

Notes on the Open Letter on Jung and “Africans”, published in the *British Journal of Psychotherapy* in November 2018

PPI is publishing, as a news item, an Open Letter (OL) published in the *British Journal of Psychotherapy* (BJP) in November 2018. The reason for having approached the BJP with the OL is described in the letter (see below).

The immediate history of what has become the OL is that, in the final session of the Analysis and Activism conference sponsored by the International Association for Analytical Psychology (IAAP) conference in Rome in December 2015, it was proposed and unanimously supported that a statement be issued by the IAAP in connection with Jung's writings on “race.” The IAAP Officers were all in attendance at the conference and it was agreed that a statement be drafted. This was then edited and added to by the IAAP Executive Committee so as to produce a final proposed version. This was tabled at the IAAP Congress in Kyoto in 2016. After considerable intense and fractious discussion, the IAAP decided in February 2018 that it was not the time to issue such a statement.

Of course, there is a longer history. The possibility of such a statement was raised by me at the Delegates' Meeting at the 2007 IAAP Congress in Cape Town, South Africa, but there was no response in the meeting. Some significant milestones are apparent in the Selected Bibliography of Works Consulted that can be seen below. For example, Polly Young-Eisendrath's 1987 paper on “The Absence of Black Americans as Jungian Analysts”; Farhad Dalal's 1988 paper “Jung: A Racist,” which is still the most frequently downloaded paper from the *British Journal of Psychotherapy*; and Fanny Brewster's 2013 paper “Wheel of Fire: The African American Dreamer and Cultural Consciousness.”

The OL is signed by a diverse and international group of prominent Jungian analysts, clinicians and academics. It was not intended to be a mass petition and the signatories' names emerged from discussion. The signatories are adamant that the intention is not to blame Jung or to “apologise” for him. Instead, the group takes responsibility onto themselves as they openly acknowledge the problems in a public setting.

Nor is the OL to be regarded as a criticism of the IAAP, which has set up a Working Party on diversity as a direct result of the concerns being raised. In addition, IAAP is reviewing its ethical and other constitutional documents with “race” and diversity in mind.

The question has been raised as to why the focus is on persons of African heritage and only passing mention is made of other populations of colour and Indigenous peoples. The reason is that it was felt that such a focus was precisely what was needed. The writers remembered that, previously, there had been a focus on Jewish people. When Jung's alleged anti-Semitism was under discussion, there was little or no mention of other groups to which he might have had a prejudicial attitude—nor of what the Jungian communities might do about it. Of course, as the current term “intersectionality” implies, all prejudice and discrimination against specified groups of people is, at some level, to be linked.

What Jung wrote about “Africans” and “American Negroes” has disturbed or concerned many readers and commentators. He has little positive to say and this contrasts with elements of his writings on Native Americans, Chinese, Indians and Jews.

For those who are unfamiliar with the concerns, here are a few instances. They are presented here not to make a point or series of points and in the fullest recognition that context is not provided, but because this author's

experience is that some outside and even inside the Jungian world do not know what the aforementioned concern is about. The selection—necessarily incomplete for reasons of space—is no more than a general orientation.

In 1921 Jung wrote:

Powell said, "The confusion of confusions is that universal habit of savagery—the confusion of the objective with the subjective". Spencer and Gillan observed: "What a savage experiences during a dream is just as real to him as what he sees when he is awake". What I myself have seen of the psychology of the Negro completely endorses these findings. (Jung, 1923/1960, CW6, para. 46)

An incident in the life of a bushman may illustrate what I mean. A bushman had a little son whom he loved with the tender monkey-love characteristic of primitives. Psychologically, this love is completely auto erotic, that is to say the subject loves himself in the object. The object serves as a sort of erotic mirror. One day the bushman came home in a rage; he had been fishing as usual, and caught nothing. As usual the little fellow came to meet him, but his father seized hold of him and wrung his neck on the spot. Afterwards, of course, he mourned for the dead child with the same unthinking abandon that had brought about his death. (Jung, 1923/1960, CW6, para. 403)

