

Blog post published on the Happy Maki website - November 2023

On the 8th of October a document was published by a group of undisclosed ex Happy Maki employees, alongside an online campaign including a facebook page, instagram and twitter account, going by the name of "Unhappy Maki". The purpose of this campaign was to get me to change my beliefs and apologise for them being harmful, alongside informing people who might "fall victim to my beliefs, whether they are future staff or customers". The people involved kept all of their personal information anonymous whilst publishing my business name, my full name, my email address alongside a lot of lies and manipulated information about myself which hundreds of thousands of people have now seen. Not only is this behaviour highly unethical, it's illegal and it's called Doxxing. Doxxing is the publishing of anyone's information online. People use it to harass, threaten or get revenge on someone online. It's now more commonly being used as an online tool in culture wars, or as a means for which bullies can attack those who support or express opposing beliefs to themselves.

From Unhappy Maki's published collective statement which you can find here and their online comments, they have accused me of : Transphobia, Biphobia, gaslighting, manipulation and aggression, as well as issues with contracts, furlough, holiday pay, and an accusation that I am part of a cult. It's a pretty long list. The group claims that 10 people all quit due to the above reasons.

What I would like to do with this blog is to give you the facts so you can draw your own conclusions based on the full information. I'd also like to discuss the many issues of ethics that this whole situation has highlighted. I feel it's such a great opportunity to address and continue the conversation around what are some really important and current facets of social science and current toxic patterns of online attack. I know this happened in small vegan takeaway but it's an exact reflection of much larger conflicts that are going on globally. I feel very passionately about ethics, they apply to everyone equally and don't discriminate. I think there is a lot here that we can learn from.

First here are the facts on the majority of the above accusations:

- There were 7 employees chose to leave, based on the fact that I hold an opinion on the transgender experience, not because the work environment was toxic or abusive.
- There are 7 staff who are still working and who are in strong disagreement with the character claims being made against me and are all completely against how the other members of staff acted.
- The remaining 7 do not share my opinion, or feel that I am transphobic. But dont feel it's realistic or important to work with only people who have the same beliefs and opinions. They know I treat people kindly and they enjoy working for the company and what it stands for, tasty vegan food made with a passion for the environment, health and business ethics in a kind and inclusive environment.
- Furlough laws have been followed to the absolute T and that is what has upset staff. As a matter of ethics, we treat the government's money just as we would treat our own. We've had many

conversations with our bookkeepers to make sure things were being done legally. The shop manager, business manager and in particular myself worked incredibly hard to get through Covid and we managed to get everyone back off furlough. During this process I have had staff move to other countries and not inform us, or actively turn down shifts, only to then ask me why they haven't received furlough pay. This would be fraud and the furlough scheme has highlighted the issue of entitlement that so many of us have to varying degrees. We have always explained kindly to people why this is an issue and why they can't legally receive furlough in these scenarios. It's something that I know a lot of other business owners have been struggling with this general disregard for the stresses, strains and sacrifices business owners experience to be able to run their businesses and provide jobs.

- Since the shop opened, staff have been paid correctly for holiday and sick pay, again we strictly follow the law on this and on pensions working closely with our bookkeepers to achieve this. I don't understand where this claim comes from, our business manager is extremely good at his job and is very kind soul who works with the shop manager taking great care and detail in making sure everyone is fairly paid at the end of each month.
- Anyone who knows me or has worked closely with me knows that I am not manipulative and/or guilty of gas lighting. If anything, I am getting better at reading and braver at addressing this behaviour in others. I am extremely transparent and have not been strict enough with bad behaviour and this is a big lesson I have learnt recently. I am far from perfect but I am kind, self-reflective and take on board any concerns that people raise. If the character accusations were true, I wouldn't have any current and past staff firmly standing by me in support. Thank you to these people and to those who have messaged me over the past 2 weeks. They know the person I am being made out to be online is not who I am.
- I have a belief in soulmates and this is being severely manipulated to create another accusation that I am biphobic, in attempt to build a larger case of attack against myself. The accusation that I am biphobic is news to me, my bisexual friends and family members. I believe in a God and in loving design, which for me includes the concept that we have one literal other half of our soul, our soulmate which can be of the same or different sex. I feel this is a beautiful concept. Whether you believe that or not and whatever sex/sexes you or I choose to sleep with I have zero issue with or judgement towards and I definitely don't feel that anyone is invalid. But if you believe in soulmates which many do, the logic is, there is only one other half of us. This is being twisted to accuse me of biphobia.
- We have recently hugely improved our contracts and on-boarding process. But staff have always either been on a full time or zero hours contract. I don't personally deal with contracts but if anyone hasn't been put on a contract its been an unintentional oversight by management. We have never abused a zero-hour contract, we use them because we are very flexible with our team with part time staff often changing their hours. We run a set rota at the shop so hours and shift patterns are the same every week, meaning people know their set hours and we never cancel shifts. Our shop manager even approached me a few months ago asking for a 4-day work week, she is an amazing artist and wanted more time to focus on herself and her passions outside of work. I thought it was a great idea and so the whole rota was changed to facilitate

