



Gender Equity & Reconciliation International

Transforming gender injustice & establishing beloved community

Gender Equity and Reconciliation International (GERI)

*Reports from the field:
January - July 2024*



Dear Friends,

Heartfelt greetings!

We first want to express our deep gratitude to all of the donors, facilitators, volunteers, and friends who together make the GERI mission possible. Our vital work is happening only because of your ongoing support, enthusiasm, and engagement with GERI.

This newsletter reports on the inspiring GERI workshops and presentations over the past six months around the globe. A separate [mid-year training report](#) was also recently sent out, which provides a summary update of the four GERI Professional Immersion and Facilitator Trainings that are in full swing this year (in India, Kenya, North America, and Spain/Latin America). Taken together, these two documents provide a full update of the GERI program—our four professional certification trainings, plus our numerous workshops and presentations.

GERI workshops bringing healing around the world

In this first half of 2024, GERI's workshops have continued to foster healing, connection, and transformation in various communities and organizations around the world. From the



vibrant LGBTQ+ community in Las Vegas (USA) to the deeply moving workshop in Brisbane (Australia) and transformative breakthroughs in Pune (India), each GERI workshop brought unique experiences and touched different facets of gender reconciliation in numerous communities. Meanwhile, our online Spanish-speaking course brought participants from all across Latin America and Spain into a rich and inspiring GERI experience together. We are also continuing our partnership with Chrysalis Academy in South Africa, bringing the GERI work to young people and community leaders in Cape Town (South Africa). And in May we celebrated our inaugural three-day GERI workshop near Steinen in southern Germany.

In addition to these in-person workshops and online courses, GERI facilitators have also



convened nearly 20 shorter introductory sessions and presentations—some as public offerings, and several others were invited engagements with universities, NGOs, and other organizations. These included in-person programs in Costa Rica, Seattle, Cape Town, Las Vegas, and at Royal Roads University near Victoria, B.C. Other invited sessions were held online for the University of Texas at

Austin, the United Nations Commission on the Status of Women NGO Forum, and for EarthJustice, a leading public interest environmental law organization. Taken together, these introductory programs introduced GERI to hundreds of participants from diverse backgrounds and communities.

All across the world, people have come together in GERI workshops to explore the complexities of gender and sexuality, share personal stories of pain and triumph, and engage in heartfelt ceremonies of reconciliation within diverse and supportive communities.



United Nations Commission on the Status of Women #68, (UN-CSW NGO Forum), *March 17, 2024*

This was our ninth year presenting at the UN-CSW NGO Forum and it's always a great joy and honor to be invited to offer a GERI experiential session. With over 75 enrolled, it was heart-warming to experience how the GERI methodology resonated with everyone no matter which country they were from.

Some of the reflections made by participants:

I deeply appreciate everyone's open heartedness in their sharing as well as the skilful ways all the participants fostered and held space for the sharing to emerge so gracefully. *(Female participant)*

This work is needed worldwide and I wish people in my country could have the opportunity to experience the workshop. *(Female from Syria)*

I admire GERI and the crucial work of providing healing to a hurting world. *(Male participant)*

Lucille Meyer, GERI Trainer said, “*it is always humbling to represent GERI on different platforms, as the methodology enrolls participants in a way that that is safe and healing. We look forward to enhancing our relationship with this important Forum.*”

Thanks to the GERI facilitation team: Lucille Meyer, Tristan Johannes, Silvia Araya-Fischer, Hugo Sanchez, Evans M Njoki, and Cynthia Brix.

Brisbane, Australia

[The most valuable aspect of the workshop was] the support I felt during the truth mandala and the truth forum. They [facilitators] made me feel safe enough to show up and be vulnerable.” ~ *Male participant, Australia*



The days were mostly dry and cool, not to be taken for granted in tropical Brisbane, located on Australia’s northeastern seaboard. The venue’s ecological design was used to full advantage during the three days of this GERI workshop. Floor-to-ceiling louvered windows looked out onto Deception Bay, a misnomer for the beautiful seaside location.



The energy of the group in this workshop was particularly contemplative, thoughtful, and beautiful to be part of. There was also plenty of courage in these participants, and raw human emotions were shared. During the silent witnessing activity, a full range of emotions was displayed by both genders in the witnessing and standing aspects. This authentic expression, without words, set the stage for this intimate workshop.



