spaces where I've entered heathen spaces where people were instantly shitty to me as soon as I post a selfie.

So at this point, it's become kind of like I have a little checklist that I go down if I enter a new Discord server. Where it's like, okay, I search these terms, I find out if people are saying these things, is there any pushback against these things? And that's how I that if a space is safe for me. Which sounds like it would be a stressful thing, but at this point, it's just kind of. Okay, I'm doing this work because it needs to be done and because if I'm not doing it. Somebody else is going to have to do it.

00:54:03 - Garrett

Yeah, I feel the most... I feel like very awkward talking about this topic, because I feel like I'm... I'm a cis-passing trans man, I'm white, I'm not disabled or not considered disabled. I am neurodivergent, I have ADHD, but I don't feel like I fall into a lot of other margins. But the one. thing that I can speak to is... Um, my grandmother is Polish, she was born in Canada, but her grand her parents were born in Poland, and um. I think somebody actually mentioned in the chat, I'm gonna read it out loud, just if that's okay, it says

"The animism and ancestral veneration inherent to heathenry.what has honestly been a beautiful gateway into exploring or beginning to reclaim the indigenous American ancestry that I always felt I couldn't access due to my colonial... due to colonialism and being mostly white or at least white passing." (Ruin)

00:54:58 - Garrett

I wouldn't say, I don't know much about, um, any Indigenous or Native American ancestry that I might have, though I think I do have some. But I think that it has... Heathenry has sort of given me permission to look back at my ancestry, and the practices and folk traditions that existed in Europe, and especially in Poland. And sort of have more empathy for them. You know, it's made me feel a little bit more connected to that side of my family, and I feel like, almost as if reciprocity, is part of our faith. That has come back and made it so now I am more empathetic. to a bunch of different, marginalized experiences, but, like, for example, I think a lot more about the impacts of colonialism now than I did in the past. And some of that might be because of political education, or my social circle, but I think animism has sort of forced me to reckon with, like, oh, like, what did it mean? Like, when... XYZ happened... like, we learned that in a

Biology class that Ireland used to be full of trees, and then all the trees got cut down, and now there's, like. It used to be over 90% forest, and now it is like 6% forest. And I mean, so it's, it's really... forced me to contend with not just... What were my ancestors doing? What folk practices, were they trying to hold on to? like in Poland, when there wasn't even a Poland there wasn't even a country when it was partitioned off, and They maintained their identity, unfortunately, through Catholicism. But a lot of the folk magic and folk practices got passed down through Catholicism. What did that mean for them, and why do they still hold onto it today? Many of these traditions are still so baked into the culture, still to this day, and then coming here, and what does it mean to immigrate to a country... where that wasn't our country, and... engage with a land that is not our land. Overall, I just feel like it has made me a more empathetic person. I don't have a lot of the experiences, like I said in the beginning, that a lot of other folks do, but it has forced me to learn, and it has made me very grateful for the opportunity to learn those things. I find a little bit of tidbits here and there about my ancestry and what I can look back in and empathize with their struggles. But that empathy makes it so I can empathize with a lot of other struggles as well, so that's something that I really appreciate about heathen spaces. When they are thinking that way, because like Jai said- they are not always the resisting colonialism or anti-colonialism circle and the inclusive heathen space circle, quote unquote, is not always, like, it's not that Venn diagram is not always a circle, and I personally find my self most interested in the spaces where they actually do overlap, because then, to me, that feels actually reciprocal with both the land I'm living on and what I'm experiencing in my spirituality.

00:58:49.000 - Miche

I just wanted to say, before I... actually answer the question. I wanted to say there's a comment from Ruin that says,

I feel very strongly that even, and especially for the lily whitest of us, it's so incredibly important for us to figure out who we were before we were white, so to speak.

00:59:02

I was just gonna say that, yes, that's something I also feel very strongly about, and that's one of the reasons when, like, I'm talking to people about, like, heathens against hate, like, one of the things that I say is that I think that it's very important for us as white people to do the work of actually, like, obviously it's important for us to do a lot of work. This is by no means doing this. Doing this work does not automatically make you anti-racist or mean that you're all good and you never have to work on yourself again. Because that work is something that is going to happen every day forever, because our society embeds all of us with a lot of stuff. But that is something that is super important for us is to actually reconnect with specific ancestral traditions and cultures. I took a class a couple months ago that I'll drop the, uh, the link in the chat, but, it was about building solidarity with Indigenous communities, and literally the homework for the first lesson was to research one of your ancestral lines, and a tradition that they had when they were on the land that they are indigenous to.