this for both our Manager, assistant manager and any other full-time member of staff if they wanted it.

- I cannot deal with issues that I am not aware of, period. As far as I am aware there has never been an issue raised which has been ignored. Sometimes things do take longer than they should to take action, I can struggle with task prioritisation especially over the past 5 months when I have had a huge amount of stress to deal due to Covid and its immense effect on our business model. But when this happens, I always put my hands up and say, yeah sorry guys that should have been sorted sooner, that's my bad, I'll work on that.

The accusation that I am transphobic based on an email I had written, and that I severely mistreated my staff by threatening their social security both require a longer explanation. Here is the full email I wrote to Henry back in February, 6 months ago. I had never met Henry before, they wrote to me asking if Happy Maki would help with the fundraising for his transition surgery:

Hey Henry,

Lovely to hear from you, we love having you guys as neighbours and I'm glad you get on well with the team they are a great bunch.

I'm afraid I can't help you out with this fundraising as its not in line with my beliefs/ what I feel would help people the most who are in your position. Just to be clear this is by no means suggesting that what you're feeling and going through doesn't feel real and isn't very challenging, I have a lot of compassion for anyone who finds themselves feeling not right in their own skin/ bodies. From the research I have done, I believe that gender dysphoria is due to spirits and spirit over-cloaking. I didn't believe in spirits until recently so I get that it's probably a bit out there, but I have been shocked and a bit scared about what I have read and how easy it is for them to control and manipulate people's thoughts and feelings.

If you want a bit more of an explanation, I'm happy to chat further about why I've come to this personal conclusion and what my sources of research have been. I also understand that this is probably a confronting view point on what is a sensitive and very personal topic, but I wanted to be transparent and honest with you regardless, as I feel this is always the most respectful and beneficial way to be.

I really wish you the best and hope that we'll meet soon so I can put a name to a face.

Warm wishes,

Anna.

I feel if I hadn't provided a reason as to why the answer was no, I would have later been called out as hiding the truth, but because I did provide a reason some are labelling this as abusive, invalidating and a hate crime. You can see the nature of this email is not hateful or invalidating. However, I do understand that one could feel invalidated if someone doesn't share their opinion on a personal experience, or

triggers their pain, but that doesn't make it so. After being in an echo chamber of people telling me that the nature of the email was wrong of me to send, my initial response was to question myself, recoil and say I'm sorry for what I said, I was scared of the attack I was receiving and I wanted it to stop. I have since had time to process, reflect on my true feelings and motives and get opinions on the ethics of this from people who I trust and who were emotionally removed from the incident, I feel that being transparent and simply giving a brief explanation of why I couldn't help was not an unethical thing to do. I am aware that this stance splits the crowd and I will have people strongly agreeing and disagreeing with me. But I think the real problem is that the opinion I hold is controversial. Some people who disagree with me have already actively tried to manipulate and threaten me to make me change my mind, straight away these actions are out of harmony with ethics and morals. But I think its also important to raise the questions, If this email was so offensive, invalidating, abusive and harmful why did it take 6 months for staff or Henry to say anything to me? If this email is so offensive, invalidating harmful and abusive why does Unhappy Maki feel the best course of action is to share it as widely as possible?

