

Statement by Coru Cathubodua Priesthood on the book Witches of America by Alex Mar

SAN FRANCISCO, Calif., Dec. 1, 2015 – In light of the continuing media coverage of journalist Alex Mar's book, Witches of America, and The Wild Hunt's Editor-in-Chief Heather Greene's inquiry into our community's reaction to it, the Coru Cathubodua Priesthood has issued the following statement.

We cannot comment on the situations of other subjects, people and organizations depicted in the book as we were not privy to their participation, however, we can correct numerous assumptions about our own participation and portrayal.

The Coru Cathubodua Priesthood was contacted on October 4, 2013 by Ms. Mar requesting our participation in a book that would be a continuation of her documentary, "American Mystic," and would depict her personal journey documenting U.S.-based Paganism.

The Priesthood decided to participate in Ms. Mar's book based on three factors:

1. The personal experience of one of our members; having been a subject of said documentary wherein they were given review rights by Ms. Mar, thereby establishing the precedent.
2. Two members who knew Ms. Mar personally vouched for her trustworthiness and ability to honor agreements.
3. The conferring of review rights by Ms. Mar to the portions of the manuscript where our Order was depicted. This occurred in a December 13, 2013 phone call between Ms. Mar and our then communications chieftain.

We requested review rights in order to ensure the accurate portrayal of our beliefs and protect the individual privacy rights of our members and their families. **It was our understanding that our members would be the sole focus of what was detailed in the book, not our friends, family or congregants.** We believed this agreement was amicable, reasonable, equitable and conscionable, and with these expectations, we proceeded in good faith.

We gave Ms. Mar access to individual members for interviews. She attended public events and hospitality functions. She was never invited to nor was she present for any private Priesthood rituals.

On November 18, 2014, we contacted Ms. Mar requesting an update on the project and inquired about our opportunity to review her manuscript. **Our review rights were rescinded by Ms. Mar in a reply email from her dated November 23, 2014 stating that the manuscript will not be made available to us for review, citing industry "standard practice."** This was one year after our participation in interviews with Ms. Mar.

To restate for the sake of clarity; the Coru Cathubodua Priesthood would have declined to participate in Ms. Mar's book from the start without the agreement that we would be able to provide corrections and redaction where necessary to protect our members' personal and religious lives, and ensure our beliefs and public rites were correctly depicted.

For Immediate Release

Much of Ms. Mar's book inaccurately characterizes the structure and practices of our Order, then and now. Many of the events depicted that involve the Priesthood are paraphrased anecdotes translated through her own personal journey and story-driven narrative. We view the book as being "inspired by actual events."

None of the events described therein should be considered accurate or representative of our religious beliefs, structures, values or attitudes. In addition, individuals who attended our public events were quoted and named by Ms. Mar without their knowledge or consent.

The Coru Cathubodua Priesthood believes that a person's actions and the result of those actions are the true measures of a person, not their intent. We believe that Ms. Mar was sincere in her religious and spiritual exploration at that point, and in her intent to craft a book that would benefit our community. However, this book is not a boon to the Pagan and Polytheist communities. Ms. Mar's intentions matter very little in light of the consequences of what she chose to write. **As this book has caused direct harm to our members, our friends and community, we cannot, will not and do not stand by it.**

An additional point of clarification: Ms. Mar has recently gone on the record with mainstream publications to say that participants received copies of the book prior to publication with the intimation that it was for review. Our Order did not receive any copies of the book. Two of our members received personal advanced copies of the book as a courtesy two weeks prior to its general release date of October 20, 2015.

We would like our experience to be the final lesson to other Pagans and Polytheists on the potential challenges and ramifications of dealing with the mainstream media. Journalists are always on the record and what you say will be used in whatever light the writer finds most advantageous to the story she wants to tell, whether it's true or not. Before speaking with mainstream journalists, make sure to get all agreements detailed in writing.

We will continue to hold value and put trust in the power of word – in verbal agreements, promises, vows and oaths, and that a person's words will follow their actions. Our interpersonal relationships and very society depend on it.

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About Coru Cathubodua

Service, sovereignty, kinship and warriorship are the values that guide the Coru Cathubodua Priesthood. We are Pagan priests on the move, ready to take action to advance our mission to bring about sovereignty and kinship to the world through acts of community and individual service. Guided by the Morrigan, Irish Goddess of sovereignty, prophecy, and battle, we welcome all who share this vision of service to bringing these values to life for all people. For information visit www.facebook.com/CoruCathubodua.