“I appreciate the power of the silent witness to experience the universality of the pain of humanity. It humbles me and allows me to see other perspectives, and gives me a reference for compassion to

others.” ~ *Female participant, Australia*

There was a moment during the silent witnessing, while the women were standing to bear witness to an aspect of their

oppression, that a man suddenly cried out in anguish for how the women had suffered. This audible cry from a man had the impact of unlocking for one woman the power of being truly seen. She expressed that *for the first time*, a man had audibly acknowledged her suffering. It was an impactful moment for all.

The facilitators deftly maneuvered the group indoors and out during the workshop, to balance periods of sitting with movement and time to enjoy the outdoors. The ebb and flow of emotions also found their inward and outward expression as the group was guided into and out of the depths of longstanding gender conditioning.

“[This workshop] helped to bring into the light where some of my behaviors come from. I witnessed the pain that men had perpetrated, which caused me to consider the pain that I had caused to others.”

~ *Male participant, Australia*



“I witnessed the prevalence of pornography and how it has shaped men’s and women’s experience [and] expectation of sex. [My empathy increased for men when I heard] the damage done by pornography and how difficult it is for men to know how to show up sexually.” ~ *Female participant, Australia*

The women’s truth forum felt like an intimate women’s gathering, for which the men’s respectful presence throughout the workshop had helped laid the groundwork. As the women moved closer together, their voices found purchase in the afternoon air, softly at first, and then with growing determination as the circle felt increasingly safe and intimate. Shadows began to extend across the landscape, and with them came impassioned expressions of sorrow and rage. Lost children, infertility, wounding in relationships, loneliness... the

stories flowed, trembled, halted, and exploded across the room, weaving like threads into a heart-rending tapestry of women's experience.

In the men's truth forum, the inner circle settled into a shared brotherhood of vulnerability, as they risked themselves to bring forward their stories of challenge and sorrow as boys and men. Key themes included the absence of role models for them as young men, the challenge and shame of grappling with sexuality when the only 'guidance' on the topic came from unhelpful peers and pornographic images, the experience of infertility, and the aching longing to come into right relationship and the fullness of mature, healthy masculinity.

The men and women had empathically resonated with what the other gender had expressed, and the deep sincerity of their poignant stories enabled the honoring ceremonies to come together with relative ease. Tears and laughter flowed and a deep connection blossomed.

Australian senior trainers Esther and William Diplock led a team that seamlessly guided and worked with the participants over the three days. Jeremy White



and June Lambourne, while still GERI interns, displayed the finesse of more experienced facilitators, allowing all participants to feel seen and held.

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**Chrysalis Youth Development
Academy, Cape Town, South Africa**



It was a beautiful conclusion after 3 days of intense reflection, sharing and deep listening. Building a new life for a new generation was the theme of the honoring ceremony where participants shared their intentions for building a gender-healed world.

GERI's partnership with Chrysalis Academy continues to thrive, enriching the lives of young people and community members across the Western Cape. From January to July 2024, two learning cohorts, totaling over 400 young men participated in the GERI workshop, integrated into their learning journey at Chrysalis Academy.

These men embraced the focus on healing relationships among men, exploring gender diversity, and they especially appreciated the Gender River of Life and Truth Mandala exercises. The impact of the GERI program helped these young men to navigate personal experiences, broaden their understanding of gender dynamics, and deepen their views on themselves and their

relationships.



As part of the integration of GERI into the Chrysalis Academy curriculum for these young men, on July 12 2024, the Academy convened its second GERI Father and Son workshop. A



total of 46 fathers and their sons engaged in an open-hearted way throughout the day.

Fathers, grandfathers, step dads, uncles and brothers volunteered to form part of this process aimed at building relationships and deepening family bonds.

As GERI Trainer and Chrysalis Academy CEO Lucille Meyer reflects:

In the morning session, Fathers reflected on their own fathers and

father figures, their lineage and its impact on their lives. Fathers expressed how they appreciated the opportunity to reflect on their roles as men and fathers, and how they have not spent much time thinking about the inter-generational dimension of fatherhood.



When sons joined their fathers, the emotions in the room were palpable. Father and Sons sat facing each other, and connected around their relationship. Many tears were shared during the connection...

After a lunch, all Father and Sons gathered with 220 students, and shared their learnings and strategies they would be putting in place to connect with their sons more deeply. Similarly, the students had an opportunity to thank their fathers for showing up, and their wishes and dreams for their connection into the future. One of the students remarked that it was powerful to witness their fathers being vulnerable, and that vulnerability is not a sign of weakness.

