
Gender Equity and Reconciliation International

Transforming Patriarchy in Religion: From Gender Apartheid to Beloved Community



Gender Equity and Reconciliation
International



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- Are you concerned about sexual misconduct by religious leaders, and #MeToo stories of sexual harassment in religious communities?
- Do you believe that spiritual communities and religious institutions must do more to transform embedded patriarchal norms, and to uplift women's leadership, and embrace today's expanding gender landscape?
- Would you like to discover innovative ways to transform gender relations between women and men – in religious communities and society at large – and 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 like-minded people around the world who are crying out for genuine, realistic solutions to these challenges. The #MeToo movement precipitated a dramatic awakening of widespread sexual harassment and exploitation across the globe – and religious institutions and spiritual communities are no exception. Devastating revelations of sexual misconduct and exploitation – often enabled by corresponding institutional complicity and cover-ups – are emerging with increasing frequency today in churches, sanghas, and spiritual communities in every major faith tradition.

Despite these heartbreaking realities, there is practical new hope on the horizon! An innovative methodology called 'Gender Equity and Reconciliation' has brought remarkable healing and transformation to thousands of women and men on six continents. Developed over 25 years, Gender Equity and 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 Nozizwe Madlala Routledge, a Quaker who was formerly Deputy Speaker of Parliament in South Africa. *"This work is the answer. We need much more of this work."*

Read on!—and discover Gender Equity and Reconciliation, which shows remarkable promise for transforming patriarchy and gender oppression within religious congregations and institutions.



The need for Gender Equity and Reconciliation

Gender-based oppression and violence afflict every segment and level of human societies – from the bedroom to the boardroom—irrespective of race, class, culture, religion, age, sexual orientation, or gender identity. The #MeToo campaign and recent revelations of rampant sexual harassment lay bare the raw pain of gendered dysfunction in contemporary society, and dispel any illusion of having gone beyond this legacy of oppression. Daily acts of physical or psychological violence and ‘micro-aggressions’ in gendered relationships establish social conditions that foster violence on a larger scale.¹ Nations with greater gender inequality are statistically more likely to engage in warfare.² Gender is a central fault-line in all societies, and there is urgent need for new strategies and effective methods to transform gender injustice on all levels – to foster a peaceful, sustainable future for humankind. Gender Equity and Reconciliation International was founded as an innovative step in this direction.



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 GERI vision is unique, and uniquely valuable to the world.

—Peter Rutter, MD, Jungian psychiatrist,
author of *Sex in the Forbidden Zone* and
Understanding Sexual Harassment

¹Melanie Verwoerd and Claudia Lopes (eds.), *Sexualized Violence in the National Debate: Cross-border Observations on India and South Africa*, Heinrich Boll Foundation Southern Africa, April 2015.

²Valerie Hudson et al, *Sex and World Peace*, New York: Columbia University Press, 2012.

What is Gender Equity and Reconciliation?

Over the past 25 years, Gender Equity and Reconciliation International (GERI) has developed a transformative process called Gender Equity and Reconciliation that has been introduced in nine countries: the United States, South Africa, India, Colombia, Kenya, Australia, Croatia, Canada, and the United Kingdom. Born of necessity in the 1990s from revelations closely analogous to the recent exposés of Harvey Weinstein, Bill O’Reilly and others – the GERI process provides a rare forum for women *and* men to *jointly* confront the personal, social, and cross-cultural origins of gender oppression and exploitation, and to reach mutual healing and understanding. Open to people of all sexual orientations and gender identities, the GERI process aligns with principles of truth and reconciliation. Our trainings apply an experiential learning methodology combined with skillful facilitation in a group setting, to provide a community-based approach that complements traditional activist, political, and academic approaches. The GERI methodology was explicitly endorsed by Archbishop Emeritus Desmond Tutu in 2013.



Who can participate?

GERI programs are open to adults of all ages from all walks of life, with a strategic focus in five target areas: (1) Peacebuilding and reconciliation in NGO and governmental sectors, (2) Community organizations, (3) Universities and colleges, (4) Mental health and psychotherapy, and (5) Religious organizations. We also hold workshops for the general public. Follow-up programs are offered to support participants to integrate key learnings and practices in their personal and professional lives.



Men are strongly encouraged and welcomed into GERI programs, which entail no ‘male-bashing,’ but instead inspire men to

take part joyfully in the transformation of gender relations in society. The greatest male privilege is not any of the social advantages afforded to men in a patriarchal society, but rather for men to actively participate in dismantling the unjust patriarchal system itself.



Archbishop Desmond Tutu officially endorsed GERI and its methodology in 2013.

