

## **IGA Statement in Solidarity with Black Lives Matter**

'It is hard to face this. But all our phrasing – race relations, racial chasm, racial justice, racial profiling, white privilege, even white supremacy – serves to obscure that racism is a visceral experience...You must always remember that the sociology, the history, the graphs, the charts, the regressions all land, with great violence, upon the body.'

(Ta-Nehisi Coates, *Between the World and Me*, 2015)

We find ourselves at a moment in time when racial inequalities are at the forefront of our minds. In the UK and around the world we witness the brutal reality of how accumulative disadvantages inherent within and underpinned by structural racism throughout all our systems can have severe, even lethal consequences. One way in which we see this is in the disproportionate way black and brown people are vulnerable to contagion and death by COVID-19. This virus particularly attacks the respiratory system restricting the capacity to breathe.

We share the pain, trauma and sickening horror of witnessing the modern day lynching of George Floyd on 25<sup>th</sup> May in Minneapolis. George Floyd's death follows a long list of similar killings of black and brown men, women and children by law enforcement agents and vigilantes in the USA. We have witnessed the communication 'I can't breathe,' with the devastation of such cries going unheard too many times. These violent events are now captured on film as they happen and swiftly circulated around the world. As a result, we are all too familiar with the repetitive trauma of seeing black and brown bodies dehumanised and torn asunder. However, institutionalised and systemic racism and violence cannot be located solely in the USA. We are able to reflect and recognise the clear and present parallels within the UK and Europe. Heightened awareness impels us to maintain momentum and face the reality of pervasive and embedded structural racism and inequalities closer to home. These are keenly reflected in our criminal justice system and the recent rise of fascism and racist hate crimes.

Our profession offers us a clear theoretical framework to explain and understand how the racist abuse and discrimination witnessed today is in fact a continuation of centuries of trauma. This has been perpetuated generationally since the beginning of slavery and imperialism with present day re-enactments painfully alerting us that we remain a long way from reparation. As outraged as we are by the situation, we are also mobilised.

We will work to ensure the tools of our profession are adequately employed to address racial inequities, starting with our own organisational culture, trainings and consulting rooms. This is the responsibility of us all and not solely members and trainees of Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic (BAME) heritage. We consider it the responsibility of our white colleagues throughout the group analytic communities to respect, listen to and learn from BAME colleagues' and patient's lived experiences of racism. We are well aware that this is easier said than done. Our intention is to work together, challenging ourselves to achieve a cultural shift whereby the shadow of racism is taken up. We also wish to respond to

BAME colleagues' repetitive experiences whereby parallel processes involving racist dynamics and tropes emerge in the various group matrixes of the institution. The result is often that BAME colleagues leave these scenarios feeling re-traumatised, carrying the full burden of exclusion and erasure, often in isolation.

By implication we will address the practice of privileging Whiteness, recognising how its pervasiveness runs the risk of leaving BAME colleagues feeling suffocated. Importantly, we recognise the direct relationship between establishing a reflective and enquiring culture around inter-racial dynamics and our ability to provide effective therapy to a diverse population.

We believe the IGA has the potential to offer much to the public, wider analytic psychotherapy communities, and social institutions in relation to understanding and working with racism. We do not feel our potential in this regard has been realised. Therefore, we aim to collaborate with other analytic psychotherapy organisations and to raise our profile externally. In turn we expect to be culturally enriched by these inter relationships.

The National Diversity Power, Position and Privilege Working Group (PPP) has been actively engaged since November 2018 in working towards a culture of increased inclusivity. We have a strong membership committed to internal systemic change and responding to social political dynamics played out in the wider world. This group is currently responding to the increased momentum driven by recent events. We are committed in engaging in anti-racist practice now and in the future.

Within the next two weeks, we will publish an issue of the IGA News, which will describe the actions we are going to take to achieve the progress described above. Some of the actions are either already in development or have been halted because of social distancing measures but may not be known to all colleagues.

In the meantime, whether you are an IGA member, trainee or member of staff, we will value your contribution to our developments. Similarly, if you have concerns or require support, please contact IGA members who have a lead role in regard to anti- discrimination and racism. They are:

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