Introduction to Gender Reconciliation

Transforming Patriarchy in Religion:
From Gender Apartheid to Beloved Community
Gender Reconciliation program for religious leaders from multiple faiths,
Cape Town, South Africa, 2010
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Overview: Gender Reconciliation

TRANSFORMING PATRIARCHY IN RELIGION

1. Are you concerned about oppression and marginalization of women in religious life and institutions?

2. Are you committed to transforming gender-based injustice in religion, and society as a whole?

3. Are you concerned that religious institutions sometimes suppress sexual misconduct of religious authorities, to protect their public images?

4. Have you wished that religious institutions and spiritual organizations would do more to uplift the leadership of women and embrace gender diversity?

5. Are you seeking practical ways to transform gender relations between women and men — in religious communities and society at large — to restore mutual respect, trust, and harmony between the sexes?

Light on the Horizon

If you answered yes to any of these questions, you are aligned with millions of other people of faith who also yearn for practical solutions to these challenges. There is new light on the horizon in the form of an innovative program called ‘Gender Reconciliation.’ Developed over two decades and introduced on six continents, Gender Reconciliation applies principles of ‘truth and reconciliation’ to gender injustice, and shows great promise for restoring healthy relations between the sexes. “I have been looking for a long time to find a way to bring healing and reconciliation between women and men,” says former Deputy Speaker of Parliament in South Africa, Nozizwe Madlala Routledge, who is a Quaker. “This work is the answer. We need much more of this work.”

This booklet summarizes the philosophy and promising results of Gender Reconciliation, and its application to religious congregations and institutions.
What is Gender Reconciliation?
TRANSFORMING GENDER RELATIONS BETWEEN WOMEN AND MEN

Transforming Gender Relations

Gender Reconciliation is designed to bring about a profound transformation of gender relations, and to create a culture of unprecedented integrity, mutual respect, and collaborative partnership between men and women in religious communities, and the larger society. This entails not only initiating a whole new ‘gender conversation’, but also fostering new relational skills and a culture of deep respect and integrity between the sexes – fueled by heightened mutual awareness of the gender conditioning experienced by both women and men in contemporary society.

‘Gender Reconciliation’ refers to an experiential process facilitated in a group or community setting that creates a rare forum for women and men to jointly confront pervasive injustice relating to gender and sexuality, and to collaborate skillfully together to reach a place of mutual healing, resolution, and often forgiveness. Gender Reconciliation leads to enhanced appreciation and understanding for both men and women, including the subtle ways that we are each culpable, often unwittingly, for maintaining the status quo of gender imbalance. The insights gained contribute directly to the next step

“I HAVE BEEN LOOKING FOR A LONG TIME TO FIND A WAY TO BRING HEALING AND RECONCILIATION BETWEEN WOMEN AND MEN. THIS WORK IS THE ANSWER. WE NEED MUCH MORE OF THIS WORK . . . ”
— NOZIZWE MADLALA ROUTLEDGE, FORMER DEPUTY SPEAKER OF PARLIAMENT AND DEPUTY MINISTER OF HEALTH, SOUTH AFRICA

Gender Reconciliation programs in South Africa, India, and Colombia
of making personal and social changes that transform harmful behaviors, and foster healthy gender relations.

Developed over 23 years by Gender Reconciliation International (GRI) and its network of trained facilitators, the Gender Reconciliation process is open to men and women of all sexual orientations, and has been successfully introduced in eight countries — the United States, Canada, India, Kenya, Croatia, Colombia, Australia, and most extensively in South Africa — in diverse venues ranging from nongovernmental organizations and religious communities to schools, prisons, universities, Members of Parliament, therapeutic networks, and activist groups.

For the past several years, GRI has been diligently training facilitators in Gender Reconciliation — primarily in South Africa and the United States — with new training programs beginning soon in India, Australia, and Colombia. In each country where we work, we seek out appropriate strategic partner organizations and professional colleagues who are ready and eager to confront gender violence and injustice in their country. We then conduct professional training in Gender Reconciliation, and together we pioneer effective new forms of authentic and open communication, mutual healing and understanding — leading to transformed gender relations.

Gender Reconciliation has made significant strides in South Africa over the past decade. Archbishop Desmond Tutu and Rev. Mpho Tutu have explicitly endorsed Gender Reconciliation International.

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**Academic Research on Gender Reconciliation**

Two universities in South Africa have initiated research programs on the Gender Reconciliation methodology developed by GRI. A three-year formal research project was launched in late 2014 at the University of the Free State (UFS) in Bloemfontein. The project conducts the Gender Reconciliation program for students on campus, including three-day intensive workshops and monthly follow up sessions.
over the academic calendar year—gathering comprehensive data including audio recordings of every workshop and follow up session. These data are complied and analyzed utilizing a combination of qualitative and quantitative research methods, to assess the impacts and efficacy of the Gender Reconciliation program over time. The research goal is to understand the deeper psychological and social dynamics entailed in the intricate process of transformation of consciousness relating to gender and sexuality, and the long-term impacts of the Gender Reconciliation program on student attitudes and behaviors regarding gender relations and sexuality. Research protocols are designed in close collaboration with the Dean of Students, Dr. Rudi Buys, and approved by the university ethics committee for implementation on campus.