01:00:08

And as you know Dr. Lyla (Re^Human instructor) was talking about it, she was like, the reason for this and the reason that I think that this is so important is because if you are rootless, if that connection is severed then whenever you are interacting with people in Indigenous spaces, you are automatically going to be coming to the table needy, because there's something in you that is missing that you want us to fill, but we can't do that, and that is part of what contributes to ongoing, like, colonial violence and, like, demands on people's time and emotional labor etc. I definitely agree with that. I also think that as far as the other things - I've had a lot of different class experiences. I've been at a well-paid tech job. I've also been so poor that I stole toilet paper from public bathrooms. I have...I'm neurodivergent and have PTSD, CPTSD... I also have a lot of chronic illnesses going on. I still feel weird about claiming the label disabled, but probably fall under it at this point, just because of the sheer amount of, like, maintenance work I have to do to be functioning on anything that resembles, like, a normal level. So there's all of that, um... oh crap, I was gonna say I had a thing, and I forgot it, but... I do think that all of those things impact. My experience in heathen spaces to some extent, but it's very hard to, like, piece out, like, what is what.

I think that it is something that I think about when there are strict laws around, or strict rules around certain things I would not, at this point. if I was at a sumble or a feinting or anything like that, and the expectation was to all pass around the same horn, I would have a hard, hard pass to that, because I have POTS and MCAS, I can't... if I get COVID, it could, Fuck me up for years to come. I've already had it twice, and I would prefer not to have it again. There's a documented link between it worsening those things and other issues. That is not always something that people are receptive to.

I also think that something that this made me think about, I remembered it, was that, like, I referenced this earlier, but, like, as someone who has been I was Charlottesville in 2017- I was counter-protesting at the Unite the Right rally. I also spent a lot of time out on the streets in 2020 in Austin, including the night that Abbott called in the Texas National Guard, and they were like rounding people up into school buses and grabbing people off the street into unmarked cars.

01:02:55 (**TRIGGER WARNING Police Brutality**)

And something that has been one of the ways that I kind of vet Heathen spaces is, looking at how they talk about Odin to some extent, but especially Tyr. Because especially in Texas, something that I ran into regularly was people kind of talking about Tyr as literally as, like, the patron deity of cops. I have heard people say completely unironically, very seriously, that Tyr does not care about morality, or what is actually just; he cares about justice in the sense of the law. Like, he cares if something is illegal, which is, number one, like, stupid on its fucking face to me, and number two is such a limiting thing to say about a deity, like, I don't... it feels like... it is both limiting and arrogant. The idea that an entity that is, like, thousands of years old and perceives reality and time and space and everything in a completely, completely different way than you cares about

human laws as they are written specifically is so ludicrous to me that I don't even know how to, where to start unpacking that. but as someone who has been, who has, literally watched cops walk off and let Nazis mace people. Mace me and my friends, and tear gas people, and beat people with poles in the street, and has also been maced, and tear-gassed by cops and has watched them assault people 20 feet from me, and has taken care of people who were maced and tear gassed and beaten, like, directly afterwards. That is, like... if that is how someone views Tyr, I don't want to be in a ritual space with them. I don't, I am not going to, like... I scream at them if I'm in the same room as them, but I'm not going to share a horn with them. I can't be, I'm not safe around them. I would argue that most marginalized people aren't, because, if that is how If that is, like, the way that you are interacting with the world, then that's, like, fundamentally not safe for so many people, and it's also fundamentally alienating for so many people.

01:05:02

It kind of reminds me of this TikTok. I'll see if I can find the original one. I have, like, the video saved on my phone because I keep showing it to people because it was a big light bulb moment for me, but essentially she's talking about how, one of the reasons that I thought it was interesting is that she's talking about it within a Christian lens, and she's talking about how for a lot of conservative Christians, Christian nationalists and fundamentalist Christians, their morality is authority-based, it's vertical, and that if you have the authority to do something, it is okay to do it. Killing someone is not wrong because you're hurting someone, it's wrong because you don't have the authority to do it. So if you have the authority then by that same rule, if you have the authority to do something. So if God told you to do it, or if you have the full weight of the law behind you, etc, then, you can do whatever you want.

Versus, like, empathy-based morality that is horizontal. Where hurting people is wrong because you're hurting people. One of the things that I thought was fascinating about that is that, I know Christians who don't fall into that model, like, Garrett's grandparents are Catholics and funny enough, given that it's a very hierarchical structure traditionally they are very compassionate, empathetic people. But I have also met heathens who absolutely fall under the, like, authority-based paradigm. Talking about Tyr like that is a huge red flag for me that that's the kind of paradigm that they look at the world through, and that means that it's not a safe space for me. So I think that that's something that I also watch for.

