

## **Racism, on-going systemic oppression, white fragility and the pandemic.**

### **Background statement & resources for psychotherapists from the Equality, Diversity and Intersectionality Committee of HIPC.**

The EDI Committee and Steering Committee of HIPC are appalled by the recent killings of black people by those in positions of power in the United States. We offer our condolences to the bereaved families and friends. We also are appalled to read of the excess mortality in the Black, Asian and Ethnic Minority (BAME) communities during the current covid-19 pandemic as a result, at least in part, of systemic oppression, social deprivation and inherent structural discrimination. Such events bring back to the surface historical oppression and transgenerational traumas with the associated feelings of rage, anger, sadness, grief and shame. These circumstances need to be understood and the on-going discrimination challenged. We are saddened by all covid-19 related deaths and offer our heartfelt sympathies to those who have lost loved ones. We wish to support psychotherapists with resources to help deepen our understanding of these complex matters.

The oppression of one people by another has its roots in antiquity and was practiced by the ancient Greeks and Egyptians amongst others. Slavic people in particular were taken into servitude giving rise to the word 'Slaves'. Slavery was adopted by the Portuguese in 1442 and other European imperial powers followed, especially the Dutch and British, in order to supply slave labour to their colonies. After the slave trade was abolished imperial powers routinely exploited the countries they colonised seeking cheap labour and monopoly markets creating cultures of oppressors and the oppressed. Often this created a hierarchy in which superiority and inferiority was created along racial lines.

There is no biological basis for notions of race or racial superiority. The notion of race is a social construct created by slave traders to placate the feelings of guilt of those involved. It has been used over the centuries to create the ideology of white, mainly Anglo-Saxon, superiority in relation to others positioned as inferior. Once established by brute force, those in power have continued to promote this ideology by overt and covert methods to maintain the power differential. The effects of this out-dated and iniquitous ideology continues as structural and systemic discrimination shaping our behaviour today. The 'oppressed and the oppressor' are caught up in this systemic dance not knowing how to extricate themselves from these intergenerationally assigned roles, which also operate as

internalised oppression. The recent brutal and overt killing of George Floyd by a police officer highlights the extent to which the lives of black people are routinely discounted by those in positions of power on a regular basis.

The current covid-19 pandemic has revealed a significant excess mortality amongst the non-white population and this excess is accounted for, at least in part, by the poverty, internal oppression and social disadvantage resulting from systemic oppression. Groups that have been historically discriminated against, including our Chinese community, have been at the receiving end of increased levels of racism during the pandemic, making it harder to cope with the threat to health posed by the virus.

The Equality, Diversity and Intersectionality Committee of the Humanistic and Integrative Psychotherapy College seeks to raise awareness of the inequalities created by conscious and sub-conscious biases and prejudices which are embedded in our cultures. We also wish to raise awareness of the prevalence of sub-conscious white privilege and the challenge of raising this in the light of white fragility. Such fragility can emerge when the prevailing white privileged world view is challenged and begins to crumble giving rise to emotional responses such as anger, fear, shame and guilt which constrains constructive discussion. These issues are likely to appear increasingly within psychotherapy.

We would also encourage training organisations to create a safe space for trainees where the impact of the recent pandemic and the social events could be named, explored, discussed and support offered. It's imperative for the recent events to be discussed within a relational framework so that the 'us and them' splits are not recreated in this process.

The impact of these social and systemic events will have profound effects on the BAME students and their engagement in the training programme. We would encourage the training organisations to offer the appropriate support needed by the trainees. The intention behind all of these support activities should be to work together to build a more inclusive future.

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10<sup>th</sup> June 2020

Below is a compilation of supportive resources and organisations that have been drawn to our attention. It is not an exhaustive list. We acknowledge and appreciate PCSR for their work in circulating a list of resources on examining whiteness which we have referenced here and we hope these and our own additions will be helpful for your discussions and considerations.

### **Psychotherapists and Counsellors for Social Responsibility**

<http://www.pcsr.org.uk/>

### **Organisations focussing on the experience of Therapists of Colour**

<https://www.baatn.org.uk/>

<https://www.aashna.uk/>

<https://www.mcapn.co.uk/>

### **Webinars, podcasts and articles**

Witnessing the wound. 28 min video by Eugene Ellis, BAATN.

<https://vimeo.com/262194819>

Seeing White – explorations of White Supremacy 14 radio broadcasts

<https://www.sceneonradio.org/episode-45-transformation-seeing-white-part-14/>

‘White counsellors don’t understand’: Why BME students don’t get the help they need at uni <https://thetab.com/uk/2019/09/11/white-counsellors-dont-understand-why-bme-students-are-rejecting-mental-health-support-at-uni-124427>

What does it mean to be white in a society that proclaims race meaningless?

