

UKCP forum October 2023

Divine Charura introduced the topic of the future of psychotherapy in an earlier forum this year. I am grateful to him for that.

As I consider this question, I wonder whether psychotherapy indeed *has* a future, and if so, for who? Is it just a comfortable profession for the (mostly) white middle class?

Psychotherapy works in quite an isolated way. It tends to not be inter-disciplinary. Helen Morgan speaks to this in her excellent book *The Work of Whiteness*¹. We are quite arrogant and are not showing ourselves to be open to getting up to speed on the vital societal and global issues of the day.

As long as psychotherapists aren't familiar with the cultural (including racial) issues that affect their clients of colour, there is a safe-guarding issue. These clients aren't safe. These therapists are dangerous.

It is self-evident that one cannot be well in a society that is unwell. If we continue to work towards individual wellness without the wider lens of the collective in which we live, our healing will be at best superficial and patchy. This is a failing in our stated ethical commitment.

Perhaps I should add that white people have a vital piece of work to do regarding their own somatic holding of ancestral harm that hasn't yet been recognized and acknowledged in their ancestry.

I would suggest each training institute has a tutor supervisor² who can advise on creating an anti-racist culture in the training institute and in student formation. There is an institute in London³ that is doing this and their work is seismically different to that of other training institutes I'm aware of. There may be a need for an advocacy person in each institute to advocate for and support trainees of colour. The training experience can be harmful to trainees of colour who may be the only person of colour in their year group. I don't have the confidence that training institutes – including my own – are yet able to provide the support needed. Again, this is a safe-guarding issue.

I have suggested to my professional association that it be mandatory to do a CPD training regularly regarding racial justice – in the same way that regular safeguarding training is mandatory. I'm not sure whether this is being considered.

It is necessary that the profession works urgently towards therapists of colour feeling safe and affirmed in our training, as clients and as future therapists. In the meantime the Black, African and Asian Therapy Network is a fantastic space and resource – and may they continue to thrive.

¹ *The Work of Whiteness: A Psychoanalytic Perspective*.

² Someone who advises the staff.

³ HOMA. [This](#) is a link to a recent exhibition of student work - Year 2 Anti-racism In Action Race, Power & Privilege Art Exhibition

In conclusion, I would argue that there is not a future for psychotherapy. For it to have a future would mean a total rethink. We are not a profession that has shown ourselves open and responsive to our times.