01:06:38 - Garrett

I think that's a good point, because I think that one of the things. That people don't... think about is that inclusivity is not just about making a space for everybody. It's also about how are you... protecting that space, not just from outside influences, but from inside influences, and the things that are baked into our culture and into our upbringing just by very virtue of me being born, white, middle class in the United States, I'm gonna have a certain set of biases pretty early on, you know, very likely. So it's inclusivity is not just about creating, like, an isolated buzz bubble that's called safe. It's also about

creating an active effort of not just pushing back against other folks who would see that bubble popped, but looking internally and making sure that there's nobody who is, whether intentionally or not, y kind of making that space unsafe from the inside.

01:07:56 Jai

It's the idea of not just equality, but equity.

01:08:09 - Moderator Cori

I love that. Any other thoughts? Chat just mentioned the paradox of tolerance and I think that's a very good point.

01:08:29 - Moderator Cori

So, moving on to our next question. Um, do you believe that there will... come a time when more progressive and expansive relationships with our own and each other's genders. Will become the norm.

01:08:47 Alix

I think it will, but I think it may be a long time coming. But people... if people really start to see past, the overly simplistic dogma of there being an absolute and binary definition of biological sex, and stuff like that. The faster we'll get there and if people become a little bit more open-minded and open-hearted, then the better off we'll all be. But I wouldn't want to guess about how long that's gonna take, or when it might happen.

01:09:19 Jackson

I think we have to believe that that time exists, otherwise it won't. Like all magic, you have to believe in it working, and then you have to lace your boots up to make it happen, too.

01:09:32 Jai

I think things are already changing. Not in every space, but in some spaces, I think. You know, we're not already at the point where it's great, it's everything, it's perfect, but we are at a point where things are changing and there's forward momentum happening.

01:09:52 - Garrett

Yeah, I mean, I think that, uh... I think that this panel is already indicative of change that's happening. I also think that being able to discuss various gender identities within spiritual contexts is really important, too, so... Like, in Distelfink there's a lot of discussion about gender and what that means, and how it relates to the different concepts around each, observance, but also in, like, the Braucherei tradition, which is a Pennsylvania Dutch folk. folk tradition, or a folk healing tradition. It was traditionally passed from , male to female would be, like, the mentor-to-mentee would have to be somebody of the opposite sex, and that was sort of how it got passed down each time, and it was sort of said that each person would have unique things to add because of the unique contexts that were added as part of gender, but we're seeing that evolve now. I mean, discussion about... I think they're in the Braucherei tradition, there's mention of, like, between all of the interviews that Rob Schreiwer has done **12 different genders** that were recognized or mentioned as part of Braucherei or Hexerei. I think that now it's just becoming less difficult to talk about and to discuss in a way. That doesn't immediately result in, like, harm and stigma being... which is not always the case, but there are more and more spaces like that, and it's interesting to see that now that those spaces are opening up, and that lens is being turned back toward the past. How much that, that was true of the past as well, that people did not have a binary gender experience, um, and that there were words to sort of express that back then, even if they don't fit as a one-to-one with the words that we know of today there were those things back then, so...

01:12:14.000 - Miche

Yeah, um, yes, I can look up the... book that that's in, because it's referenced in, like, a larger book by Corey Thomas Hutchison's, but I also have it in my notes. I don't know if that would be, too much for Cortney to send out, but I thought that that was really interesting, and I really appreciated that when we went over the 12, different genders and, like, sort of how they translated. I really appreciated that, because I feel like as a non-binary person so much of the time, it's kind of like there's just the 'Other' category, and it was nice to see some more specific language and ways that things were discussed. That was I think it was from interviews with, like, 3 or 4 different practitioners, and two of them had had the same mentor, and had been apprentices in, like, the 40s or the 50s. So, like, a while ago, But yeah, I mean, aside from that, I do think that I think that we are making progress there, it's not always, as fast as I would like. I think that I definitely hope that that happens. I think that, you know, there's that thing about, like, oh, well, like, what if they're just experimenting? And it's like, **good**, it should be very possible to experiment with your gender presentation and try new things, and if you decide that you're cis later, like, that's fine, that shouldn't have stigma, I think that most trans people want that.