Gender Equity and Reconciliation - Implementing legislation against gender injustice

By addressing root causes of gender injustice, GERI programs offer a practical approach that helps implement legislation against gender-based violence and peace and security for women, such as the Convention to Eliminate All forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) of 1979, the 1995 Beijing Platform of Action, and United Nations Security Council Resolutions (UNSCRs) 1325 of 2000 and 1820 of 2008, and more recent UNSCRs on women, peace, and security.

Impacts of GERI programs

Monitoring and evaluation research indicates that GERI workshops have significant impacts on participants' lives, attitudes, and behaviours towards other genders. Participants report applying new skills and knowledge to address gender-based conflicts in their lives and communities, including speaking up to a greater extent about gender injustice and oppression in the workplace, the family, and in communities. Men often report a new awareness of the plight of women in patriarchal society, and a commitment to curb their own afflicted behaviors (or violence), and that of those around them. Women often report healing from gender-based violence and trauma, and a new understanding of ways that men are afflicted in patriarchal society.

Academic research validates the efficacy of GERI programs

Research on the GERI methodology is underway at two South African universities: University of the Free State, and Stellenbosch University. A three-year research initiative was launched in 2015 by Professor Pumla Gobodo-Madikizela, a leading international researcher in trauma and forgiveness, who serves on the Board of the Desmond and Leah Tutu

Legacy Foundation, and who also played a key role as staff psychologist for the Truth and Reconciliation Commission in South Africa.

Initial research findings were presented by Dr. Samantha van Schalkwyk at the Third International Conference on Advances in Women Studies (Buffalo, NY, July, 2016). Two intensive GERI programs were conducted for a cohort of 28 university students, with monthly follow-up meetings over an academic year. Voluminous data were collected and meticulously analyzed, revealing two major impacts of the GERI programs on the students: (1) 'hegemonic masculinities' among the men were significantly transformed, and (2) underlying 'gender ideologies' and relational dynamics between women and men were significantly shifted in a positive direction. The researchers characterized the latter result as unprecedented, and reported that their data enables them to pinpoint precise dynamics in the transformation of consciousness in gender relations between women and men. This research will be published in peer-reviewed journals in 2018.

Professional trainings in Gender Equity and Reconciliation

Professional trainings for facilitators of the GERI methodology are currently conducted in the United States, South Africa, and India. More than fifty professionals completed the 2017 year-long trainings in these three countries. New professional trainings are being launched in the United States, South Africa, Colombia, and Kenya in 2018 and 2019. For more details and application information, please visit the GERI website at www.GRworld.org.



[The] profound crisis in relations between men and women is... arguably one of the most important problems humanity has been facing... This extraordinary and groundbreaking [work] holds great promise as a way to its alleviation.

– Stanislaw Grof, M.D., author of *Psychology of the Future*, *The Ultimate Journey*, and *Beyond the Brain*.



"We laughed, we cried, and we bonded around our individual experiences of deep wounding and personal shame -- sharing the beginnings of our journey towards reconciliation between our genders."

"My heart is still resonating with joy and a growing sense of hope that gender equity might actually become a reality during our daughters' lives."

~ Michele Breene, facilitator, Development Associates International, and Tim Breene, CEO, World Relief

"I was renewed, shaped, challenged, connected, healed and inspired... The sharing from women to men touched my heart deeply..."

"I made my decision not to keep quiet anymore and will always advocate for women created in the image of God as our mothers, wives, daughters, sisters and nieces."

~ Rev. Philbert Kalisa, Founder and CEO of REACH in Rwanda



"[We traveled] into a realm of meaningful communication and understanding where I have never been before."

~ Kiersten Marek, Founder, Philanthropy Women



"Rarely have I experienced such vulnerability, rawness, empathy and grace. I will treasure the stories I heard. I especially appreciated the honoring and blessing ceremonies we created for each other. I was surprised at how much they moved me to tears."

~ Craig Parker, Boston City Leader, The Navigators



"I left the retreat with commitments to explore ways we can collaborate in helping men become better men, and to deconstruct the patriarchal system that wounds so many men in their experience with other men, and wounds so many of our wives, mothers, sisters, daughters, and friends."

~ Terry Symens-Bucher, President, Illuman (men's rights of passage organization founded by Fr. Richard Rohr)



"It was such a positive and transforming experience. I feel forever touched and just a sense of my whole being having the capacity to feel on a much deeper level..."

"There are no words to describe my authentic feelings of the experience, it's so amazingly powerful. I just know there is a shift inside of me. I am so grateful for the experience."

~Participant from GERI workshop by and for People of Color

Testimonials from Religious Leaders



Our interfaith community has experienced the programs of Gender Equity and Reconciliation International (GERI). I was deeply touched by their exquisite sensitivity, awesome skills and remarkable creativity. The work of GERI 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 Equity and 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 GERI program, I understood how much men suffer.