This research project was initiated by Professor Pumla Gobodo-Madikizela, a globally renowned researcher on trauma and forgiveness who is a senior professor in trauma, memory, and forgiveness at UFS. Professor Gobodo-Madikizela serves on the Board of the Desmond and Leah Tutu Legacy Foundation. Earlier she served on the Truth and Reconciliation Commission in South Africa as the lead psychologist responsible for coordinating the victims’ public testimonies and mediating between the family members of victims and the state-sponsored terrorists of the Apartheid era. She first invited GRI to conduct a Gender Reconciliation workshop at the Engaging the Other international conference in 2012. Since then GRI has conducted several Gender Reconciliation workshops at UFS, which led to Professor Gobodo-Madikizela’s initiative to launch this research project, in collaboration with research psychologist Dr. Samantha van Schalkwyk.

A second research project was launched in mid 2015 at the University of the Western Cape (UWC) in Cape Town, in collaboration with GRI. This project was initiated by the Chair of the Psychology Department, Professor Michele Andipatin. The research protocol entails the implementation of Gender Reconciliation workshops on campus, together with a focused Monitoring and Evaluation process to assess the impact on gender relations among students who attend the GRI workshops. Other research initiatives are likely to begin at the University of Cape Town (UCT), and in surrounding communities that collaborate with UWC.
Participants’ Experience of Gender Reconciliation

Feedback from Gender Reconciliation programs at universities in South Africa are highly encouraging. See the Appendix for details; here are a few examples:

“Gender Reconciliation is definitely the methodology to heal our nation.”

“Excellent — definitely must be used in the Inclusivity Program of the university.”

“It’s a life changing experience in terms of finding ‘yourself,’ truth, and healing.”

“...the university should engage further in this work to add experiential learning to students’ academic experiences...”

“...it should be compulsory for all new students.”

PHILOSOPHY OF GENDER RECONCILIATION

The Time is Ripe

Every major religion is afflicted by gender injustice, and the entire human family lives under a kind of systemic ‘gender apartheid’ that oppresses both women and men, regardless of sexual orientation. Gender Reconciliation is therefore needed everywhere, yet exists virtually nowhere today. Violence against women has recently received expanded attention in the media worldwide, exposing hideous abuses that have too long been tolerated or brushed aside. Media attention to the oppression of non-heterosexual individuals and communities is also coming much more to the fore.
Patriarchal structures are found in every religious tradition, and hence Gender Reconciliation is urgently needed in religious communities and institutions of all faiths. If ‘God enters through a wound,’ God enters more deeply through a shared wound, and the religions of the world share a deep common wound in their mutual oppression of women, and of non-heterosexual persons. The time is ripe for systemic transformational change, and Gender Reconciliation offers a practical and proven way to begin.

**Liberating Both Women and Men from Gender Injustice**

In every segment of society — from parish to parliament, from bedroom to boardroom, irrespective of race, religion, or class — men and women grapple daily with the profound and debilitating impacts of cultural conditioning around gender and sexuality. Patriarchal conditioning oppresses all of humanity. The symptoms are legion: sexual assault, physical and sexual abuse, homophobia, gender stereotyping of all kinds, patriarchal power structures and institutions, the tyranny of physical appearance over inner personhood, dysfunctional intimate relationships, and overt and covert gender-based violence.

Gender Reconciliation invites men and women to jointly confront, unmask, and shed these pernicious patterns, and together begin to reclaim our human birthright to live in harmony, joy, and creative collaboration. Both men and women are afflicted by patriarchal conditioning, and each needs the other for a true and complete healing. This fundamental interdependence between men and women is expressed in the African concept of *Ubuntu*, which is defined by Archbishop Desmond Tutu as follows:

> I am because you are. I can be me only if you are fully you, for we are made for togetherness, for family. I have gifts that you don’t have, and you have gifts that I don’t have. We are different in order to know our need of each other. We are made for complementarity.¹

> — Archbishop Desmond Tutu

Gender Reconciliation between women and men in Religious Communities

The bulk of gender activism today focuses either on protecting and empowering women, on transforming men and male socialization, or on promoting the rights and safety of the LGBTQI communities. These are all crucial initiatives and must continue, yet they generally address only one or another side of the issue. The women’s movement has functioned for decades with little or minimal participation from men, which has been a critical place to start the journey towards gender equality. Similarly, several men’s organizations have been created to help men awaken from their dysfunctional conditioning, such as A Call To Men, Man Up, the Men Engage Alliance, and others. However, only recently have there been politically visible calls for men and women to collaborate together for gender equality (such as the HeForShe campaign launched by UN Women in 2014), although Gender Reconciliation International has been developing this approach in several countries for more than 20 years.

Religious communities and institutions of all faith traditions offer a rich and ripe domain—largely untapped—for transforming gender relations between women and men of faith, including all sexual orientations. The ethical and spiritual precedent for equality between women and men is naturally built into most religious theologies, despite the patriarchal nature of established religious institutions. As leading Buddhist nun Jetsunma Tenzin Palmo has observed, the patriarchal nature of religions comes mostly from the societies they are embedded in, rather than the religious ideologies themselves. Many religious leaders and institutions sincerely want to take practical steps toward gender equality, but they often move at a snail’s pace, in part because of a perceived lack of skillful methodologies. The Gender Reconciliation approach is a proven and critically-needed gender-relational methodology, which offers a powerful place to begin.