It also makes me think of a series of Tumblr posts that get passed around occasionally. About, like, how, um... how like trans women...Like seeing trans women exist can be a really positive experience for people who were assigned female at birth, like cis women because there is so much baggage around being a woman in our society, like, you know, OP says something like. That, uh, their mom was, like, raised in, like, a fundamentalist, very fundamentalist Christian sect where, like, she had it drilled into her from day one that she was inferior, that she was, like, never going to be good for anything other than breeding and raising children and housework. and the first time that she found out that, like, trans women existed, she literally, sat down and cried about it, because the idea that someone would want to be a woman so bad that they would that they would fight against all of the social stigma to be recognized as a woman was so foreign to her number one, and also affirming to her like, "*OH, maybe this thing about me is not, like, absolute trash.*"

I think that that's a really important experience for people to have, and I think that only, like, that's, you know, one of the reasons that, trans people existing, I think, obviously I'm biased, but I think can really only make everyone's experience of gender a better and more positive.

01:15:31 - Moderator Cori

Sorry, that made me really emotional, so Any more thoughts before we move on?
So, next I have a kind of a collection of related questions for allies and about allyship.
So, I want to start withWhat are a couple of actionable steps that Cisgender pagans can
take this month to be better allies to our transgender community.

01:16:12 - Alix

So, I'd say the first thing is to be better allies to our transgender community, **Educate Yourselves**, because it's unbelievable how much misinformation and false assumptions are floating around out there, and get treated like objective facts. I mean, you could start with the idea that biological sex is perfectly binary and immutable. There's literally no way to define 'Female' in such a way that includes every person who is assigned female at birth and excludes every person who is assigned male at birth. It's impossible, maybe you could come up with some definition that satisfies the vast majority of cases, but you're still talking about tendencies rather than natural law, or whatever. Natural laws don't have exceptions and I think we'd all agree that biological tendencies, no matter how strong, should never, ever serve as a basis for discrimination.

And then another example, the whole trans women in sports issue. I could tell you from personal experience that Over the course of several years of HRT, some degree of physical strength and stamina gets lost. And scientific studies have begun to bear this out. It's more likely after being on HRT for a while, that a trans woman will be disadvantaged in sports. But you never hear that in the media. Because it fundamentally challenges and upturns people's transmisogynistic assumptions.Which I could go on about all day. But suffice it to say, the truth is out there.

Which brings me to the second step I'd suggest, is **Speak the Truth**, to your cis friends and family. Don't leave the burden for us to carry alone. Please. Educate as many other people as you can on these issues. The last thing I'd suggest is, well, I don't... I want to say I don't want to get political, but I have to get political. **Bring your allyship to the ballot box**. Know where the person you're voting for stands on trans rights, and know whether they're actually going to fight for and protect us. Because even in blue states, that's become kind of rare these days. A once-in-a-blue-moon kind of thing, you could say, recently, it feels like the tide may be turning, but, de really need to make sure that trend continues by only supporting genuine and committed allies. So, yeah.

01:18:43 - Jackson

Coming from a Wiccan background, I had a lot of, built in, here's what the masculine and the feminine are for, here's how they fit into your ritual space, your altar space, that kind of thing, and, slowly kind of unlearning some of that has been an important part of my, like, building a sensible spiritual life. So I think as an actionable step, if you have masculine-feminine structures within your practice, maybe take a second and look at them and say, *"Are these actually serving anything, or are they just, cultural inertia that I've been leaving around, and is there another structure that might work better for me?"*

01:19:28 - Jai

Seconding everything that's been said. It is so important to unlearn and unpack. The assumptions that you've been taught. And to just do your research and learn the basics. Also, In the chat, someone said, **Stand up for us even when we're nowhere nearby.** That is so important.

01:19:50 - Garrett

Yeah, I definitely agree with everything, And again, I also agree with what Paige said (in the chat) about, "*it's not opinion, this is all political.*"

You know, I agree about making sure that we know. Where our politicians, who are said to represent a stand on trans issues, it's really important. If there is the option to support somebody who does support trans rights, you know -Please, Please support them, you know, because, especially right now, we are literally seeing that the transgender issue, quote-unquote, gets left by the wayside because it's too controversial, or because they are worried that it will alienate a vast majority of voters who are moderate by American standards. So I think that if you see somebody who is doing something right, you know, tell them that you appreciate it. By both voting, but also send a letter, or give them a call, or something like that. But also recognize that, like. Don't do that to the exclusion of, if it's coming down to, like the candidate who has said nothing about trans issues and the one that is actively going to, contribute to our demise. also know where you stand on that? Like, you know, like, don't... Don't... **Understand that people's lives really do depend on these things**, and that goes for all marginalized groups, not just trans people. **Talk to marginalized people, talk to trans people**, ask them, like, you know, "*I'm noticing that, you know, the options that we have available, there's nobody really who supports trans rights. What are you gonna do? What, like, what... What... what matters to you in this moment?*" Because I think that there's a lot of people who really try to do the right thing. They tried to do that in an echo chamber of their own voices, and the people that are around them, and they don't actually. Branch out and talk to people who have different experiences. And what... would actually represent them in a moment.

