

Letter From Robb Smith, CEO of Integral Life, summarizing his and Ken Wilber's re-evaluation, in light of new material in regard to Marc Gafni

"Love and Suffering: Dr. Marc Gafni Reemerges" – Robb Smith

We recently began preparations for a new annual event called "Integral Spiritual Experience" in collaboration with integral spiritual leaders Swami Sally Kempton, Diane Musho Hamilton, Sensei and Dr. Marc Gafni. Ken Wilber and I both felt it was important to transparently investigate and address the current state of affairs as it relates to the alleged sexual misbehavior of Dr. Gafni from a few years ago. Indeed, in Ken's letter to the community of a few years ago he made a commitment that any new information would be examined.

In the past few months there has been an unveiling of what actually transpired among Dr. Gafni and his former partners. So as not to influence the discernment necessary in ethical matters of this kind, I won't detail the findings here, but instead point interested readers to look at what has more recently surfaced at www.marcgafni.com. The conclusions drawn on the website by the evaluators, rabbis, spiritual teachers and others are based on ample documentary material. Collectively, at various stages over a period of more than two years, all parties have been heard from directly and through their representatives and now through extensive first person documentation.

From the information that we reviewed, it seems clear that what was previously construed as illegal sexual misconduct was among other things a cauldron of badly-handled relationships and communication amongst adults. To be clear, we know it is not our place to judge a very complex set of perspectives, emotions, and intersubjective commitments. Dr. Gafni has taken ownership of his part of the poor judgment that contributed to the conditions surrounding the events, and we feel deep empathy for those involved and don't presume to fully account for what happened. But, put simply, the evidence is clear that nothing illegal occurred, and by the end there was real pain all around. So how do we move forward?

Integral living is, if anything else, about finding the transcending path through the pain and promise of human life. I have not been a practicing Christian for over 20 years, but as Integral Life began preparing its new documentary film "The Future of Christianity" for delivery this Christmas season, I was delighted to have an opportunity to read some of Father Thomas Keating's work. In his small tome *Transformation of Suffering* he describes one of the greatest and most miraculous equations ever described: transformation = suffering + love. The greatest value that we at Integral Life hold, and practice, is love. As we considered the path forward, it was made clear by our commitment to practicing love, which in the end seeks to include, forgive and heal.

As Dr. Gafni reemerges into the integral world, after two years of a significant life review that included personal introspection, therapy and spiritual work, he will be included, as applicable, in future integral events that we sponsor. He is a talented

scholar with a unique contribution to make to the unfolding human story. I believe that in this particular story of suffering of which he is a central player, love is the widest path to transformation.

This is why I have asked Dr. Gafni to begin preparing a program on integral love (which will be published on IntegralLife.com). I believe that because of his experiences he has a unique perspective to share, and that because his very presence will cause mixed reactions, this program will be among the best kind of integral engagements: one that invites us to become deeply aware of our own relationship to love, pain, suffering, judgment, forgiveness, and transformation. I have asked him to engage in this project in a personal and transparent way. I offer no promises about what the outcome will be. I am confident that greater freedom and fullness lie at the other end of suffering, and I am committed to fostering that in our community.

I think that this affair is a calling to love more fully and more deeply. That love has the profound power to transform our human frailties into unity that transcends our small stories and overcomes our deepest wounds is the greatest lesson life can teach. Free to be fully human is more than just a tagline for Integral Life. It is a pointing-out instruction, a gentle reminder that this greatest lesson lives within each of us, all of us as sinners, and all of us redeemed.

With deep respect,

Robb Smith

Comments to this letter:

I think you all are setting a great example with this. It is the example Ken has set all along as far as I can see, and it is great to see the organization as a whole living by the same ethic.

It's very easy to ostracize, alienate, and the like--in fact this is what we are all conditioned to do, and the way of the first-tier worldviews. People feel a short-term boost from this, but it keeps them in the world of the personal self and isn't a long-term solution to suffering.

It takes something more to engage fully with the evolutionary process, with love and care and commitment. At times it requires some kind of sacrifice from us, some risk, an acceptance and bearing of a feeling of irritation or such, but it is the path of happiness as well as love.

There may be those who will say drop him--as I have heard it said about other people--but you are surely doing the right thing by engaging with the process like this. This is really the spirit I like to see.

- **David Marshall**

Thanks Robb, and all who put their care and attention to this continual process of healing.