In 1927, Jung noted:

The expression of religious feeling, the revival meetings, the Holy Rollers, and other abnormalities [of American life and culture] are strongly influenced by the Negro, and the famous American naivete, in its charming as well as its more unpleasant form, invites comparison with the childlikeness of the Negro. (Jung, 1928/1964b, CW10, para. 95)

The vivacity of the average American which shows itself . . . in his extraordinary love of talking—the ceaseless gabble of American papers is an eloquent example of this—is scarcely to be derived from his Germanic forefathers, but is far more like the chattering of a Negro village. (Jung, 1928/1964b, CW10, para. 95)

Even today, the European, however highly developed, cannot live with impunity among the negroes [sic] of Africa; their psychology goes into him unnoticed and unconsciously he becomes a negro. There is no fighting against it. In Africa there is a well-known technical expression for this: "going black." It is no mere snobbery that the English should consider anyone born in the colonies, even though the best blood may run in his veins, "slightly inferior." There are facts to support this view. (Jung, 1928/1964a, CW10, para. 249)

From 1930:

Some states are particularly black, a fact that may astonish the naive European, who thinks of America as a white nation. It is not wholly white if you please, but piebald. It cannot be helped, it just is so. What is more contagious than to live side by side with a rather primitive people? Go to Africa and see what happens. When it is so obvious that you stumble over it, you call it going black. (Jung, 1930/1964c, CW10, para. 962)

He [the Black] reminds us—or not so much our conscious as our unconscious mind—not only of childhood but of our prehistory, which would take us back not more than twelve hundred years so far as the Germanic races are concerned. (Jung, 1930/1964c, CW10, para. 962)

And in 1935:

The child is born with a definite brain, and the brain of an English child will not work like that of the Australian black fellow but in the way of the modern English person. (Jung, 1968/1986c, CW18, para. 84)

In the collective unconscious you are the same as a man of another race, you have the same archetypes, just as you have, like him, eyes, a heart, a liver, and so on. It does not matter that his skin is black. It matters to a certain extent, sure enough—he probably has a whole historical layer less than you. The different strata of the mind correspond to the history of the races. (Jung, 1968/1986c, CW18, para. 93)

We often discover with Americans that they are tremendously unconscious of themselves. Sometimes they suddenly grow aware of themselves, and then you get these interesting stories of decent young girls eloping with Chinamen or with Negroes, because in the American that primitive layer, which with us is a bit difficult, with them is decidedly disagreeable, as it is much lower down. (Jung, 1968/1986c, CW18, para. 341)

Then in 1939:

*I have not been led by any kind of wisdom; I have been led by dreams, like any primitive. I am ashamed to say so, but I am as primitive as any n*****, because I do not know! (Jung, 1961/1986b, CW18, para. 674)*

There is a footnote from the editors of the Collected Works appended to the word “n*****”: “the offensive term was not invariably derogatory in earlier British and Continental usage, and definitely not in this case” (CW18, p. 286, Note 10).

The next two extracts are taken from *Memories, Dreams, Reflections* (Jung, 1963):

All in all, Negroes proved to be excellent judges of character. One of their avenues to insight lay in their talent for mimicry. They could imitate with astounding accuracy the manner of expression, the gestures, the gaits of people, thus, to all intents and purposes, slipping into their skins. I found their understanding of the emotional nature of others altogether surprising. (p. 288)

General laughter arose; capering, they scattered in all directions and vanished into the night. For a long time we heard their jovial howls and drumming in the distance. (p. 301)

This last extract was not written by Jung, but by Otto Rank in a review of Jung's lecture “Report on America” given at the Second International Psychoanalytic Congress in 1910 in Nuremberg:

Lecturer described a number of impressions he had gained on two journeys in North America. The psychological peculiarities of the Americans exhibit features that would be accessible to psychoanalysis, since they point to intense sexual repression. The reasons for repression are to be sought in the specifically American complex, namely living together with the lower races, more particularly the negroes. Living together with the barbarous races has a suggestive effect on the laboriously subjugated instincts of the white race and drags it down. Hence strongly developed defensive measures are necessary, which manifest themselves in the particular aspects of American culture. (cited in Jung, 1986a, CW18, para. 1284)

