

Removal of Witch Hunt Pages on Facebook

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

The Lady Liberty League and the Covenant of the Goddess are delighted to announce that two Facebook pages advocating the death and torture of alleged 'witches' or 'wizards' have been removed for violating Facebook's community standards.

Over the past week, LLL and CoG have been engaged in dialogue with the Pagan community and with Facebook over the presence of these disturbing, hate-filled pages. The pages appeared to be part of an ongoing-campaign of violence against powerless people within predominantly Christian communities, and did not initially target Pagans.

Nevertheless, the Pagan and related Nature-Spirituality communities, who use similar terminology, were concerned by the hate-filled rhetoric and by the initial lack of response to removal requests. After a communication with decision makers at Facebook, the company has agreed that such pages do violate its community standards and have removed them.

LLL and CoG applaud Facebook's decision to remove these pages. We honor Facebook's stated commitment to protecting freedom of speech and the free exchange of ideas, and recognize that the decision to remove content cannot be taken lightly. We are gratified that after giving the matter consideration, Facebook took a stand for human rights and for a world in which everyone can live free of the fear of violence.

We urge the Pagan community to join us in expressing our thanks to Facebook for listening and making this positive change. We hope Facebook will continue to be a leader in the effort to address violence and hate wherever it festers.

We also thank the many partners within the Pagan community who worked with us to engage in respectful dialogue with Facebook and respond to the situation in a coordinated and effective way. This was truly a community effort, and we are thankful for the many people who gave their time, research skills, passion and spiritual energy to this cause. Our community has once again shown that we can rally together and support one another in making the world a better place.

This victory will help make the internet a more civil place, but the real struggle is ongoing. Around the world - not just in Africa, but in our own communities - vulnerable people, including children, are tormented or killed after being labeled as 'witches' or 'sorcerers.' Most are unconnected to our spiritual community, except that their attackers call them by the same words that we have reclaimed for our spiritual practices. Yet we cannot and should not turn a blind eye to their suffering. We urge the Pagan community to support worldwide efforts to eliminate persecution in the name of religion.

The Lady Liberty League, the Covenant of the Goddess, and our partners will continue to support efforts within our community to make violence unacceptable everywhere and to support efforts to promote human rights and freedom from fear for all.