

# The International Association for Transactional Analysis: Social Engagement Committee

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[Correction added on 13 January 2021, after online publication: Abstract has been included in this version.]

### Abstract

This brief contribution introduces the work of the Social Engagement Committee of the International Association for Transactional Analysis and its current members.

## 1 | INTRODUCTION

The International Transactional Analysis Association (ITAA) has grown into a vibrant multi-organizational and international network of bodies. From origins in the United States, we now have many national and continental member bodies. The ITAA recently established a social engagement committee to help the organization move forward institutionally, academically, and professionally with integrating social, political, and cultural thinking into transactional analysis. Transactional analysts are interested in the relevance of a social psychiatry, which is applicable in the field of psychotherapy, as well as other social psychologies such as counselling, education, and organizational consultancy. Being immersed in transactional analysis within professional fields means that the wider collective frame remains important. However, like many of the psychological frames, social and political context has sometimes been 'in addition to' rather than at the core of how we think, what we teach, and how we practice. At the core of transactional analysis is the transaction: the stimulus and response in our living with each other. Engaging the membership with a social and political perspective is intended to mean engaging in a number of activities. By way of introduction, the members of the social engagement committee offer their motivation for joining.

## 2 | DIANE SALTERS: CHAIR, CAPE TOWN, SOUTH AFRICA

The creation of this committee is important to me because I believe it links transactional analysis more fully to its radical and social roots. Although Eric Berne became politically cautious after his experiences during the McCarthy period, his theory and practice were rooted in a deep conviction that the world could be a place in which more people became empowered and fulfilled. Transactional analysis was developed as a social psychology intended to understand and heal both our personal and social ills.

Growing up in apartheid South Africa and fighting the system that privileged me as a white woman, as well as other people of my race, gave rise to my sensitivity to systemic injustice and oppression; both how it shapes our world and our internal frames of reference. I look forward to this committee developing conversations that provoke and stimulate deeper awareness in all of us about power and exploitation – of people and planet – and the role that we, as transactional analysts, can play in building a healthier and more harmonious world.

### 3 | SASHI CHANDRAN, NITYA GURUKULA, INDIA

I was drawn by the inclusive global vision of the ITAA social engagement committee. Our founder, Eric Berne, talked of hope for individuals to change and be liberated. However, to move beyond individual autonomy requires a paradigm shift in our transactional analysis community. I believe the time has come for us to make this quantum leap for holistic, non-polarized health and wellness, individually, professionally, and socially. While engaging with my fellow members, I attempt to practice non-violence individually and collectively through my institute. Operationally, autonomy in social and global arenas is a challenge for transactional analysts. More than attending to 'how to's', the focus, I believe, needs to be a shared world vision, wherein we transcend to a Self-Other-Environment balance, while retaining our vital cores.

### 4 | VICTORIA BASKERVILLE, UNITED KINGDOM

The forming of the social engagement committee comes at a time when there is deep crisis and unrest in the world. A time when we are called, as transactional analysts, to look out into the world and take action congruent with our values, informed by the declaration of human rights.

I believe the role of the social engagement committee is to be active and rigorous in keeping in touch with what is going on in the world; to be informed and current; to be politically and socially aware; to challenge the construction of theory, the curriculum, and the way we practice; to consider who we invite into training, how we invite, reflecting on unconscious bias, white privilege; and offering an intersectional and anti-discriminatory lens across all we do.

I grew up in a northern working-class town in Britain. I am white, identify as British, and have a middle-class lifestyle, though still have my roots and values, in northern and working-class culture. I came to East London as a community artist, later becoming a teacher and support worker for refugees. I came to transactional analysis as a client, following questioning my sexuality and holding the tension of a heteronormative lens.

I feel the time has come to integrate political activism and community values with self as transactional analyst. I joined the social engagement committee as I am passionate about how we can pioneer social justice themes into our practice as transactional analysts. For me, our role is to walk the talk.

### 5 | GUNTHER MOHR, FRANKFURT, GERMANY

As an economist and psychologist, I pay attention to different perspectives of human life. I work as a training and supervising transactional analyst in organizational consultancy and I am engaged in the German Green Party as member of a town parliament.

The social engagement committee gives a platform to consider and deal with the need for equality and solidarity of people. The nowadays world, on the one hand, reveals the importance of connectedness of all human beings by the coronavirus; and, on the other hand, it shows accelerated conflict and nationalistic policies. The ITAA is an umbrella which supports coming together of people regardless of superficial characteristics. In concrete, this means being aware for any discrimination or racist attitudes and behaviors and confronting it from the point of view of a community which is based on ok-ok-relations and radical respect.

From being born in German–French border region, my ancestors have suffered from the every 30-year war between German parts and France in history. The main background of my political engagement is the 'never again'; that, in relevant parts of German society, was elaborated as an answer of our looking that deep into the evil possibilities of human soul.

## 6 | WATARU SUEMATSU, JAPAN

The launch of the social engagement committee has made me take a step forward as a transactional analyst and a community psychologist. I perceive that the wisdom within practices in every field of transactional analysis and community empowerment are required in modern society. I hope the committee will deepen transactional theories and practices, inspire them into the problem-solutions in the current society and realize 'I'm OK, You're OK, They're OK' in the world.

## 7 | KAREN MINIKIN, UNITED KINGDOM

I have been politically engaged since living in Birmingham, United Kingdom, during the 1970s, where my teenage years and early activism were inspired by reggae, ska, two-tone music, and the anti-Nazi league. The latter was a counter movement to the rise of the National Front in the United Kingdom – a far right political party, dominated by legitimizing racism in its proposed policies. Earlier in my life (mid-1960s to 1970s), I lived in Nigeria, where my father taught at the University of Ibadan. My father is from the Punjab region of northwest India and Pakistan, so my personal embodied and lived experience is essentially post-colonial. I find I am still working with what this has meant to my being, philosophy, and premise for psychotherapy, as well as my ongoing engagement in politics and social responsibility. Professionally, I have taken a special interest in power dynamics and how that informs our institutional constructs, curriculum, as well as conscious and unconscious processes in clinical practice.

## 8 | FINALLY

Our international committee is in its early days of formation. Together, we bring good representation of diversity of nations and personal experiences. We hope our work will be an ongoing reminder of how critical it is for psychological work to remain relevant across the world. Without a sense of engagement, social responsibility and the values inherent in that, systems and processes are at risk of becoming oppressive and destructive if they are fueled by unchecked power and entitlements. In our different ways, we seek to monitor this and look for ways that can inspire our membership to think and work in ways that remain true to our values and philosophical premises.

## AUTHOR BIOGRAPHY



**Diane Salters** has been involved with transactional analysis since 1976. She is a certified psychotherapist, trainer, and supervisor in transactional analysis. She met Claude Steiner on many occasions, experienced his workshops and conference presentations, and served with him on the International Transactional Analysis Association's (ITAA) Board of Trustees in the 1990s. More recently she served as ITAA president for 4 years. She currently lives in Cape Town but her work online extends to many continents.

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