“I WAS DEEPLY MOVED AND CHANGED, AND AM PROFOUNDLY GRATEFUL FOR THE EXPERIENCE. SO MANY CLIENTS IN MY PSYCHIATRIC PRACTICE ARE DEPRESSED AND TRAUMATIZED BY GENDER VIOLENCE, AS IS OUR ENTIRE CULTURE. THE GENDER RECONCILIATION VISION IS UNIQUE, AND UNIQUELY VALUABLE TO THE WORLD.”
— PETER RUTTER, MD, JUNGIAN PSYCHIATRIST, AUTHOR OF “UNDERSTANDING SEXUAL HARASSMENT”
METHODOLOGY OF GENDER RECONCILIATION

The Gender Reconciliation process brings women and men together for mutual healing and creative collaboration, which serves to transform dysfunctional patterns in gender relations. Our approach stimulates deep reflection and interactive insights around gender conditioning for both sexes, and skillful communication across the gender and sexual divisions that plague many religious congregations and institutions. Even in the so-called developed countries of the United States and Europe, which have experienced strong women’s and men’s movements and LGBTQI initiatives to protect the rights of gender and sexual minorities, gender-based violence and other forms of gender inequality remain rampant—and religious communities are no exception. Without the integration that brings women and men together in compassion and vibrant collaboration — for mutual healing rather than mutual blaming — gender injustice will never be fully transformed.

Alignment with the Tutu Legacy of Reconciliation

In their recent book, The Book of Forgiving, Archbishop Desmond Tutu and Rev. Mpho Tutu outline the key steps entailed in the process of forgiveness. They identify a four-fold path: (1) telling the story, (2) naming the hurt, (3) granting forgiveness, and (4) renewing or releasing the relationship.

These four steps are closely aligned with the methodology of the Gender Reconciliation process, which begins with contemplative invocation and building a safe community space that enables crucial stories of gender-based afflictions to be recounted, and the corresponding hurts to be named. As the Tutus acknowledge:

It is not always easy to tell your story, but it is the first critical step on the path to freedom and forgiveness. We saw this so palpably in the TRC, when the victims of apartheid were able to come
forward to tell their stories. They were relieved to have a place of safety and affirmation in which to share their experiences. … When you tell your story, you no longer have to carry your burden alone.

**Healing the Roots of Gender Imbalance**

In Gender Reconciliation workshops, great care and sensitivity go into creating a safe space for heartfelt truth telling relating to personal, gender-related experiences — supported by deep listening in a field of compassion and non-judgment. There is no pressure on participants; instead, they are invited to share at whatever level feels personally appropriate. This creates a rare forum in which men and women speak candidly, and are able to truly hear one another’s life experiences relating to gender and sexuality that otherwise often go unacknowledged in society and religious communities alike.

The Gender Reconciliation process continues with transforming injurious dynamics and renewing broken trust between the sexes, and includes granting forgiveness as appropriate. This is accomplished through a series of interactive exercises between the women and men, and culminates in honoring ceremonies that the women and men design, choreograph, and offer to one another. The result is an uplifting and often profound experience of mutual harmony, renewed appreciation, and creative collaboration between women and men—which in turn generates a sense of restored hope and inspiration for creating authentic, balanced partnership between the sexes.

As men and women move skillfully together through, and beyond, the charged minefield of dysfunctional gender dynamics, the trapped energy and negative emotions that have historically exacted such a massive toll in gender relations are steadily transmuted into joy, complementary empowerment, and creativity. New possibilities are born, and we begin to rewrite our collective gender story — reclaiming our birthright as men and women to live in joy and harmony together.
**Get Real! workshops in Gender Reconciliation**

GRI has launched a series of workshops entitled *Get Real!*, which is an acronym for *Gender Equality Training for Relationships that are Enlivening, Awake, and Loving*. *Get Real!* workshops are offered to students and faculty on university campuses, and to adults of all ages in religious organizations and congregations, NGOs, and community-based organizations. The *Get Real!* workshop is a three-day intensive process for men and women, designed to help them wake up from dysfunctional conditioning around gender and sexuality, to shed the false identities that are cultivated by such conditioning, and to learn new ways of relating authentically—on interpersonal, human, and soul levels.

The premise of *Get Real!* is that dysfunctional conditioning around gender and sexuality—for both men and women—leads to a condition of widespread inauthenticity in both inter-gender and intra-gender relationships. As a result, both women and men develop artificial, culturally-conditioned personas that are accepted as ‘normal,’ and may even provide a measure of functional ‘security’, but these personas cut them off from their true selves. These personas are fear-based; women are afraid of being violated, disrespected, or abandoned; men are afraid of revealing their vulnerability, or being disrespected as ‘weak.’ Both are fearful of being manipulated. Over time, women and men forget who they really are, and the result is they have difficulty having a real relationship.

Documentary films such as Jean Kilbourne’s *Killing Us Softly* series and Jackson Katz’ *Tough Guise* series have been skillfully publicizing key insights around dysfunctional gender conditioning for decades, but recently has there been a larger popular awakening to these issues. A recent documentary film entitled
Miss Representation articulates major aspects of false gender conditioning for young women, and the new documentary film The Mask You Live In documents parallel false conditioning for young men. Both forms of conditioning create massive pain and confusion, as well as tremendous pressure for women to accept their misrepresentation as their true selves, and men to accept their masks as their true identity.