Not providing an honest explanation would have meant the interactions with Henry from that point onwards weren't based on reality or truth. Despite the offence this email apparently caused, I had some lovely exchanges with them afterwards and have never treated them with anything but kindness. I want to make it clear that I don't understand the specific flavour or particular details of social discrimination that anyone who is Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender or Queer has suffered and still continue to suffer because I haven't had these direct experiences. But I think we have all experienced emotions of feeling, unworthy, judged, unloved and unaccepted for who we are. I don't understand the rhetoric that I am "invalidating and disregarding Henry" and "questioning his existence". I feel that as humans we have been designed to be able to empathise with people. Hand on heart, I truly truly feel for anyone that faces what must be very strong and difficult emotions relating to a transgender experience and/or gender dysmorphia. I watched The Danish Girl about a year ago, because I was interested in understanding more about this, I highly recommend this film. I thought it was an amazing performance by Eddie Redmayne, it really helped me better connect to the more detailed and specific feelings people must go through, it was at times incredibly hard to watch that level of discomfort and suffering.

The topic of the transgender experience is so highly charged because it is not yet fully understood and it poses some big questions. Psychologists, geneticists and spiritualists are all trying to figure out what is going on. When we see someone is not happy or has a problem our natural instinct is to help them. It is a huge topic for discussion that people are divided on and that people including transgender individuals change their mind on. And that's all ok, but what Unhappy Maki and their supporters are trying to do is put me in the circle with the people who do use their opinions to judge, shame and invalidate these experiences and that is simply not the case. Just like Henry, transgender people are looking for help. For me to have an opinion or even a feeling on how I want to help or what I don't feel comfortable doing isn't unethical, it's human nature.

As shitty as this whole thing has felt and despite the terrible way it was dealt with, it's good that it has come up and it has shown me so much. Unsurprisingly I am aware that my beliefs are a minority, and this is not the first time, although it's most definitely the worst that I have been discriminated against

and attacked for them. The way the team “addressed their concerns” with me is actually the worst I have ever been treated by a group of adults. It has nothing to do with the fact that my beliefs were challenged, funnily enough I am pretty used to that and I really enjoy having open conversations about anything related to the human experience. Myself and my other managers were hurt by the direct and cruel way that we were treated person to person, which started even before the topic of concern was raised. This was an issue of ethics.

We take staff grievances and protocol seriously, which sometimes is just a request for a quick chat. For any large issue or request by staff to have a group meeting about particular issues, this needs to be put in writing to myself or a line manager. This was clearly reminded to management and outlined in an email when I first heard that from our assistant manager there were “issues” about a month ago. It was chased up by myself, the shop manager and business manager because 3 weeks had passed and we were still completely unaware of what any of these issues were. The assistant manager told us that her and the staff concerned were refusing to follow protocol saying they had been “rubbed up the wrong way” by being asked to outline the issues in an email. Our assistant manager also point-blank refused to discuss these with us directly. We called a meeting with her to address this problem with not following protocol, amongst other things that had become problematic.

Our assistant manager and fellow 5 team members organised in secret to turn up to the shop, hijack this meeting and force me to talk about an undisclosed subject so that they could, quote: “see my raw reactions to their accusations”. This is an issue of ethics. It was an act of gross misconduct and I can only describe it as a modern-day witch hunt. I have asked all 6 of them involved never to treat anyone the way we were treated. Myself, the manager and business manager all had to take time off work due to how much it had affected us and I do not say stuff like this lightly.

For 20 minutes we tried to convince them this was not the right way to go about things, but what followed was an hour of threatening and passive aggressive accusations and attacking me for my personal beliefs and opinions referencing Divine Truth (online spiritual teachings that I listen to) as if it were some sort of bible of laws that I blindly live my life by. I was told that I was uneducated, transphobic and biphobic and that unless I changed my opinion, they weren't comfortable working for me. This last point I have no issue with, don't work somewhere you're not comfortable. But do not ambush and corner your employer, attack them, give them an ultimatum and then decide afterwards that you don't feel comfortable working that evening. Only to go on and later accuse your employer of putting demands on you and affecting your social security. It's actual madness, but this is what happens when we feel justified in acting out in our pain and anger, we completely lose sense of truth, reality and logic.