Um... And... yeah, so, I mean, like.

Just to make a very direct example. Again, because it is all political, like. We did not support Cheryl for the primary, but we sure supported Cheryl for the election of New Jersey's governor. There's a reason, I mean, we don't have ranked choice voting, so we didn't... our the candidate we favored the most who did and was openly positive about trans rights didn't win. But... That doesn't mean that we were gonna sit the vote out, either, you know, when it came right down to it, because a lot of people's lives depend on it. It sucks that we're in that position at all, but that's why talking to each other is so important, and getting out there is so important. Um, and the last thing that I will just say is, **Connect with your community**, kind of just, building off what I've already said, go to a local queer event that, as long as that they're allowing allies to be there,, go, and experience it firsthand, and just be in community with your neighbors, and with other queer people in your community, because you'll quickly find that we are just people. And that a lot of these issues are actually not as complicated as what, uh... You may have

been led to believe, so it's actually pretty simple. It's just human empathy, and trusting people that they know what's best for their own bodies and their own health, so...

01:23:57 - Miche

Yeah, um, I think I would definitely agree with, like, everything everyone else already said, um... In addition to that, I think I would say, as far as, actionable steps, like, having... overall **being proactive** about it, especially if you were a leader in any kind of community or event space. If you're on the committee of a board **have a code of conduct that explicitly includes transphobia, as a violation of the Code of Conduct**. Of course, in addition to other things, but and **have a documented process for dealing with violations**, because I do think that, another one of my things, along with, like, the ancestral connections, but another one of my soapboxes is that I think that a lot of the reasons that things get tense is because, our entire concept of justice as a society is very punitive. So people think that if they did something wrong, then they are going to get punished, and if they are told that they did something wrong, then that means that there is some kind of punishment coming. And, like, that is... I think a lot of where the defensiveness can come in, because you're expecting, "*oh, if I did something wrong, that means that, like, this person is mad at me,*" or "*they're never going to talk to me again,*" or "*I'm going to be cut off from, like, my social circle.*"

In a culture where people are very often starved for community, being cut off from your social circle can be literally life or death.

It can be as dramatic as that sounds. so I think that having...like, thinking about this ahead of time and not being willing to just settle for 'oh, we accept everyone, we just don't talk about politics, or things like that', but instead being like, okay, no, we are going to make an effort to be, like, actively inclusive to trans people and disabled people and queer people and people of color. we're going to think about all of these things, like we're going to look at, like, this festival and, if there's... I can't think of, like, an example off the top of my head, but something in there about, like, physical labor and how, like, that has to be done for a person to be of value to society, like, what does that mean for disabled people? Being willing to, like, unpack that together, like, I think that there's room for a lot of good discussions along those lines. I... because again, like, I think a lot of times people just don't think about this stuff.

Thinking about things from that perspective, but also having a, like, okay, like, if someone does something, like... that goes against the code of conduct, or that is not meeting our standards of inclusivity, like, this is how we will deal with it, and having the same standard for everyone, and having that be transparent. And having it not be, like, just like, oh, well, you know, you get, like, a finger wagged at you, and then, like, three strikes, and you're out forever.

01:26:46

But, like, a... okay, so, like, if someone does this, like, we pull them aside, and we're like, hey, like."This was not okay, like, I don't know if you know about this, like, you might not know, but, like, here's some resources, like, here's some reading, this does not match the kind of space that we're trying to create, so we, you know, in the future, like, we

really would like you to not do that." Like, and if you continue to do it, we're going to have to have, like, some further conversation.

But I think that there's, like, a line when people, like, start learning about restorative justice, like, I think that a lot of times they think it means that, Nobody ever faces any consequences, and it doesn't mean that either. But, like, there does need to be... you know, there needs to be standards for accountability that are not just about punishment and that apply the same to everyone, whether, like, the person who has been a member of your kindred, or who came to your event for the first time. If they have a complaint about someone who has been a member of your kindred for 10 years, like, you need to be willing to listen to them, like, because it's unfortunate, but in a society where all of us are, being sort of indoctrinated with so much bad stuff from, like, day one.

It is... like, everyone is going to up at some point, and like. It doesn't matter if you think, like, oh, well, they wouldn't intentionally say something racist or transphobic or, you know, etc.

It doesn't matter if it was intentional, like, if they did it, then they did it and there needs to be, like, a conversation about that that is not, like, making the trans person, you know, or the marginalized person out to be hysterical just because you don't see it. I think that that is, like, I guess probably another bullet point would be, like, accept that, like, you are not going to see everything.