When 'misrepresented' women interact with 'masked' men in relationship—whether intimate or otherwise—dysfunction becomes inevitable. Young women and men both tend to forget over time who they really are, and start believing in their false identities or personas. Many of the contemporary challenges in intimate relationships, sexuality, and dating—as well as ordinary platonic relationships between the sexes—arise because of the interaction between these false masculine and feminine conditioned personas. ‘Relationship’ often becomes two forms of inauthentic personas interacting and clashing outwardly—while inwardly the two souls are reeling, and authentic human-to-human contact is often lost. Get Real! workshops help both women and men to shed this conditioning, and discover new forms of authentic relationship and integrity in intimate relationship.

Get Real! workshops can be adapted to the specific interests and goals of each participating church congregation, sangha, tariqa, or other religious community. Our standard introductory workshop is three days, which can be conducted as three days consecutively, or be spread over two consecutive weekends (Friday evening and Saturday). We also conduct an array of other introductory programs including 2-hour ‘tasters, day-long orientations, follow-up and advanced workshops, and a year-long training program with internship practicum that leads to certification as Get Real! facilitators.

**Objectives of Get Real! workshops**

In the three-day Get Real! workshop, participants engage in a program that:

- Creates a safe forum for men and women to jointly confront dysfunctional gender and sexuality conditioning in society, and in religious life;
- Facilitates skillful acknowledgment, truth-telling, and deep listening in relation to participants’ personal histories;
- Fosters new levels of sensitivity and mutual awareness among women and men, and between hetero and non-hetero conforming participants;
- Cultivates respectful and authentic dialogue between the sexes on sensitive gender issues, including skills for addressing conflicts;
• Promotes new forms of relating between women and men imbued with mutual appreciation, compassion, and trust;

• Builds a collaborative network of men and women who are committed to transforming gender relations, and who are mutually accountable to one another.

Integration, follow up, and ‘Beloved Communities’

The introductory Get Real! workshop provides a powerful initiation into the key principles, practices, and experience of Gender Reconciliation. Follow-up is essential for continuing to develop the insights and understandings over time, and for building a vibrant community of practice that enables participants to apply and implement principles of Gender Reconciliation in daily living. Over time, these groups transform into powerful, compassionate learning communities of mutual accountability and deep bonding—a form of ‘beloved community’ that cultivates the highest standards of integrity and accountability in interpersonal relationships.

Toward this end, participants who have completed the Get Real! program may choose to commit beyond the initial introductory workshop to engage in:

• Follow-up meetings held regularly after the workshop — in which participants share their experiences and challenges in practicing the tools of Gender Reconciliation in their daily lives;

• Self-facilitated groups beyond the initial follow up groups, using Gender Reconciliation ethical agreements as a guide, to address issues for which no other safe forum typically exists;

• Practical application of simple, effective communication tools which participants practice in their daily lives, and report on learnings, insights, and challenges in follow-up sessions;

• The Gender Reconciliation Training program, which provides an intensive immersion over a year’s time for those who wish to delve deeper. See next section for more information.

“THE PROCESS YOU TOOK US THROUGH WAS VERY VERY DEEP... IT OPENED UP ANOTHER WORLD FOR ME. IT OPENED UP A SPACE THAT HAS BEEN SO TRANSFORMING, SO HEALING — GIVING ME SO MUCH HOPE. AND WITH THIS HOPE I CAN GO NOW, EVEN TO FAMILIES, TO YOUNGSTERS, GIVING THEM THIS HOPE.”

— LIGIA FONSECA, COUNSELOR, MUMBAI, INDIA MEMBER OF THE VATICAN FAMILY COUNCIL
Training in Gender Reconciliation

Religious leaders and seekers who wish to experience the transformative power of Gender Reconciliation more fully, or who would like to potentially become facilitators are encouraged to apply for the Gender Reconciliation Training program. This training program has three tracks, the first of which is an intensive foundational training and may be taken as a stand-alone training (without pursuing subsequent tracks) for those who wish to immerse themselves in the Gender Reconciliation experience, but are not seeking to become certified facilitators.

The structure and content of the Gender Reconciliation Training program is tiered, to enable multiple levels of engagement and trainee commitment. The training continues to evolve over time, and the current structure is the following:

- **Track I: Gender Reconciliation Intensive.** This consists of four 5-day modules of intensive group training, over a 12-month period or less. This portion of the training is required for all trainees.
- **Track II: Internship Program** (for those who have completed Track I and wish to work toward becoming facilitators of Gender Reconciliation). In this internship program, trainees gain invaluable field experience by helping to organize and facilitate Gender Reconciliation programs.
- **Track III: Facilitation Certification.** Successful completion of the internship program enables one to apply to become a certified facilitator of Gender Reconciliation. Certification is conferred (on a case-by-case basis) upon qualified trainees who complete all of the foregoing elements of the program successfully, and who possess the necessary psychological maturity and leadership skills.

**Upcoming Trainings in 2016 in USA, India, and South Africa**

New professional trainings in Gender Reconciliation will be launched in 2016 in India, South Africa, and the United States. The India training is open to trainees from all of southeast Asia, and the South Africa training is open to trainees from all African countries. The first modules (Track I) of these trainings will be held in Bangalore, India (February 1 - 5, 2016), in Cape Town, South Africa (March 2 - 6, 2016), and in Seattle, USA (dates to be announced). Dates of further modules will be posted at www.GRworld.org
Key elements of the Track I training in Gender Reconciliation include:

- Spiritual foundation and principles of reconciliation
- Gender across the religions; sacred union of opposites
- Advanced & creative group facilitation skills
- Individual coaching and mentoring
- Silent meditation, prayer, breathing practices
- Group dynamics in relation to sensitive gender issues
- Creating safe space, working with trauma & PTSD
- Gay, lesbian, bi-sexual, & transgender issues
- Intimate communication skills and presence
- Conflict transformation and ‘collective alchemy’
- Sexuality—sacred and profane—and relationship to spirituality
- Holotropic Breathwork experience
- Challenging and volatile gender issues, and pitfalls in groups
- Transmuting shadow aspects and areas of unawareness
- Ceremonial and celebration skills in community

For more information on the training, please visit our website at www.GRworld.org.
Gender Reconciliation in Your Community?