In hindsight I should have given them the option to stop their ambush and follow protocol or be fired. Although the Unhappy Maki tag line would then have read “staff try to stand up for transphobic behaviour and get fired”, it would have been the correct way to handle things. It would have avoided a lot of hurt and mistruths being spread. If I had been someone who was a Muslim or Christian employee there would have been a lawsuit. Instead I am a business owner who doesn't align to any organised

religion and so that means.... this behaviour is then ok?

The staff's actions had caused the shop to shut and they were delaying people being able to work. I gave them the exact answers they asked for and asked to let me know their response by the end of the next day. It is the reverse of what is being claimed online. I can now see my role in the scenario, an issue I have had for a long time. I want to please people and I'm scared of being hated and judged for being the "big bad boss". I have learnt a lot about being more direct, firmer and a better leader. Doing the right things is far more important than worrying about what people will think of me or my business. I did the wrong because I was trying to avoid my fear. My desire for public and personal approval is something that I need to work on, but this event has definitely chucked me into the deep end of that process!

I understand that this group of 6 staff members felt they were doing the right thing, they felt justified in their approach, standing in solidarity and fighting for the LGBTQ+ community. I also don't doubt that they all felt mistreated afterwards but this is one of the key points of ethics, just because someone feels mistreated doesn't automatically mean it is the case. A lot of the time when people are actually doing the right thing by us we feel this way. I feel they were very blinded by their strong emotions and mob mentality which had developed at a guess, over the past two months or so. I have since been told that this group was being led behind the scenes by someone that wasn't even employed with us anymore. This person hadn't passed their trial due to instances of toxic behaviour and they quit in September after receiving a written warning. This is one of the people behind the "Unhappy Maki group" and some of my team have had to block this person as they continue to harass and pressure them online and in person.

I think it is really crucial to look at how this played out not only in this incident but how this broken approach to trying to force change is repeating itself constantly in today's World. We have to get real guys, when we act out in hurt and anger, situations will never play out kindly or be correctly resolved. You end up with two sides not being able to hear each other and the cycle of retribution continues. This approach does not and has never worked and it only creates more pain and differences, that will all need to be addressed and worked through. We can claim we are standing up for Love and Truth but if you look closely at our actions, their nuances, and the feelings behind them, the ethics become very clear.

I do want to get back to the main point of concern for most people so that you are very clear on where I stand and you can make a decision based on my feelings and opinions rather than hearsay.

The facts are:

- I do not feel it is wrong of me to have an opinion on something I haven't experienced directly.
- I do not believe that whether someone is upset or not is not the benchmark for morals and ethics.
- I do not feel that providing a personal explanation in response to a request for help is a hateful act.

I agree with the definition that "Transphobia encompasses a range of negative attitudes, feelings or actions toward transgender people or transness in general. Transphobia can include fear, aversion, hatred, violence, anger, or discomfort felt or expressed towards people who do not conform to social gender expectations." This is not anything that I experience or have demonstrated.

There seems to be a second definition "To express or even have an opinion on a subject matter that you haven't directly experienced such as the transgender experience is invalidating, offensive and hurtful and is therefore wrong and makes you transphobic".

As you can see the two definitions are very different. I feel this is splitting the whole world at the moment on many issues, race, sexual abuse, women's rights etc and it's what has split the recent team at Happy Maki. Personally, I feel the second definition is very troublesome, you're not part of my community, how dare you have an opinion on the topic. Forgetting that what is important is the motive and feeling behind the opinion and how it is used, not whether it even exists or not. There are times in all of our lives when our opinions change, but to actively try and deny people of having an opinion by labelling it as phobic, creates bubbles in which only a certain understanding can be expressed and beliefs get more extreme. I feel it is actually anti-progression and anti-acceptance. If this makes you angry, makes you want to hate me that's fine but if you look at my feelings in the email to Henry there is no hate or anger or control, there is softness and compassion and a desire to be transparent. I believe that no one ever deserves to receive those aggressive feelings period, hate does not heal it only harms all involved.