My heart was full. I realised that many families make very little time for meaningful engagement, yet the longing is there. I again witnessed that men are willing to share deeply if they feel safe sufficiently safe and held.

We are looking forward to more of these engagements as they form an integral part of the Chrysalis Academy family strengthening process.



In addition to the youth workshops, Chrysalis Academy hosted a three-day intensive workshop, March 11 - 13, for 19 staff and members from various partner organizations, including the ManKind Project, Aspire Youth, and PeaceJam South Africa. Through intense reflection, sharing, and deep listening, participants confronted themes such as absent parents, domestic violence, grief, childhood trauma, and homophobia. The workshop culminated in a powerful honoring ceremony. As our friends at the Academy shared,



It was a beautiful conclusion after 3 days of intense reflection, sharing and deep listening. Building a new life for a new generation was the theme of the honoring ceremony, where we shared our intentions for building a gender-healed world.

Simultaneously, the University of Stellenbosch's Centre for the Study of the Afterlife of Violence and the Reparative Quest (AVReQ) launched the next phase of its research study to assess the impact of the GERI program. Dr. Samantha van Schalkwyk, a GERI Facilitator and Deputy Director of AVReQ, led the study, interviewing twenty students and three facilitators. Preliminary results reveal that the students were

profoundly affected by the workshops, finding the experience of sharing their stories and building relationships with peers and facilitators deeply valuable. The transcription and thematic analysis of these interviews are ongoing, and Chrysalis Academy is working closely with Dr. van Schalkwyk in the data analysis process.

GERI Las Vegas *Healing Across the Gender Spectrum*



“The GERI Workshop is an oasis of love and care in a desert of fear...”

~ Female Participant, Las Vegas

Participants were buzzing with vibrant energy as they gathered for the GERI LGBTQ+ workshop at The Center in Las Vegas, April 13 - 14. This was our second workshop over the past four months at The Center which serves the LGBTQ+ Community of Nevada. In addition to our two-day workshop over the weekend, we also co-facilitated a public introductory workshop for friends of the Center. We were grateful to be joined by Swami Ramananda for this evening session, who beautifully wove an introduction to QiGong practice into our evening of connection and sharing.

We moved into the full workshop the next morning, and the participants dove in courageously. One quiet young person shared, very vulnerably, how good it felt just to be heard and

witnessed. Another transgender participant reflected,

“I had the pleasure of witnessing gay straight, cis, trans - and people of all identities coming together for the shared purpose of healing and reconciliation. This truly is the path forward, and I am honored to be a part of this GERI community.

Considering how much pain my community is in, it was absolutely inspirational to witness each and every person’s commitment to individual and collective healing.

The queer community is so colorful and vibrant, and it is truly a miracle to witness the emergence of their truth.”

Participants explored how societal norms had shaped their identities and expressions. Amidst these discussions, a heterosexual cis man bravely stood up, and acknowledged his own privilege. “I appreciate you all for allowing me to see this,” he said, his voice steady yet emotional, “I’ve realized how much easier my path has been, simply because of who I am.”

His words had a profound impact on a woman seated nearby, who felt a wave of validation wash over her. “Your honesty means a lot,” she said softly, her eyes brimming with gratitude, “never before in my life have I heard a man speak in this way: with no defensiveness, but just acknowledgement of his privileged experience...”

Another impactful exercise was the *Cycle of Reconciliation* process, developed by Ron Kraybill. One participant spoke to a long-held burden in their family relationship, and their perception of this issue shifted during this exercise when a “lightbulb” suddenly switched on in their mind:

While in the GERI Workshop, I was internally working through my healing of emotional abandonment concerning my absent relationship with my mother. I had a chip on my shoulder with the belief that I wasn’t able to heal this pain fully without her assistance in the process. Then it came fully into my awareness that indeed I do have the power and the tools! I was reminded that there is more than just one way to heal. For this I am grateful.

The workshop closed with a sense of unity and growth, and the participants felt a deeper understanding of themselves and one another. As one woman participant reflected afterward, *“The GERI Workshop is an oasis of love and care in a desert of fear. This is a gift for the world. I am grateful to have participated.”*

Our deep gratitude to Gard Jameson for inviting GERI to bring our work to the Center.

GERI Germany - Celebrating the Germinating Seeds of Gender Healing

“I am deeply touched how this work with each other builds bridges of understanding and releases blockages in hidden corners of biographic experiences and suffering.



The way the space was held safely and the skillful methods allowed us also to be or stay connected with the spiritual core...”