If you are interested to bring a Gender Reconciliation workshop or training program to your religious community or organization, please contact us at training@GRworld.org, or contact our Seattle office at (303) 588-7715. The initial program is generally a three-day intensive Introduction to Gender Reconciliation.

Religious leaders and seekers who wish to apply for the professional facilitator training program should write to GRI at training@GRworld and request an application form. For more information on the upcoming training programs, please contact the following:

- For India or North America: Cynthia Brix (cynthia@GRworld.org) Tel. +1 (303) 588-7715
- For Africa and South Africa: Judy Bekker (jbekker@rbanet.co.za) Tel +27 83 661 2903 or Zanele Khumalo (zanele@GRworld.org)
- For Colombia and Latin America: Natalia Cediel (natalia@GRworld.org)
- For UK and Europe: Antonia Porter (antonia@GRworld.org)
- For Australia: William and Esther Diplock (diplock@GRworld.org)

A few of the certified GRI facilitators in South Africa
Appendices

Omega Institute, University of the Free State, and workshop in Durban, S. Africa

Appendices

2. Participants’ Feedback from Gender Reconciliation in Universities
3. Gender Reconciliation International - Professional Staff

Priests honoring nuns in Gender Reconciliation ceremony, India
Appendix 1

DIVINE DUALITY
THE POWER OF RECONCILIATION BETWEEN WOMEN AND MEN^2

by William Keepin, PhD with Rev. Cynthia Brix, PhD(hon)

Excerpt from Divine Duality

“The future of humanity will be decided not by relations between nations, but by relations between men and women.” Whether or not D. H. Lawrence was overstating the case in making this prophetic pronouncement, he was pointing to something very real. The crisis in relations between women and men is of massive proportions and is creating profound misery for literally billions of people across the planet.

The purpose of gender reconciliation is to transform the roots of gender imbalance at multiple levels: within the individual, in interpersonal relationships, and in the larger society. Gender reconciliation seeks to provide a safe and skillfully facilitated forum where women and men can jointly examine the subtle knots of cultural conditioning around gender and sexuality, support each other in healing the roots of negative gender dynamics, and address the associated inequities and injustices in the world.

As Martin Luther King, Jr., emphasized, social change does not happen by keeping corruption and injustice hidden, but rather by confronting darkness with the power of love. ... Gender healing and reconciliation consciously invokes this universal love of the heart, which in the end has the capacity to overcome the very real and formidable challenges of gender oppression and injustice that have tormented human societies for literally thousands of years. In King’s words, if “pessimism concerning human nature is not balanced by an optimism concerning divine nature,” then we “overlook the cure of grace.” The power of love invokes this grace, which in turn facilitates deep healing and fosters authentic social change.

After decades of separate women’s and men’s movements — valuable though they have been — another step is urgently needed: the time has come for women and men to band together to jointly create gender harmony. We must gather in mixed groups to plumb new depths of relational awareness, courageous truth-telling, compassionate listening, empathic sensitivity, and mutual healing. This form of gender work is almost entirely absent in our society, even in progressive social change movements and otherwise highly conscious spiritual communities. Yet there is a powerful yearning on the part of women and men of all sexual orientations — many of whom have done years of work in separate women’s or men’s groups — to now take this next step.

Gender oppression is universal, and all societies would benefit tremendously from authentic gender healing and reconciliation. The whole of humanity is in profound need of a kind of “Truth and Reconciliation Commission” in regard to gender injustice and sexism. Humanity as a whole must one day face unflinchingly the full agonizing truth of gender oppression and sexism in our consciousness, our societies, our families, our relationships — our very legacy as a species. We must cultivate a vast forgiveness for the ruinous violations of women and girls, the profound betrayal of men and boys, and the persecution of all those who have not conformed to narrow, rigid heterosexual stereotypes. Humanity will never be able to move fully forward into its next phase of evolution, toward a new civilization of love and harmony, without first reconciling gender imbalance at a far more profound level than has yet been achieved in any contemporary society.

"WE MUST CULTIVATE A VAST FORGIVENESS FOR THE RUINOUS VIOLATIONS OF WOMEN AND GIRLS, THE PROFOUNDBETRAYAL OF MEN AND BOYS, AND THE PERSECUTION OF ALL THOSE WHO HAVE NOT CONFORMED TO NARROW, RIGID HETEROSEXUAL STEREOTYPES."
— DIVINE DUALITY

"... THE TIME HAS COME FOR WOMEN AND MEN TO BAND TOGETHER TO JOINTLY CREATE GENDER HARMONY."
— DIVINE DUALITY
Appendix 2

PARTICIPANT EVALUATIONS OF GENDER RECONCILIATION

GRI conducted a three-day introductory Gender Reconciliation workshop (*Get Real!* for 28 students at the University of the Free State in Bloemfontein in March 2014, and the same workshop for 27 students and three faculty at the University of the Western Cape in June 2014.

