

Marc Gafni

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Marc Gafni (born Marc Winiarz) is an American author and spiritual teacher.^{[1][2][3]} A former Modern Orthodox rabbi,^[1] Gafni now self-identifies as a practitioner of world spirituality based on integral principles.^[4] He has been accused of sexual assault by multiple women, and admitted to a sexual relationships with a 14-year-old girl.^[5] He was also accused of molesting a 13-year-old girl over a period of nine months.^[6]

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Biography

Gafni, also known as Mordechai Gafni, was born in 1960^[5] to Holocaust survivors in Pittsfield, Massachusetts.^[3] Gafni was educated at Modern-Orthodox yeshivas in the New York area. In the 1980s, while attending Yeshiva University,^[3] Gafni worked with Jewish Public School Youth, an organization providing Jewish social clubs in public schools.^[7] In 1988, Gafni also worked as a rabbi in Boca Raton, Florida.^[1] After making aliyah Gafni served as rabbi of the West Bank settlement of Tzofim.^[8] When Gafni moved to Israel he hebraicized his name. "Winiarz," Polish for "vintner," is related to the Hebrew word "gefen" for grape, thus the name "Gafni." Gafni has three children from previous marriages^[3] and one child with Mariana Caplan.^{[9][10]}

Marc Gafni



Marc Gafni in Rome

Born	Marc Winiarz 1960 (age 55–56) Pittsfield, Massachusetts
Nationality	American
Other names	Mordechai Gafni, Mark Gafni, Mordechai Winiarz, Mordechai Winyarz
Website	http://www.marcgafni.com/

Teachings and prominent works

Gafni's teachings are often described as integral or world spirituality, incorporating traditional religious studies to contemporary themes, and are aimed at spirituality for people who do not identify with one specific religion.^{[3][11]} Gafni describes himself and his students as “dual citizens” of both their native traditional religion and the broader themes of "world spirituality".^{[3][12]} He advocates a new set of teachings around eros, sexuality and relationships in his book *Mystery of Love* and CD set *Erotic and the Holy*.^{[13][14]} At the core of his world spirituality message is what Gafni refers to as the "unique self, the idea that every human being has a unique story that needs to be lived".^[15]

In 2010, Gafni and the mother of his son Zion, Mariana Caplan,^[9] founded the Center for World Spirituality.^[16] That year, Gafni and Ken Wilber founded a Wisdom Council to envision a world spirituality based on Integral Principles.^[17] The Wisdom Council is part of the Center for World Spirituality and includes members such as Gafni, Wilber, Tony Robbins, Deepak Chopra, Warren Farrell, Lori Galperin, Sally Kempton and other leaders.^[18] The co-chair of Center for World Spirituality is Whole Foods CEO John Mackey.^[19]

Gafni was a Scholar in Residence at the Integral Institute, and the Director of the Integral Spiritual Experience, but left after the 2011 allegations of his sexual impropriety.^[20]

Writing

Gafni is the author of eight books on spirituality and religion, including the 2001 *Soul Prints*.^[2] *Soul Prints* included an introduction by Israeli poet Admiel Kosman and won the Napra Award for best Spirituality Book of 2001. Marc Gafni's second English-language book, *The Mystery of Love*, was later converted to an audio lecture series called *The Erotic and the Holy*, published by Sounds True. He also co-authored *Who is Afraid of Lilith? Rereading the Kabbalah of the Feminine Shadow* with Ohad Ezrachi.^[21] He wrote *Radical Kabbalah*, a two-volume work published by Integral Publishers in 2012.^[22] In 2012, he published *Your Unique Self: The Radical Path to Personal Enlightenment* with a foreword written by Wilber.^[23] It won the 2012 USA Best Spirituality Book of the Year award from USA Book News.

Television and speaking

While in Israel, Gafni hosted *Tahat Gafno* ("under his vine"), a television program broadcast on Israel's Channel 2.^{[3][24]} Gafni also did a series of weekly television spots with Israeli comedian Gil Kopatch on biblical wisdom for every day life.^[25] Gafni also appeared in a series of spiritual public service announcements on Israeli television in the wake of several terrorist attacks.^[26]

In 2008, Gafni spoke with the Dalai Lama about the perception of love.^{[2][24][27]} In 2010 Gafni did a series with Chopra entitled *Love and Evolution*.^[28] In 2013, Gafni and Eben Pagan founded an event called "Actualize: The Source Code of Success".^[29]

Education

Gafni majored in philosophy as an undergraduate.^[3] He claims to hold rabbinic certification from the Chief Rabbinate of Israel,^[4] but Gafni has since returned his *semikhah* to "spare his former teacher any further embarrassment".^[1]

Sexual assault claims

Gafni has been accused of sexual assault multiple times, both privately and publicly, dating back to the 1980s when he lived in the United States.^{[1][5][7][30][31]} In 2006, after he had moved to Israel, Gafni was accused by three women who attended the *Bayit Hadash* ("new home") spiritual center in Jaffa, which Gafni opened in the late 1990s. There was a formal police investigation, which was made public.^[8] Gafni responded by acknowledging relationships with some of the women.^[7] However, he characterized the relationships as consensual and bolstered his claim by posting polygraph results on his website.^{[2][32]} Because of the allegations and because Gafni fled the country to avoid prosecution,^{[11][33]} he was dismissed from *Bayit Hadash*,^[34] which closed within days.^[35] Back in the United States, Gafni sent a remorseful letter to his congregation saying he regretted his actions.^{[34][36]} Gafni later claimed the letter was not an admission of fault or guilt but an attempt to cool the controversy.^[37]

Gafni was the subject of new allegations of sexual misconduct in 2011.^[20] Integral Life, one of Gafni's promoters, announced they were deleting his contributions from their website and distancing themselves from him.^[20] Tami Simon, CEO of Sounds True, canceled her planned publication of Gafni's book, *Your Unique Self*, and issued a statement denouncing him.^[38] The board of directors of the Center for World Spirituality, an organization co-founded by Gafni and of which he is CEO, issued a statement of "unequivocal support" for Gafni, and Farrell also expressed his support.^[39] Wilber initially separated from Gafni,^[40] but the two eventually reconciled and Wilber rejoined Gafni at the Center for World Spirituality.^[41] *Your Unique Self* was ultimately published by Integral Publishers.^[42] Gafni said that he was a victim of "pseudofeminist witch hunts", invoking a phrase from Alan Dershowitz's *Sexual McCarthyism*.^[5]

In January 2016, an unnamed woman who wrote that she was married to Gafni from 1999 to 2004 published an opinion piece in *The Times of Israel* in response to a *New York Times* article about Gafni the preceding week.^[5] She cataloged what she described as her "story of abuse" and wrote that she had gone public, albeit anonymously, to "Protect some girl. Protect some woman. Some student. Some unsuspecting soul."^[43] Within two weeks, Sara Kabakov wrote in *The Forward* that she had been abused by Gafni in the early 1980s, beginning when she was thirteen years old.^[44]

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External links

- Marc Gafni's personal web site (<http://www.marcgafni.com/>)

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