01:28:24

And, like, you know, obviously I would never ask someone to give up their critical thinking skills, but, like, if someone. who has a lived experience. with something is like, hey, this bothers me for XYZ reasons, or like. I know that you probably don't know about this, but the way that you're talking plays into, like, these cultural tropes. Like, you have to be willing to at least hear them out and think about it, um... And I think that, like, all of those things are steps that can create... that help you move towards creating spaces where... that are safe for, all marginalized people, trans people included.

01:29:02.000- Garrett

Also, it just makes spaces safer for everybody, except for racists and, you know, people who are intolerant of others to the point that. they would actively go against. a very human instinct to be in community. It's just better for everybody. If everybody just takes the time. To accept that their experience is not prescriptive on everybody else, and that they don't know everything, and that it is okay to make mistakes, and that everybody is learning. it just... it would just be better for everybody, not... not least marginalized people, but also everybody. So, like, I think that's the piece that often gets missed is that I think people believe that, well, if we do all of this, then, like Mish said, something bad will happen to us. Like, our community will be changed, our community will be different, or bad, or...something like this, and I'm like, there's a lot to unpack there just with that belief, in general, that, like, if you accept. this criticism and accept these marginalized folks in, that something bad will happen to your community. Um, but that is literally the kind of stuff that we are taught from a very young age, so...

01:30:29 - **Moderator Cori**

Yeah. Okay, I'm gonna kind of combine some of the questions that we talked about earlier. So, in terms of representation -

- How does the representation of trans identity within leadership, or lack thereof, shape how you view your position within the heathen community.
- What can we do about offering and making sure there is representation of transgender non-binary people, not just in leadership, but within our communities?
- How can we make these communities a place where transgender and non-binary people want to be and feel like they belong?

01:31:16 - **Alix**

So the whole reason why I sort out a leadership position in the Troth was because there were no trans-feminine voices there At all. And so I felt like a personal responsibility to kind of get involved. I think actively seeking marginalized folks for leadership positions is really important or finding ways and means to platform us and boost our voices, at the very least. The problem is, you know, a lot of marginalized heathens, Transheathens won't feel super comfortable with public engagement. Especially right now. Especially for trans women. So it's probably incumbent on the more privileged of us to create environments where it feels safer for us to stick our necks out. So to speak. To really show in concrete ways that the community by and large, has our backs. So we could offer our voices and our perspectives, which you know, are frankly lacking.

01:32:24 - **Jackson**

Um, I'll second all of that, and also say that it's also important to bring queer people, like, you know. openly noticeably trans and queer people, to things when it's not just for, the trans panel, or like the Pride Month events. This panel's great, but also it's important to make sure that you have. Trans people are doing things where it's like, I don't know, like. Like, a general ritual. Um, so the... **so that we exist beyond just our identities.**

01:33:02 - **Jai**

Everything that's already been said, making space for trans people, being active and inviting us onto Spaces and in to spaces.

01:33:15 - **Garrett**

I also think not going and putting pressure on any one trans person to be the voice for the entire trans community. So, like, you might have a trans person in leadership at your organization, your company, maybe in a ritual space- they're involved. But don't, like we were just discussing earlier in this panel, everybody's trans experience is different, and so if you are only going to that one person to decide what's right for the trans representation at any level then you are always going to get something that is not representative of the entire trans community. And now,

I don't think that getting something that's entirely representative of everybody's experience is very realistic, because it would be a lot of different people that would have to be put. But I think ... Lift up the people who are marginalized themselves, but also

take an active interest in learning about the experiences of others and show that with their actions. So, they're not consistently, like, "*I would know this because I'm a trans person*," or "*I would know this because I'm XYZ*," that they are often not framing it in concepts of them knowing it because of their own experience, but also then connecting that to stories and to experiences that they have, that they are consciously bringing in through their engagements with the community. I'm not saying that bringing your personal experiences in as a trans person to leadership is a bad thing. But I find that just... this is a blanket statement for all leaders, the leaders who are the best are kind of the reluctant leaders, the ones who don't really want to be representing, but are... So because of that, they are more inclined to lean on others for help, to go to others for advice, and that means that just by the very virtue of being that kind of person, I think that their voice will be a little bit more representative. So just be mindful that, like, just because you have... might have a trans person as part of leadership, it's not a box to be checked and say, "*okay, that means that we're inclusive*." It also has to be a continuous effort to make sure that the burden isn't being placed all on that person, to represent the whole.