![Students in Gender Reconciliation activity, Stellenbosch University](image)

Student evaluations from these programs are reproduced below, including all written answers to the indicated evaluation questions. The evaluations are highly favorable. Of course it is important to bear in mind that evaluations collected at the end of a workshop tend to be somewhat biased — in a favorable direction if the workshop went well, as these did—due to the general atmosphere of enthusiasm and gratitude at the end. Several students requested follow up sessions, which form an integral component of GRI’s long-term implementation of Gender Reconciliation programs.

“IF THESE WORKSHOPS CAN CONTINUE, GENDER DISCRIMINATION WON'T EXIST.”

— UNIVERSITY OF THE FREE STATE STUDENT
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>What were the most valuable aspects of this workshop? Please be specific, and explain why.</th>
<th>What were the less valuable aspects of the program? Please be specific, and explain why.</th>
<th>Do you feel this workshop has value and relevance UFS? Would you recommend this work to others? What would you tell them?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The therapeutic sessions of story sharing. This allowed me to express my emotions and empathize with fellow group members.</td>
<td>None.</td>
<td>Yes. This workshop postulated relevant practical examples that could be used as a theoretical framework to educate and empower other people on gender reconciliation.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Silence order, for me it brings peace, attention, positive attitude to a group. Sharing personal experience, as I said during my sharing it was my time sharing my personal information.</td>
<td>To be honest I never saw or received any kind of less valuable aspects, I don't want to lie to you.</td>
<td>Yes it has a huge value and relevance to us UFS students, especially to me if I can say so. Yes I would highly recommend to others. I would tell them to attend a workshop.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>It was more focused on the gender equality and the empowerment of women. It was also allowing an individual to express and share stories that caused pain in their lives.</td>
<td>The least valuable thing was the restriction on the workshop itself in terms of the issue that we focused on. We need to address all issues like gender, race, etc.</td>
<td>Yes it has values. It helps people to open up and share stories which hurt them and let them know how to heal.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Noble silence I found this aspect very convenient. It taught me to be calm and collective. The men space helped me talk about important things.</td>
<td>I found the games less valuable because its something I already had in my life.</td>
<td>Yes. Yes. The program helped me come to terms with my anger. I recommend you try it.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reconciling men and women. Sharing experiences and learning values. Honoring other people's experiences.</td>
<td>Socializing. Though it is important for the community to socialize it was not as vital as the reconciliation per say.</td>
<td>Yes, it gives members; both the students and staff a platform to express themselves and teaches them more about the actual facts that men and women have to deal with in society.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The most valuable aspect about this workshop was when we were sharing our own personal experiences as far as problems we are experiencing.</td>
<td>Everything was valuable.</td>
<td>Yes, everything was valuable and has value and relevance. I would recommend this to others.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The way in which the workshop was conducted because it created safe spaces for all.</td>
<td>There are none.</td>
<td>Yes, young women and men stand a chance to gain and enrich themselves through this program.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>What were the most valuable aspects of this workshop? Please be specific, and explain why.</td>
<td>What were the less valuable aspects of the program? Please be specific, and explain why.</td>
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<tr>
<td>The silent witnessing, it really challenged my honesty and really exposed me to the challenges that females and males alike face.</td>
<td>Nothing in this program was less valuable.</td>
<td>This workshop brings together the different genders and exposes them to their similarities and differences, and initiates a process of healing for both genders. I would recommend this program to all students and staff, because it equips one with skills and tools that are useful in dealing with people of different genders and it allows one to deal with one's gender issues in a safe environment.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Helps people to open up and heal invisible wounds.</td>
<td></td>
<td>Yes, all people need to reconcile due to this aspect of life and its challenges.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Respectfully understanding one another as female and males. Honesty amongst both genders and confidentiality amongst the groups. Mostly being a good listener.</td>
<td></td>
<td>Much great recommendation. I would tell other people about it.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hearing the stories and experiences of others helped me to understand far more than I did before.</td>
<td>Nothing.</td>
<td>Yes. Yes. It is a great way to increase understanding and find peace.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The silent witness and the truth mandala. It forces you to be honest with yourself.</td>
<td></td>
<td>Yes it is life changing. It makes you re-evaluate everything.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The truth sections, because I got in touch with myself and was open. The experience was the best and I learned a lot about myself.</td>
<td>I did not have any.</td>
<td>Yes! Because a lot of students go through tribulations in their lives, I strongly believe that this is what they need and it would help them emotionally and physically, helping them to perform better in their studies.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The opportunity of telling one's story without fear of shame or rejection.</td>
<td>There were not any.</td>
<td>Yes it does. I definitely would recommend it to my close circle of friends. I would tell them that it is personal and allows one to begin a journey of healing.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
**University of the Western Cape Written Responses**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>What were the most valuable aspects of this workshop? Please be specific, and explain why.</th>
<th>What were the less valuable aspects of the program? Please be specific, and explain why.</th>