~ Female Participant, Germany

The first ever GERI workshop in Germany was held in Steinen near the Swiss border, May 1 - 4. This courageous group spent four days delving into their own formation around gender and sexuality; opening and stretching themselves to listen deeply to one another, and sharing with integrity and vulnerability their personal stories of pain and challenge; all embraced within

the dignity and resilience of the human spirit.



The Truth Forums brought forth stories of the tragic patriarchal conditioning of boys and young men; from abuse suffered at the hands of older men determined to make boy children into “men”, to the absence of healthy modeling and guidance for navigating the complexities of emotional and relational life. The women’s stories spoke deeply to the pain of girls and women experiencing the violation and misuse of sexuality, and their struggles to be seen in the fullness of their being. Both forums brought forward a strong shared yearning for a new and better way in gender relationships, and for harmonized mutuality of masculine and feminine.



The poignancy and depth of the truth forums was matched by the beauty and sincerity of the honoring ceremonies, in

which women and men individually honored each other for their unique gifts and qualities, and blessed one another on their journeys forward...



Deep gratitude to Petra and Kenneth Sloan for the invitation, and for their skillful hosting of this workshop in their beautiful retreat



home. Thanks also to Laura Sloan for her nourishing meals, and the whole family's tremendous care and selfless service that made this workshop possible. Thanks also to the facilitation team – Desireé English, Garrett Evans, Phil Rogacki, Cynthia Brix, and William Keepin – for their heartfelt holding of the process.

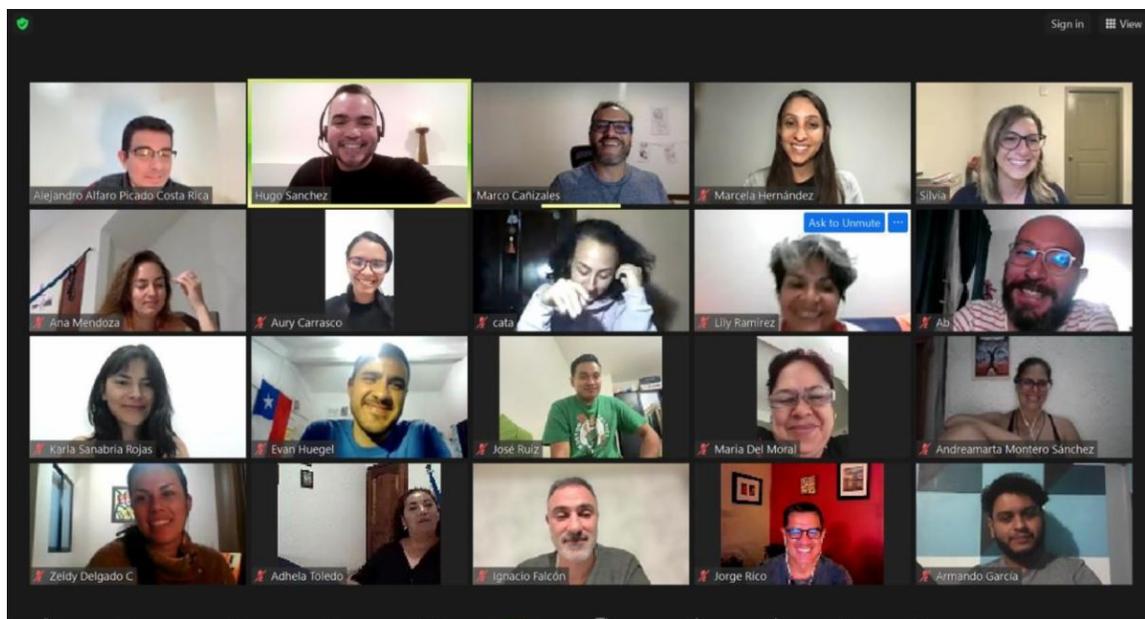
Spanish Speaking Online Course

What I experienced with GERI

has been magical and indescribable. Truly, as the sessions progressed, I became a more aware person of the male gender, and the silence of the stories that have remained unspoken for years. The experience made me realize that both men and women have lived the same stories...



~ Female participant, Latin America



We are gratified to share the success of our recently completed 7-week online workshop for our Latin American and Spanish-speaking communities. We are excited about the growth of our GERI community in Costa Rica, which was particularly well represented in this course. This was our first full workshop of 2024, and it set a wonderful precedent for the year ahead. Led by Silvia Araya, Hugo Sanchez, and Jorge Rico, we also had four dedicated interns — Marcela Hernández, Marco Cañizales, Adela Toleda, and Alejandro Picado—who joined the team beautifully and played a crucial role in organizing and facilitating this course.