I have done a large amount of research into spirits, from documentaries and books to following the work of leading scientists and mediums. Spirits are just people who have died, no demons, no entities just people. They can and do affect everyone in different ways, positively and negatively and to varying degrees and this depends on the existing feelings we have inside of us and how sensitive/ mediumistic we are. This is not a transgender issue, it's a spirit issue that has specific affects on different people for different reasons and when this is better understood and more widely accepted like it is in other countries we will make huge leaps in our populations mental health as a whole. I feel I have seen enough evidence to know all of this as fact. It's a complete 180 on where I was with this concept 3 years ago, I would have literally laughed in your face so I totally understand if you think I'm a loon. But to call me uneducated or misguided is a false claim. I strongly feel that for anyone to analyse the amount of information I have on this topic and not come to the same conclusions would be nearly impossible. One book in particular called "30 years among the Dead" has been a very eye opening read. I am now even more interested to specifically learn more about this topic and how it relates to gender identity, dysphoria and transgender people's full experiences. So I can better understand the current narrative from all angles and educate myself more about the global debate and how this information might help people. For anyone interested in the vast topic of spirits, spirit communication and spirit influence, you can find the full list of resources that have lead me to my current opinion on the matter on my personal page www.mysoulexperiment.co.uk. It's just a brief summary for now but I'll be adding to it later. I have no intention to push my beliefs on anyone, or for anyone to think the same as me. My feelings are the opposite of bigoted, I research thoroughly, continuously learning and improving my understanding,

alongside personally experimenting.

The fact that this is even being discussed online at large still seems odd to me, is every business owner who has spiritual beliefs of one kind or another, having these attacked and discussed publicly? What has happened here, shouldn't have happened and I feel it's important to look at the causal factors. Why has literal madness occurred in a restaurant where drama is not commonplace? All it takes is one opinion that a group or community doesn't agree with and people will go to great lengths to either force you to change or face having yourself and your business outed. Why do these people feel this is justified, how is this approach ever going to bring about positive change, and how in this scenario am I the one being labelled as intolerant? If we have any hope in moving forwards as a population, we have to be able to speak honestly, vulnerably and directly about how we feel, what we believe and what we know about certain topics. The key is that it is done with kindness.

I want to make it clear that when I use the terms faith and belief, I am not talking about Divine Truth the organisation which is the website / youtube channel and "apparent cult" that Unhappy Maki are claiming I am a part of. My faith is my personal beliefs and opinions about love, how the world works and the existence of a Loving God. Divine Truth is an online source of education that I have learnt an unbelievable amount from, it's taught by a couple in Australia, Jesus and Mary. I do believe what they are teaching is "Gods universal truth". Everything they teach is logical and science is proving it bit by bit to be true. A lot of what they teach is incredibly beautiful and a lot is very triggering, demonstrating why the only way to happiness and loving others is taking emotional responsibility for our pain and childhood trauma, a process which you can choose to involve God in or not. It is not a faith or a religion and there is a lot of very false and fear based information about them online. Although I know a fair amount about the basics of the teachings, I am still early on in my life long experiment with solidifying the concepts as truth through personal experience and evidence-based research. This is the only process they encourage and they offer help with doing this in the forms of lessons, explanations and methods and the recommendation of other resources, a big one of which is the engagement of our own conscience.

All my thoughts and feelings are my own and anyone who knows me knows I am not in a cult and just how laughable that claim is. I have never and will never have the desire to be part of an exclusive community. Yes the fact they say they are Jesus and Mary is out there, I thought exactly the same way you are probably feeling now when I first heard this, but they are by far the kindest and most inspiring people I have ever met. I don't care how that makes me sound, they are my friends and I have learnt and benefited so hugely from applying what they teach and from the help they have directly given me. If Divine Truth was a cult it would be the worst cult ever, there is no physical community, there are no rules, there is no control, no punishment, no promiscuity, no guru and no worship. If I was looking for a cult I'd want my money back, that I was never asked for in the first place. No one else at work is an active listener of their videos but it's not something that I hide, I'm an open book and have had conversations with lots of people about it over the years. I am not some, mentally unwell or poor lost soul who has joined a doomsday cult, this is just another fabrication to increase the case for personal attack against me and my opinions. If you want to read more about my personal experience with the teachings and links to my favourite videos of theirs can do so here. If you want to be informed about

tasty vegan food made with a passion for the environment, health, business ethics and great customer service then you are on the right website, even though it feels we have taken a bit of a tangent.

