

## Lori True's Role Report

From Three MMA Leaders

Submitted 7/16/2020

Music Ministry Alive Associate Director Lori True was a particularly concerning part of the culture of silence and intimidation that surrounded and sustained Haas's abuse. To some, True often used superficial notions of Christian forgiveness, Buddhist nonjudgment, and African philosophy as justifications for continued silence around any concerns that emerged around Haas's behavior. Prayer texts, liturgies, private conversations, and public social media posts seemed to be designed to further particular agendas that included shaping an aura of untouchability around both Haas and True. To question their judgment even in the smallest of matters was often framed as judgmental, unforgiving, or "not being a team player." Progressive notions of inclusivity and radical welcome pervaded the MMA prayer life that True oversaw in broad terms. But in specific instances, there was always a circle of insiders, outsiders, and cast-aways carefully patrolled by True as she gradually took on increase responsibilities over the life of MMA and Haas became more of a figurehead in its later years.

Many members of the MMA community noted times when they expressed concerns to True in good faith about MMA in general or Haas in particular only to be met with defensiveness accompanied by sobbing or shouting, leaving the person raising the concerns with intense feelings of guilt, shame, and humiliation. This ire was particularly directed toward women. When another male member of the team publicly excoriated a woman, True stood by silently even as that person ostensibly reported to True. The woman excoriated was not invited back because she was deemed "too emotional" when she cried as a result; the man who excoriated her was invited back for years after the incident and was widely considered to be a "golden boy" of True. Confrontations of any kind that called into question True's authority typically resulted in being "demoted" to a lesser role within MMA or in being cast out of the MMA community altogether. Not only were "problem children" not invited back to MMA, but True would never inform them that they were not being invited back. Instead, she would simply let them find out from others who received an invitation when they did not. When a long-time member of the team would disappear and others would inquire about their absence, True would frequently share with other leaders and participants false gossip as a way to explain why they were no longer a part of the community. Worse, outside of MMA, Haas, True, and anyone who remained a part of the MMA inner-circle were encouraged to keep their distance from those whom they had cast out; the unspoken consequence many perceived was that remaining friendly with those who had been "blacklisted" was to ensure the same fate for them.

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Over time, the pattern became clear to the entire team: question authority, and the invitation would not come. This taught compliance to those who wished to remain a part of the community and made raising concerns about Haas or True something they wished to avoid at all costs. Not only was there no clear reporting structure, but those who tried to engage other team members about particular concerns were quickly dismissed. All of this conspired to create a culture of secrecy, silence, and compliance that enabled abuse to flourish.

True, like Haas, also blurred personal and professional boundaries in ways that to many at first felt affirming and soon felt uncomfortable, coercive, and manipulative. True would often refer to a group of young women who worked for her both in her capacity as an employee of the University of St. Catherine and in her capacity as Associate Director of MMA as her "daughters" which confused the lines between her supervisory roles and personal relationships. These young women knew everything about True's marriage, divorce, family life, and more. There were no professional boundaries. True would use this manipulated intimacy to coerce these women to do personal chores for herself and for Haas that included cleaning his house or teaching him how to use social media, even asking them to shut down his accounts and start new ones without clear explanation. These young women felt they had no choice but to comply with countless requests from Haas for personal favors or to True's requests on his behalf or risk losing both their jobs at St. Catherine and at Music Ministry Alive. Opportunities for recording were also used as rewards by True for compliant young women. Many described a sense of strong family bond when it worked to True's advantage and a cool detachment when it did not. To one woman, she said "What I love most about you is that you are accommodating." Even as True called them daughters, they referred to one another and were referred to by others as "Lori's servants." Accommodation, compliance, and obedience shaped the relationships of each of the women who shared their experience.

The relationship between True and Haas was itself one that made many uncomfortable by the patterns of dysfunction that seemed to them to mark it. The relationship was a source of ongoing tension in Haas's circle even among many of his closest friends and defenders. Many described full-on shouting matches about deeply personal issues that often erupted into tears in public professional spaces. Seeming to fear particular disclosures during or after such arguments, Haas would often say of True "Here she goes again... now she's going to tell you xx." Haas would visit the St. Catherine campus multiple times a week even as he had no formal role at the University, only to

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spend hours with True. Many of the young women who worked for True and/or MMA were in turn forced to spend hours in Haas's presence. On occasions when Haas would show up unannounced and True was not available or when True refused to take his calls as punishment for some unspoken misdeed, Haas would obsessively call and text this circle of young female leaders in an attempt to reach True, pressuring them to get True to respond. Haas would call and text the same small circle of young women around True multiple times even in the span of just a few minutes, sometimes sobbing, begging them to intervene. Other times, Haas would regularly email these women and others about a range of things with the mantra: "Don't tell Lori I'm emailing you" which put them in a further precarious position between their boss and their boss's powerful friend. To those who expressed concern about being uncomfortably and incessantly caught in between them, True's responses ranged from "He's just not well," to "His health is not good," to "that's just David." What is clear, then, is that True knew Haas was not well and nevertheless gave Haas unlimited access to students and other young people that put them in positions that felt impossible to navigate and personally destructive.

Other concerns expressed about the relationship included True's regular threats to tell Haas's wife about affairs about which she was aware even as she was widely thought to be in one of her own with him. Haas once wet his pants in a recording session out of fear that True was en route to publicly out him in front of his wife. "A crazy woman is about to come here and say some very crazy, untrue things," Haas said after hanging up from a call with True. Others reported conferences where men and women alike were invited to Haas's room for a meeting, but emphasized the need to knock so many times that it felt clear to them why they needed to do so.