You've explained a fine example of principles brought down off the shelf, taken to heart and applied where it counts most.

It's apparently taken such delicate footwork across so many fine lines to arrive at this "...widest path to transformation".

And it's an example, for me, of the strength and patience to bring all we know to bear on a task without short-circuiting or aborting the current full phase of the process.

It seems to me that the wider the circles we draw around a set of difficulties, framing with broader embrace, the clearer we are able to acknowledge the actual gravities of situations and let the nuances of the details be appreciated for the gifts they hold.

Grateful via vigilance w/you,

Kerry

A principle here being, Objects-In-Mirror-Are-Closer-Than-They-Appear. The more our view includes the whole of the road, the traffic and signs, the greater our chances of moving forward together.

What a beautiful day in the Integral community. Marc Gafni is a brilliant spiritual teacher and pioneer bringing the Integral approach to both Judaism and Kabbalah. His presence has been sorely missed in this community, as you can tell from the responses to Robb Smith's blog post.

Thank you Robb and Ken for taking the time, heart, and space to go through all of the varying complexities and nuances of perspectives to welcome Marc Gafni back home with open arms.

I look forward to both the Integral Spiritual Experience event and the Integral Love offering on the portal.

I am 100% in support of this beautiful, truly Integral, gesture made by Integral Life (i.e. Robb Smith and Ken Wilber).

Deep bows to all who find themselves on the outside. May they swiftly return to the inside, where they belong?

Much love and gratitude,

Kelly Sosan Bearer

Yes, this is good news, I agree that Marc has a unique contribution to make, and am just happy to see anyone being restored to their former station in life after a fall...

I really like the formula Robb set out: transformation = suffering + love... I remember Rowan Williams (Archbishop of Canterbury), another contemplative Christian, saying exactly the same thing about "the two fundamental realities" at the core of our experience of being human: irreparable loss and inexhaustible love...

There are many others in the world of contemplative Christianity (Thomas Merton, Laurence Freeman) that share similar sentiments, so this new documentary film the Future of Christianity looks pretty interesting, it's a bold topic but I personally think that Christianity is the one tradition that is most open to unexpected shifts, unpredictable earthquakes and abrupt transformations, etc...

Cameron

what wonderful news ! i hope this means we get to see more of those entertaining clips of ken and marc playing off each other that we delighted in at integral naked ! and wow can't wait for the integral love project

(btw: can't we call him rabbi marc anymore ??)

- **Dee**

This is great news that Marc is being welcomed back to make this contribution. I am also impressed with the prudently patient yet ultimately compassionate embrace of Marc by Robb and Ken.

There is an untold story here that Marc himself has been too responsible and compassionate to make a lot of noise about.

Having gotten to know Marc in the ISC teacher community we have had the chance to hang out from time to time during the past two years. During this period Marc allowed me to review the massive background file that he has meticulously accumulated. I have spent a long time going through it. It documents in great detail what transpired and the explosion of clearly untrue and slanderous allegations regarding Marc that have been repeatedly made.

This is not to say that Marc did not make some mistakes; he has gone through a long process of soul searching and integrating the lessons of some bad judgment. On the other hand the web blogging mania that has gone wild, and the dark side of feminine victimology that has raised its ugly head is a case study that is fascinating, and would have been tragic if Marc had not have been resilient enough to incubate spiritually and now emerge a stronger and more profound person and teacher.

I don't mean to over do it here. I would merely note that I admire Marc all the more for his decision not to counter attack, but rather to allow the truth to emerge gently and carefully over time even as he begins to share his even greater depth with the world.

John Kesler

I was overjoyed to hear of Rabbi Gafni's return to the Integral community conversation. He has been my teacher and inspiration for the past several years, and I've missed his contribution to ISC's important explorations and articulations.

Like John Kesler, I too have had the opportunity to learn more about what Marc has endured and I'll be looking forward to the "integral feminist" response to the irresponsible paths that Marc's accusers chose and I must echo John's admiration for Marc's "prudent patience" through all this.

Theologian Morton Kelsey once described the church as "not a museum for saints, but a hospital for sinners." I think this stands as a reasonable aim for ISC as well. We all misstep in our on-going efforts to bring Spirit to light and Light to soul, but if we can't respond to each other with love, forgiveness and renewal then we are not really functioning as the manifestations of Spirit that we aspire to.

My gratitude to Ken and Robb along with my admiration for Marc for taking this step together. We are all the better for it.

John Forman