Robin DiAngelo

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=A-pZH-S4jk>

What’s Missing From “White Fragility” <https://slate.com/human-interest/2019/09/white-fragility-robin-diangelo-workshop.html>

Whiteness on the couch. Natasha Stovall

<https://longreads.com/2019/08/12/whiteness-on-the-couch/>

**Muhammad Ali with Michael Parkinson on Whiteness:**

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7eXdt1eGgCA>

**Society's portrayal of race and Racism in cinema**

<https://www.psychosisofwhiteness.com/watch>

**Post-Slavery Syndrome: Exploring the Clinical Impact of the Trans-Atlantic Slave Trade:**

<https://www.confer.uk.com/post-slavery-syndrome.html>

**Documentaries on Race, discrimination & privilege:**

<https://www.docplay.com/articles/10-documentaries-to-watch-about-race-instead-of-asking-a-person-of-colour-to-explain-things-for-you/?fbclid=IwAR0Xzlm>

**Recent relevant books**

<i>Me and White Supremacy: Combat Racism, Change the World, and Become a Good Ancestor</i>	Layla F.Saad	2020
<i>The Racial Healing Handbook</i>	Anneliese A. Singh	2019
<i>On Privilege, Fraudulence, and Teaching as Learning</i>	Peggy McIntosh	2019
<i>How to be an antiracist</i>	Ibram X. Kendi	2019
<i>Dying of Whiteness</i>	Jonathan M. Metzl	2019
<i>White Privilege Unmasked: how to be part of the solution</i>	Judy Ryde	2019
<i>BRIT (ish): On Race, Identity and Belonging</i>	Afua Hirsch	2018
<i>White Fragility: why it's so hard for white people to talk about racism</i>	Robin DiAngelo	2018
<i>Natives: race and class in the ruins of empire</i>	Akala	2018
<i>So you want to talk about race –</i>	Ijeoma Oluo	2018
<i>My Grandmother's Hands: Racialized Trauma and the Pathways to Mending our Hearts and Bodies</i>	Resmaa Menakem	2017
<i>Why I'm no longer talking to white people about race</i>	Reni Eddo Lodge	2017
<i>Race in Psychoanalysis</i>	Celia Brickman	2017
<i>Inglorious Empire: What the British did to India</i>	Shashi Tharoor	2017
<i>Black and British: A forgotten History –</i>	David Olusoga	2017
<i>The Challenge of Racism in Therapeutic Practice</i>	Isha McKenzie-Mavinga	2016
<i>When We Ruled: The Ancient and Medieval History of Black Civilisations –</i>	Robin Walker, Fari Supiya	2014
<i>The Blood Never Dried: A People's History of the British Empire –</i>	John Newsinger	2013
<i>Dear White America: Letter to a new minority</i>	Tim Wise	2012
<i>I Know Why the Caged Bird Sings –</i>	Maya Angelou	2010
<i>Black Issues in The Therapeutic Process</i>	Isha McKenzie-Mavinga	2009
<i>Being White in the Helping Professions</i>	Judy Ryde	2009

## **Covid Related Resources:**

Surviving racism amidst COVID-19:

[medium.com/@yinthelane/surviving-racism-amidst-covid-19-8b18473c3675](https://medium.com/@yinthelane/surviving-racism-amidst-covid-19-8b18473c3675)

Up to date information on protective measures; the Refugee Council are calling on the government to protect refugees and those seeking asylum from the risks linked to COVID-19: [www.refugeecouncil.org.uk/latest/news/changes-to-home-office-asylum-resettlement-policy-and-practice-in-response-to-covid-19/](http://www.refugeecouncil.org.uk/latest/news/changes-to-home-office-asylum-resettlement-policy-and-practice-in-response-to-covid-19/)

LGBT Foundation helpline: 0345 3 30 30 30 (see coronavirus updates: [lgbt.foundation/coronavirus](http://lgbt.foundation/coronavirus))

Support for LGBTQ+: [www.stonewall.org.uk/about-us/news/covid-19-%E2%80%93-how-lgbt-inclusive-organisations-can-help](http://www.stonewall.org.uk/about-us/news/covid-19-%E2%80%93-how-lgbt-inclusive-organisations-can-help) and [metrocharity.org.uk/](http://metrocharity.org.uk/)

COVID-19 information in various languages: [www.uhs.nhs.uk/PatientsAndVisitors/Patients-with-additional-needs/Interpreters-and-translated-information/COVID-19-information-in-different-languages.aspx](http://www.uhs.nhs.uk/PatientsAndVisitors/Patients-with-additional-needs/Interpreters-and-translated-information/COVID-19-information-in-different-languages.aspx) and [www.gov.uk/government/publications/covid-19-guidance-on-social-distancing-and-for-vulnerable-people](http://www.gov.uk/government/publications/covid-19-guidance-on-social-distancing-and-for-vulnerable-people)

[www.doctorsoftheworld.org.uk/coronavirus-information/](http://www.doctorsoftheworld.org.uk/coronavirus-information/) (includes resources in 49 different languages)

<https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-52922046>