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Title of Presentation: Home in the Dharma: Transgender Buddhists on the West Coast of the U.S. and Canada, 1998-2019

Abstract

Research on LGBTQ+ people and religion focuses on how religion has done harm. This violence is vital to recognize. But as a result, histories of how religion has benefitted transgender people are silenced. I will respond to this lack of scholarship on trans and queer religious history. I will analyze how transgender Buddhists on the West Coast of the U.S. and Canada negotiated gender identity with religion between 1998 and 2019. What factors led these individuals to Buddhism in this place and time? What aspects of the religion did they find (un)appealing? How did differences of identity—race, age, (dis)ability—affect how they related to and accessed Buddhism? I will add to the small but growing body of scholarship on trans religious history. In a broader context, this project continues the urgent work of decolonizing the cis-centric academic landscape, bringing trans epistemologies and subjectivities to the fore.