I feel Gender Equity and 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, 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

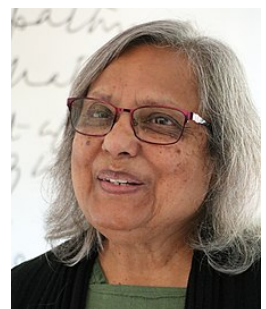


Our innate potential to become liberated is the same whether male or female. The societies in which Buddhism developed were already patriarchal; the males were the ones who were educated, so it was they who wrote the books and had the voice. Now as women are becoming equally learned it is essential that 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

This is the first time I have experienced a workshop that truly integrates both teaching and spiritual components.

—Ela Gandhi, Granddaughter of Mahatma Gandhi



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

~ Rev. 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 Equity and Reconciliation] is the answer. We need much more of this work.

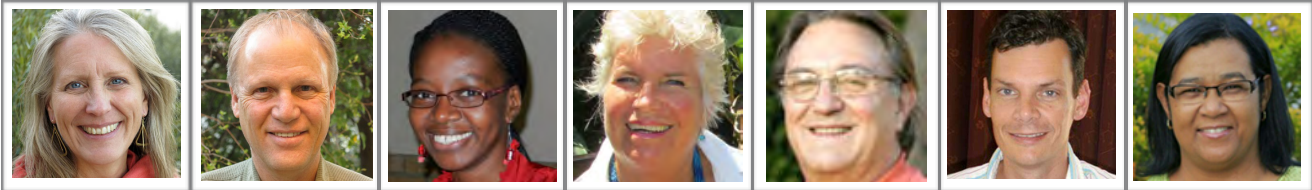
~ Nozizwe Madlala Routledge, Executive Director, Inyathelo
former Deputy Speaker of Parliament, and Deputy Minister of Health, South Africa

[Gender Equity and Reconciliation] is the next step in our logical process as a country. The work of racial reconciliation will never be complete without the work of gender reconciliation.

—Rev. Mpho Tutu van Furth



GENDER EQUITY & RECONCILIATION INTERNATIONAL - PROFESSIONAL STAFF



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William Keepin, PhD and **Rev. Cynthia Brix, PhD (hon)** are founding Directors of the Gender Equity and Reconciliation International (GERI) project and the Satyana Institute in Seattle, Washington. They have organized GERI programs on six continents for thousands of women and men. Their books include *Divine Duality: The Power of Reconciliation Between Women and Men*, and *Women Healing Women*. Will's books include *Song of the Earth* (with M. Harland) and *Belonging to God: Spirituality, Science, and a Universal Path of Divine Love*.

Zanele Khumalo, MA is International Program Officer and Senior GERI Trainer with GenderWorks, a GERI affiliate in Cape Town, South Africa. Her professional facilitation background is in diversity training, intercultural communication, and Alternatives to Violence.

Judy Bekker is a Senior GERI Trainer based in South Africa. She has been instrumental in the development and delivery of GERI professional trainings in South Africa and internationally. Judy has been a professional facilitator and solo wilderness guide for 35 years.

Julien Devereux, PhD is Senior GERI Trainer, based in Texas. He is former Chair of the ManKind Project USA, and brings vast experience in organizational leadership and clinical counseling. He has served GERI domestically and internationally since 2002.

Rev. Laurie Guam is a GERI Trainer based in South Africa. He was for many years the only openly gay minister in the Dutch Reformed Church. He and his father were instrumental in the Church's landmark ruling to ordain gay ministers and bless same sex unions in 2015.

Desiree English is a certified Trainer for GERI and GenderWorks, GERI's affiliate in South Africa. She served as Operations Officer for GenderWorks, and is also a trained practitioner of Integrative Trauma Healing, and a certified trainer of Trauma Release Exercises (TRE).

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Rob McLeod is a GERI Trainer, Facilitator, and administrator for GenderWorks, based in South Africa. He is an organizational consultant specializing in leadership training, change management, diversity, and conflict transformation. He travels internationally as GERI trainer.

Esther Diplock, M Couns and **William Diplock, M Soc Sc** are mental health counselors in private practice, GERI Facilitators, and co-directors of Gender Equity and Reconciliation Australia (GERA), an affiliate of GERI in Brisbane, Australia.

Garrett Evans, BS, is Program Officer and certified Facilitator for GERI based in Seattle, WA. His academic training is in conflict resolution, and he has extensive experience in Zen, silent meditation, and conflict resolution practice.

Karambu Ringera, PhD is a GERI Trainer, and a Facilitator since 2006, based in Meru, Kenya. Recipient of many awards, she founded International Peace Initiatives which empowers vulnerable community members via education, advocacy, and leadership development.

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For more information, visit Gender Equity and Reconciliation International at www.GRworld.org