We are becoming so divisive, in a World where we need more than ever to work together and care for each other. With this culture of online attack and hate, people are scared to speak because what you receive is saaaaavage. You should see some of the thing's strangers have said to me this past week over email and how many people have jumped on a bandwagon without fact checking. This attack or fear of it, can so often lead to defensiveness, in-action, silencing how we feel, limiting the actions we take and surviving rather than thriving. I have learnt that yes it feels horrible to receive this attack, but honestly for me it would feel even worse not to stand up for ethics, which I and so many others know are of vital importance.

Some of you will have seen that Happy Maki has come offline. I did this to stop more lies and hate being spread and to care for myself. I have been emotionally processing this event, getting the staff their work back and writing. At some point I will post more info about my views on the topic of social media and what I have learnt about the ethics of it as a whole. But at this moment in time I have no desire to re-engage in it going forwards. This is a feeling I have had for around a year now. I don't think I need to expand on the issues of online attack, most of us know it's wrong. I do want to say though, hearsay can be a very dangerous thing to base your opinions on and we all, including myself, probably need to check ourselves on this from time to time. Chinese whispers are a real thing, according to facebook I once broke a staff member's rib! I have been shocked at the number of people including influencers reposting this without knowing who is behind this campaign and the validity of all the claims they are making.

I recently received a message from a member of staff and friend telling me I need to "realise that I am comfortable in most aspects of my life, I own a business, I have financial independence and I have a support network". We make so many assumptions about people before actually getting to know them and their circumstances, the above is so far from the truth. I say that whilst strongly acknowledging that we live in a country with a very high physical quality of life compared to others. This is something that I am grateful for but not ok with and for good reason, it's also why I am so passionate about Mary's Meals and the donations we give to that charity. But just because I am a "white, straight, cis-gender, female business owner" does not mean my life is comfortable and that my opinion should be silenced. Why is it ok for people to tell me what I need to know and feel but when I gently share a personal opinion then all hell breaks loose?

I genuinely see the world as a global community and I am sure this shines through Happy Maki and the good work we do. Anything other than the concept of a global community, I feel is divisive and can be used as a great guise for horrible behaviour, just like the larger community of a country can excuse the act of war and a smaller community such a family can foster emotional abuse. We have to be kind to each other; this attack has to stop. We need to allow people to have opinions if we genuinely want them to learn and grow in a real way.

There is a reason that everyone actually feels welcome and accepted when they walk into our shop, and

why so many people were shocked at the lies they read online. It's because we genuinely receive everybody with open arms and acceptance. However, I do respect all of your opinions and if what you have read means that you are not comfortable being a customer then that's no problem whatsoever, literally, it's all good. I respect your choice and feel the same way towards you as I have always done, with a desire to treat you kindly regardless.

For me to please and respond to threats and demands to avoid attack is something that I am not willing to do anymore. To deny what I have learnt on certain topics and the ethics and morals I feel strongly about is not something I can do anymore, however that might play out for me and Happy Maki. Life is too short.

In summary, myself and those employed at Happy Maki have never and will never be supporting of:

Silencing thoughts or opinions

Attempt to control free speech

Judgement or discrimination based on held beliefs or opinions

At Happy Maki we will always:

Follow company protocol to protect the wellness of our team

We will treat people with kindness and equality

We will not stand for phobic, racists or invalidating behaviour towards any person

We will not stand for discrimination of any kind.

We will be a fully inclusive workspace.

Thank you for taking the time to read my thoughts and feelings on all the topics raised, I didn't intend to write something this long but felt it was important to be thorough and transparent. I really appreciate you wanting to understand both sides regardless of how you feel at the end of it.

Take care everyone,

Anna.

P.s. I have never broken anyone's ribs.