01:36:00 - **Miche**

Yes, I agree with everything everyone already said. I also think being willing put people in positions of leadership or support them being in positions of leadership, even if you do not always agree with them. Or even if they have disagreed with you, or you feel that they've been, too aggressive or something in the past, and obviously there is a lot that goes into that, but I think that there is, like, a natural human tendency for people to not only, as referenced, kind of assume that, one trans person can represent all trans people

when every single person on this panel has a different trans experience. Even with trans-femme people, if you have a Black trans woman and a white trans woman, they're going to have very different experiences. Class, ability, or disability all of these things really impact your experience of transness, and also very much, how people treat you. I

think that being aware of that and being aware of things like transmisogyny or Misogynoir - the way that Black women are treated differently than white women, the intersection of misogyny and racism and anti-Blackness that they experience. Being aware of those things as factors so that you are not putting all of it on one person, and then being like, "*well, but my token trans friend agrees with me, so I don't know why you have the problem*" I feel like that kind of attitude, and that's definitely not something that only crops up with trans people, I think that that's common with, like, marginalized people in general. Don't use the people that you know in leadership as shields for a critique, I think would be Maybe, like, the thing that I would add in addition to what everyone else said.

01:38:04 - **Moderator Cori**

Wonderful. Um... And then we're getting really close to about 2 hours, so I'm just gonna do one more question. This is kind of combining our last two questions. This is something that I had, one of the trans people in my life asked me to ask. That was - Do you have any suggestions for those who are starting their journey as transgender

heathens. Whether that is them starting their journey into heathenry, or starting their journey into transitions. Advice for them, or for their family and friends.

01:38:49 - **Alix**

So, my suggestion would be to take nothing for granted. There are no set-in-stone rules on the correctness or ultimate truth of anything. There's no one way to be a heathen, just like there's no one way to be a man, or a woman, or whatever else, so...I feel like you should always explore, experiment. Find what works for you. What rings true and resonates. Because only you get to define who you really are, and what you really believe.

It's just like people say we are our deeds. I think it's equally true that we are our religion. You know, these things flow into and influence each other. They're fed by the same source. At the root of who we are as individuals. And I think that's a beautiful and sacred thing, or ought to be. Rather than some kind of imposition from biology or religious authority, or whatever. So you should have fun with it. Express yourself and your spirituality fully and freely. I think that's the best advice I could offer in that respect.

01:39:58 - **Jackson**

I think a great part of starting a new journey, whether it be religious or gender-wise, is that you. you have a built-in grace period to kind of get a little messy, play around with some identities. Do you think that, maybe you wind up not liking or leaning into, but there was a good experiment with it. I think that giving yourself grace and knowing that, you're at the start of a journey, so therefore you should have extra empathy with yourself to fail and be a little cringe until you find your rhythm is really good and healthy. We should all always give ourselves that grace, but especially as you're trying a new thing. I think especially, with any form of polytheism, you have a lot of different avenues to explore, and I think intentionally trying the full buffet before you really lock into any one thing is a great approach.

01:40:59 - **Jai**

Going off of that, cringe culture is dead.

It is okay to experiment to create new terms for yourself, to figure out new ways of combining, practices and labels. It's okay and good. and healthy to figure out what you want from yourself and your life.

01:41:18 - **Garrett**

Yeah, I mean, I think that I would advocate take it slow a little bit at first. Don't rush into anything, because I think that the culture that we grow up in places that big emphasis, or at least in the U.S., places a big emphasis on wanting to be sure, and wanting to be right. Because people want to know. *"Well, what are you?"* Or, like, both in terms of religion and of gender. There's this pressure to decide, and to be like, this is what I am, and then a fear to move outside of that. Both for fear of you know, *"God, will it be perceived as, like, now I'm a failure because I told everybody this one thing, and now. It's actually this thing."* And especially with spirituality, being a relatively newer heathen. I felt a lot of anxiety of, like, Am I not honoring these deities enough? And what does it mean that I'm getting more involved in Urglaawe when I started with, like, Apollo and

Dionysus? Does that mean that my relationship with them is ruined now??and, that they'll feel offended?? You know, just like, allow yourself to grow, just allow it to happen.

Also allow it to happen a little bit to you. And take it slowly and experience it. Don't feel like, for example, once you've gotten, you know, your trans identity, 'figured out', though we could debate on the degrees of what that means in real life.