In conclusion, I would like to discuss responses mostly but not all from within the Jungian world to statements such as those listed above. It has been objected that it is unreasonable and ahistorical to castigate Jung who was “just a man of his time.” What he wrote was typical for back then in the 1920s or before. This may be a valid point. Nevertheless, it is by no means entirely beyond scholarly debate that Jung was “just” a man of his time. The racial hierarchy and the European cultural and civilizational superiority that appear in Jung's writings on “Africans” was widespread but not universal.

Just to give one example: the esteemed anthropologist Paul Radin was very critical of what Jung wrote about Africans. As we know, Radin was a colleague of Jung's, taught at the Jung Institute, and invited Jung to write a response to his work on the Trickster. He was a “Jungian.”

In 1927 Radin published a remarkable book, *Primitive Man as Philosopher*. It was republished in Radin, 2017 when the furore over whether or not the IAAP should issue a statement was at its height. Although the use of the word

“primitive” has been thoroughly dissected in many places, I find it interesting in this context—twinned with the rather different sounding word “philosopher.”

Radin zeroed in on the well-known passage above that Jung wrote in “Psychological Types” about the bushman hunter. This passage of Jung’s was first published in 1921 and remained intact through many revised editions culminating in its final publications in the *Gesammelte Werke* in 1961 and in the *Collected Works* in 1971. I find myself wondering why the Editors of the *Collected Works* did nothing about it, because they added explanatory notes in other equally problematic instances.

Radin wrote (in 1927) of the passage concerning the bushman hunter:

No greater distortion of the facts could possibly be imagined. And yet Dr Jung obtained this example from what purported to be a first-hand account . . . [It] illustrates the unconscious bias that lies at the bottom of our judgement of primitive mentality, the unconscious assumption of the lack of differentiation and integration to be found there. . . . That an example like the one used by Jung should in all good faith be given as representative of the normal or even the abnormal reaction of a primitive man to a given emotional situation, shows the depth of ignorance that still exists on this subject. (Radin, 1927/2017, p. 39)

Back to Jung. Of course, he knew Radin and his work well and it is probable that Jung was aware of Radin’s criticism of his writing. In addition to Paul Radin, one should also consider Jung’s exposure to the anthropologist Franz Boas, whose distinction between race and culture was already well known before the First World War. Jung cited Boas in various writings.

In his paper at the Clark University conference of 1909, with both Jung and Freud in attendance, Boas made it clear that there was no “justification for [racial] hierarchies” (quoted in Shamdasani, 2003, p. 277). According to Sonu Shamdasani, Boas also spoke against the idea that European civilisation represented the peak towards which other races and cultures were developing (Shamdasani, 2003, pp. 277–278). There is more in Shamdasani’s book pointing in the same direction.

On balance, though, I agree that calling Jung “racist” and leaving it there is, indeed, simplistic. It is not the way for us to go. And the signatories to the OL took responsibility for their own lack of action. But, equally, merely calling Jung “just a man of his time” may also be too quick and easy.

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Open letter from a group of Jungians on the question of Jung's writings on and theories about "Africans"

Dear Editor,

Thirty years ago, the *British Journal of Psychotherapy* (*BJP*) published a paper by Dr. Farhad Dalal entitled "Jung: A Racist" (Dalal, 1988). Regrettably, no adequate acknowledgement or apology for what Jung wrote, and Dalal critiqued, has been forthcoming from the field of analytical psychology and Jungian analysis. [To contextualise what follows, the abstract to Dalal's paper has been placed in an Appendix to this letter].

We write now as a group of individuals—Jungian analysts, clinicians, and academics utilising concepts from analytical psychology—to end the silence. We felt further encouraged to write to the *BJP* in particular because of the Journal's strapline making clear its interest in "Jungian practice today."