Participants entered wholeheartedly into the experiential nature of the process. What may have begun with expectations of a theoretical or academic approach quickly transformed into a

space for sharing personal experiences of gender and sexuality. This openness and willingness to share personal stories of anger, pain, and sadness created a powerful, healing environment.

As one participant put it, “ This process was surprising and deeply healing. It gave me the opportunity to focus on the practice of listening in a state of presence, and its transformative effect, which facilitated the healing and release of patterns in me as a result of my gender experience, through a deep and revealing acceptance.”

As the sessions progressed from week to week, we could almost see and feel the lightness emerging anew in people’s faces and spirits. There is something truly magical about the power of story - coupled with the compassionate witness of community - that allows an unburdening of what we carry, and a re-awakening to the possibilities of life.

“Being heard, seen and validated from my being—without masks—is an incredible gift, which everyone deserves to have...”

This magic was palpable in this group, and especially so in our final session together, with the fruit of their deep work together alive in the shared spirit of gratitude, connection, and unity.

Pune, India



"It was something new for me, and it makes me happy. I can understand my feelings and emotions and my partner in a better way now."

~ Participant, GERI India

After the GERI India Module 3 training was completed in Bangalore, several facilitators and trainees traveled to Pune to facilitate a 3-day workshop with the staff of a local NGO called Maher, which rescues and rehabilitates destitute and battered people in seven states of India. The workshop brought together a group of over 25 participants—dedicated individuals who work tirelessly with women and children experiencing poverty, domestic violence, and other hardships. The GERI workshop invited them to delve into their own stories and challenges, providing a safe space to share, reflect on their inner worlds, and connect more deeply with each other.





As the first day of the workshop unfolded, participants navigated this new way of sharing and being together, slowly at first, and then opening up more as they settled into the safety of the group. By the second day, people were sharing with

increased freedom and honesty, fostering a growing sense of trust and openness.

Moving into the Truth Forum process was another level of challenge and opportunity, inviting deeper levels of sharing in the presence of the other gender. This is a rare invitation in any culture, but especially so in India. The men courageously entered the inner circle of the Truth Forum first, sharing with touching vulnerability their childhood struggles, difficulties as boys and young men, experiences of loss and grief, and the pressures of societal expectations. Moved by the men's courage and openness, it was then the women's turn. As the stone heart made its way around their circle, they began to share their experiences as girls and women: the pain of sexual harassment and violation, of not feeling safe, and of suffering in their families due to gender. As the women's circle closed, the men offered moving reflections to the women. One man, his voice filled with emotion, reflected, "I heard in each of your stories the stories of my own mother and sisters."

As another man shared later, "*The fact that men and women talk about their pain without shame makes this training important. Everyone spoke freely; we have never had such a conversation with anyone.*"

The subsequent ceremonies were incredibly touching. It was moving to witness the sincerity of the groups in their planning. The men

beautifully decorated the room, prepared offerings for the women, and practiced a dance they performed with heartfelt sincerity, offering a prayerful blessing that deeply touched the women. With that experience still in their hearts, the women prepared the space for the men, anointing each man before leading him up a decorated hallway into the meeting room. The sincerity of this blessing was palpable, moving several men to tears as they received the offerings from the women.



Meeting back with this group some weeks later on a reconnection call, it was touching to hear how the experience continues to live within the participants. One man reflected on how the experience had expanded the way he listened in his work at Maher. As practiced as he is at hearing the painful intake stories of those who come to the center, he shared how his quality of listening had deepened, allowing him to be more fully present to receive

and hold space for those seeking refuge.

It was a privilege to offer this workshop to the Maher staff,

and we extend our deep gratitude to Mangesh Pol, Soni Chattrapati, and Amol Tribhuvan for their organization and interpretation before and



during the workshop. A special thanks also to Sr. Lucy Kurien for welcoming the GERI program at Maher, and special appreciation to the trainees who stepped into co-facilitation as part of their internship in this workshop; Sukanya GV and Venu Doddavarapu, as well as GERI Trainers Desiree English and Garrett Evans.

Your support is deeply appreciated and make this work possible.

We warmly welcome your tax-deductible donation to our 501(c)3 educational non-profit. Just click the donate button below!



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