<th>Do you feel this workshop has value and relevance at University of the Western Cape? Would you recommend this work to others? What would you tell them?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Sharing trauma that we went through. Get an opportunity to meet new people as well as gifted facilitators who always excel in what they were doing.</td>
<td>Definitely. None for me. Everything was absolutely amazing and it was more than what I have expected.</td>
<td>I would tell them about the knowledge that I gained. It played an important role to help us deal with problems.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The sharing of men – seeing their vulnerabilities. Being at the River of my gender identity – recognizing where most of me stems from – the Mandala – the women’s circle. Knowing that the men were also having the same experience. It made a SPACE SAFE for me - and others I feel.</td>
<td>Nothing</td>
<td>It is a Higher Learning – that’s Relevant and absolutely needed in various professions. I’ve seen nurses being subjected in their work and positions, and I feel nurses in nursing institutions could find great benefit in this experience, and also for life in our homes and institutions and community.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The experiential nature of the work.</td>
<td>Loved all the sessions I attended.</td>
<td>Yes. I will tell them that it must be compulsory for all new students.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The mandala was valuable because it brought out my inner strength.</td>
<td></td>
<td>It's magic, come see for yourself.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Truth Mandala and every activity: as it flowed and built into the next activity.</td>
<td></td>
<td>Yes: that Gender Reconciliation is definitely the methodology to heal our nation.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Silent Witnessing made me realize that I am victorious and not the victim. No matter my hurts, I am still standing. 🌟</td>
<td>None identified.</td>
<td>Yes, very valuable and I would encourage all to attend and inform them to be open to transformation.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The activities, each activity incorporates a valuable lesson with regard to the mandate.</td>
<td>None</td>
<td>Yes, it's a great learning experience.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Authenticity and vulnerability during Truth Telling and Mandala and Honoring Ceremony.</td>
<td>That there was laissez-fair [some came and went] – would have liked everyone to stay in process all the time.</td>
<td>Definitely valuable - need to continue process with ongoing workshop. Contact me for convocation (ex graduates) who are not on campus anymore.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sharing of different experiences</td>
<td>None</td>
<td>Yes, would tell them to take cognizance of other genders.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>What were the most valuable aspects of this workshop? Please be specific, and explain why.</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>The value of sharing and speaking truth to our feelings. It is important that people (men and women) make time to listen to each other without projecting their own feelings of assumptions and other judgments on to others.</td>
<td>Everything is valuable in this workshop. Time is something that I believe should be more emphasized and recruiting people to the workshop.</td>
<td>Yes: Come prepared to open yourself to be gender healed and continue to be part of a support group for Gender Healing.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The most valuable aspects of the program were the times we were given a platform to share our stories. They helped me move on with life instead of being angry and ashamed of the things I experienced.</td>
<td></td>
<td>Yes. It has valuable relevance due to the fact that UWC is an academic institution with different people from different backgrounds. Yes. I would recommend the workshop to other people so that they can learn more about gender reconciliation.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I felt that the atmosphere of the program and the space it creates are the most valuable aspects of the workshop.</td>
<td>The content of the program was excellent, however, as it already resonates strongly with my own beliefs, it was less valuable to me.</td>
<td>I do feel it has a lot of value to UWC, but it does require one to be open to the process and willing to embrace whatever emerges.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Mandala, The different segments facilitated my story to come out and to flow</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Gender River of Life</td>
<td></td>
<td>Yes, definitely. Everyone should participate in a GR workshop.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>How might the program be improved? Feel free to comment on any aspect of the program; the exercises, facilitators, workshop venue, etc. Please be specific.</td>
<td>Any other comments, feedback, or suggestions?</td>
<td>Would you be interested in participating in an advanced Gender Reconciliation Training if offered at UWC?</td>
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<tr>
<td>Please improve on the days; make it 5 days at least. That way I believe people will learn a lot and get an opportunity to ask as many questions as they can.</td>
<td>Guys we thank you very much for this wonderful workshop, and may you continue delivering these to many more.</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Time well spent – at UWC set a bar and tone of academic engagement – yet the experience was profound and I wouldn’t want to spend the last 3 days differently.</td>
<td>The refreshments were super, great nutritional filling and wonderful – thank you. I’m well fed.</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Good as is. Follow up necessary.</td>
<td>Keep doing what you are doing.</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Yes</td>
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<td></td>
<td>To have more of the GR workshops</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>More advertising and marketing prior to event. May be more effective. Especially to encourage men to attend.</td>
<td>More of these workshops will be valuable if presented at UWC. But this work should also be introduced to our communities.</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>It’s perfect as is.</td>
<td>None. Just keep on keeping on. ☑</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>More marketing and advertising to get more diverse sectors on campus.</td>
<td>Have a social braai at the end</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Everything was perfect.</td>
<td>Impressive</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Time: To end workshop earlier on the last day.</td>
<td>To have the workshop over 2 -3 Saturdays</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Send initiation to the public</td>
<td></td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Yes Definitely ☑</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Testimonials