Via detailed scholarship, Dalal set out what Jung wrote about persons of African and South Asian Indian heritage, as well as other populations of colour, and Indigenous peoples. Before and since the paper, Jung's views have caused

considerable disquiet and often anger within the communities concerned. There has also been disquiet and anger about Jung's views in clinical, academic and cultural circles generally. Analytical psychologists and other Jungians have known about the implications of Jung's ideas for decades; there are signatories to this letter who have campaigned for recognition of the problems. But there has been a failure to address them responsibly, seriously, and in public.

We share the concern that Jung's colonial and racist ideas—sometimes explicit and sometimes implied—have led to inner harm (for example, internalised inferiority and self-abnegation) and outer harm (such as interpersonal and social consequences) for the groups, communities and individuals mentioned in the previous paragraph. Moreover, in the opinion of the signatories to this letter, these ideas have also led to aspects of *de facto* institutional and structural racism being present in Jungian organisations.

The intellectual and cultural environment of late 19th and early 20th century psychology promoted many colonial and racist attitudes. Jung's largely uncritical embrace of these attitudes led him to conclude that he was justified in constructing a hierarchy in which people of African heritage were alleged to “lack a layer” of “mind” that white Europeans possessed, and thus were “primitive” in their emotional and psychological functioning. In addition, he also failed to listen to warnings from within his circle that his views were problematic.

We doubt that any contemporary clinicians and academics in the Jungian and post-Jungian community would endorse these ideas now, but the absence of an open distancing from Jung on these questions has allowed for some implicit biases in Jung's work to remain perpetuated: unexamined and unchallenged. For example, the use of skin colour as symbolic of both “race” and certain psychological traits. Failure to acknowledge and apologise for these offensive attitudes, and their potential harm and confusion, is also not in keeping with the spirit and ethos of people who, like us, currently participate in Jungian and post-Jungian communities that support and value diversity, gender equality, social justice, political activism, and respect for differences in populations, cultures, religions, and sexual orientations. Some of the publications in these areas are listed at the end of the letter.

We want, moreover, to recruit more students, clinicians and scholars of colour to study, train, conduct research, and contribute to analytical psychology, developing and actualising a more refined attitude towards human differences than the one we have inherited, or may now have.

And so, our statements here are not so much to chastise Jung as to take responsibility ourselves for the harm that has ensued in these 30 years in which little has been done to rectify Jung's errors. We deeply regret our role in having taken so long to issue a statement like this. We realise that it has been extremely difficult for persons of African descent, and other populations that have been similarly maligned, to contemplate entering either Jungian training and treatment, or becoming a Jungian analyst. Whilst it is true that people of colour are underrepresented in the psychotherapies generally, the social data suggest that, where comparisons can and have been made, the problem is even more marked within the Jungian clinical communities.

In light of this, we call on all involved in analytical psychology, including ourselves, to accept and insist on new obligations: to accept responsibility for correcting and changing theories that harm people of colour, to apologise for actual harm and discrimination, and to find new ways to keep analytical psychology engaged with communities and colleagues of colour. We call on all involved in Jungian training, treatment, and scholarship, to increase attention in their programmes to in-depth study of clinical, social and cultural matters that relate to bias, prejudice, diversity, and transcultural or intercultural perspectives and knowledge.

We recognise that, collectively, to reach these goals will require engagement in dialogue, reflection, and change within our Jungian communities. We hope our colleagues, throughout the Jungian world, recognise and welcome our good intentions. We also seek conversations with individuals and institutions who are prepared to assist us in our efforts to make the changes that are now necessary.

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APPENDIX—ABSTRACT OF DALAL (1988)

Dalal, F. (1988). Jung: A Racist. *British Journal of Psychotherapy*, 4(3), 263–279.

The paper examines Jung's perception of the non-European. It is argued that his perception of black people is racist and that these same views permeate the entire fabric of Jung's psychological theory. Further, that these views are woven into the theoretical foundations of two major Jungian concepts: the Collective Unconscious and Individuation. Finally, the paper examines the consequences of these theories as perceived by Jung, in terms of the possibilities or otherwise of people of different races living together.

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