Don't believe that you've got all of life figured out. I mean, that's how I got into an abusive relationship, I was like, I know I'm trans, and now I can do nothing wrong, and then it was like, well, life sure served me,something that told me, wow, like. You might think that you have it all figured out, but... be gentle with yourself. Be a little bit careful,

it's okay also to, like, hold things a little bit close to your chest and, you could talk to people who are trusted and safe and explore things... And you don't have to bring all of

the internet along on that ride with you, because that can really, having so many disparate voices can really, I think, hurt some people in their journey, and sometimes it can be helpful, too, to hear other people and their experiences, but just like Know that you're right with yourself. The last thing that I'll say, for other people, allies and parents or family members, friends. Let them do that. So, like, if somebody comes to you and it's like I'm a baby pagan, and I don't really know what I'm doing, and they come for advice.

Offer advice, but... don't like go on so long that, essentially, it's like, if you don't follow what I'm telling you, then it's like, you're doing it wrong, you know, like... I think be mindful that it is going to be a growth journey, and it's going to be won over a course of many years, if not a lifetime. And just be grateful to be along for the ride, because I think that watching it is really really beautiful, to see in others, too. So, both with a gender journey and a spiritual journey.

01:44:51 - Miche

I think I would say, make sure to... I don't know, enjoy it. Like, I think that something that I've seen Rob from Distelfink, who's done a lot of the research that Garrett referenced, say, like, when talking to, you know, friends is like that people take, how much fun the learning process is for granted. I think that kind of applies to both things, that it can be really fun to experiment. When you are removing some of that pressure, like Garrett referenced from yourself, to get it right. It can be really fun to, like, experiment and be like, well, do I like clothes like this? Do I like clothes like this? ... and trying to find the fun instead of the frustration. Again, especially coming from, like, a non-binary perspective, where it's like, well, this feels okay, but this does not, and I don't know Why? And also, you know, it's okay to it's okay to give people grace, like, when they are learning, you know, and, like, getting, like, changing names and pronouns, and they're still getting that right, but it's also okay to find safe spaces and hang out there. I think that sometimes there's this thing of, like, oh, well, I should be able to have this conversation with strangers on Facebook, or Reddit, or whatever thing. And it's like, you actually don't have to do that to yourself, you are not,you don't owe it to the gods or your transness to expose yourself to people who are gonna be assholes. You know, you're going to run into those people eventually, so you don't have to, like... it's fine for you to actually just seek out, like the Fellowship of Fire and Ice Discord server, where it's very proactively inclusive, and it's fine for you to hang out in spaces like that until you are comfortable.

Especially when you're just starting the journey, and it's, like this little delicate baby, you don't need to hold it out and let other people yell at it, or whatever. I was trying to think of a non-violent end of that metaphor, and that's the best I got, but, yeah.

that's very smart, yes. Jai said one of my best self-care decisions was unsubscribing from Quora emails, yes. So I think that those, you know, all of those, and, like, I think that. You know, just for friends and families, like, being aware of that, and, like, maintaining a sense of... curiosity. Not in a super invasive way, but in a oh, I want to hear about this, like, tell me what you discovered about your gender or your gods today, and being willing to, like, listen to that.

01:47:42 - **Moderator Cori**

Wonderful. Do you guys have any final thoughts that you'd like to share with us before we close out our panel?

01:47:50 - **Garrett**

I mean, I just want to thank everybody for being here, and to Cortney for organizing it, because... I just think it's wonderful to see everybody here and have these discussions, It was a real joy to spend these this last 2 hours with you all.

01:48:10 - **Jackson**

Uh, same y'all are, uh, extremely smart, and I have, like, a whole list of things I want to look up after this.

01:48:15 - **Jai**

This has been great, Thank you all.

01:48:20.000 - **Miche**

his second or fourth, fourth thing, fourth thing that. This has been really nice. Thank you for putting it together, Cortney, and for doing so much of that.

01:48:28 - **Alix**

Yeah, thank you guys so much for taking part. It was really nice talking to you all.

01:48:34 - - **Moderator Cori**

And thank you. all of you guys who have attended and been here to listen. And to the five of you for being willing to share your voice. It's a very courageous thing to do right now. The world is very scary. And... This has been such a positive evening, and I've been looking forward to it And this has been everything I had hoped, and more. So, thank you so much.

01:49:10 - **Garrett**

Aw, thank you so much, Courtney, for putting it together. Really appreciate it.

01:49:16 - **Moderator Cori**

Well, I hope that everyone has a great night. We are in discussions talking about our next panel. And our next panel, um, we are talking about doing a panel on masculinity, and toxic masculinity, and positive, wholesome masculinity. So hopefully we'll have some more details out to anybody who's interested in that, in the next few weeks. I'm also going to be sending out a survey to anybody who registered for the event. To help us make sure that we keep improving these events in the future. Thank you so much.

01:49:55 - Garrett

Awesome. Thanks.

01:49:59 Jackson

Thanks, y'all. Have a good night. Thanks for everyone who attended.