Our interfaith community has experienced the programs of Gender Reconciliation International. I was deeply touched by their exquisite sensitivity, awesome skills and remarkable creativity. The work of GRI is essential and critical if we truly yearn for global healing and transformation.

~ Imam Jamal Rahman, co-Founder
Interfaith Community Sanctuary, Seattle, WA
Member of Interfaith Amigos

I have attended Gender Reconciliation twice, and I’m looking forward to more because each time I attend, my eyes are opened more and more. The work of Gender Reconciliation is very much needed in India; I wish this work could be translated into our local language, and done all over India. It is very powerful to make people aware of what’s going on, especially the women who suffer unnecessarily around gender issues.

This work is an eye opener for men to learn what women go through. I work mostly with women and issues around women, so I did not even realize that the men also go through [gender challenges]. After I went through the Gender Reconciliation program, I understood how much men suffer.

I feel Gender Reconciliation will play a very important role if it is done within the religious communities; both male and female. I wish the Church would recognize this work, and give importance to it, and take it forward. Unless people go through this program, they don’t understand how much value it has.

~ Sr. Lucy Kurien, Founder
Maher interfaith ashram
Pune, India

Our innate potential to become liberated is the same whether male or female. The societies in which Buddhism developed were already patriarchal; the males were the ones who were educated, so it was they who wrote the books and had the voice. Now as women are becoming equally learned it is essential that they support, encourage and respect each other rather than rely only on male authority. Now it is time for the female voice also to be heard.

~ Jetsunma Tenzin Palmo
Dongyu Gatsal Nunnery
Tashi Jong, India
Most or all religions are very male-dominated. I know many priests, in my own experience, who would like to be liberated, but we haven’t had a methodology for that. Gender Reconciliation work would offer a major breakthrough.

~ Fr. Prashant Olalekar
Jesuit Retreat House
Mumbai, India

As we begin the 21st century we still see the shadow of patriarchy casting darkness on all our institutions and religions, including my own, Hinduism. The myth that places men at the top and closer to God has served neither men nor women, and created a great divide between us.

The work of Gender Reconciliation International and the professional trainings conducted by founders William Keepin and Cynthia Brix seek to bridge that divide, and reconcile us ~ men and women ~ to our equal place in the Divine, regardless of our religious affiliations. I thank them and applaud this work—God knows, it is much needed.”

~ Swami Ambikananda Saraswati
Traditional Yoga Association, UK

Gender Reconciliation is the only practical tool that I have experienced that has the capacity to transform relations between women and men.

~ Keith Vermeulen, former Director,
Parliamentary Office of the South African Council of Churches
Cape Town, South Africa

I have been looking for a long time to find a way to bring healing and reconciliation between women and men. This work [Gender Reconciliation] is the answer. We need much more of this work.

~ Nozizwe Madlala Routledge, Executive Director, Inyathelo
former Deputy Speaker of Parliament,
and Deputy Minister of Health,
South Africa
William Keepin, PhD & Rev. Cynthia Brix, PhD (hon) are founding Directors of the Gender Reconciliation International (GRI) project and the Satyana Institute in Seattle, WA. William is a physicist and environmental scientist with extensive spiritual training East and West. Cynthia is an ordained interfaith minister and former campus minister at the University of Colorado, with a background in gerontology and wellness management. Will and Cynthia have conducted over 90 workshops and trainings on Gender Reconciliation in eight countries. Their books include Divine Duality: The Power of Reconciliation Between Women and Men, and Women Healing Women. Cynthia produced a DVD entitled Cultivating Women’s Spiritual Mastery. Will’s new book integrating mystical traditions East and West with science is Belonging to God: Toward a Universal Path of Divine Love, with a Foreword by Fr. Thomas Keating (forthcoming: Skylight Paths Publishing, 2016).

Judy Bekker is Director of Training for GRI in South Africa. She co-founded Renaissance Business Associates, and has served as professional facilitator for more than 30 years, specializing in personal and leadership development, communication skills, and relationship building. Judy has also served as a solo wilderness guide for more than 20 years.

Zanele Khumalo, MA is Program Officer for GRI based in South Africa, and a professional facilitator with experience in diversity management, intercultural communication, and alternatives to violence. She holds an MA in Diversity Studies from the University of Cape Town. Zanele has six years experience as a social science researcher, and she trained young adult mentors of youth at risk.

Rev. Laurie Gaunn is Programme Coordinator at the Centre for Christian Spirituality (founded by Archbishop Desmond Tutu). He focuses on contemplative spirituality and social justice, and is the only openly gay minister in the Dutch Reformed Church (DRC) of South Africa. He and his father, a senior minister in the DRC, co-authored a book Praiseworthy Grease, and were instrumental in the recent DRC ruling to ordain gay ministers and bless same sex unions.

Antonia Porter, MA is International Program Officer for GRI, based in Cape Town and the UK. She is a conflict resolution practitioner with experience in South Africa, Nepal, India, Mozambique, USA, and the UK. Antonia holds an MA in political science from UC Berkeley, and was formerly Project Officer at the Centre for Conflict Resolution, Africa’s most internationally recognized think-tank.

John Tsangme Guy, MA, LMHC is Consultant for GRI based in Seattle, Washington. He is a licensed psychotherapist in private practice, with a background in group dynamics and facilitation, contemplative psychotherapy, and addictions counseling. John holds an MA in Contemplative Psychotherapy from Naropa University.

Judy Connors MA, is Director of Phaphama Initiatives in Soweto, South Africa. She is a certified GRI facilitator, Kundalini Yoga teacher, and contemplative Catholic. She leads spiritual and interfaith retreats for diverse religious leaders. Judy has nearly 30 years experience facilitating leadership training, conflict resolution, diversity training, intercultural language development, and the Alternatives to Violence Project.

Natalia Cediel, PhD is a Consultant for GRI based in Bogotá, Colombia. She is a lecturer and researcher in veterinary public health and epidemiology at Universidad Nacional de Colombia, Universidad Antonio Nariño, and Universidad de La Salle. Natalia teaches yoga and mindfulness, and co-facilitates workshops on non-violence with Father Manuel Jimenez at Universidad Nacional de Colombia.
If you would like to bring Gender Reconciliation training or Get Real! workshops to your religious or spiritual community, please contact:

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  Tel +27 83 661 2903
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- For UK and Europe:
  Antonia Porter (antonia@GRworld.org)

- For Australia:
  William and Esther Diplock (diplock@GRworld.org)

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