

The Need to Increase Diversity in Jungian Communities: A Personal Journey

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What does increasing diversity in the Jungian Society for Scholarly Studies (JSSS) mean? I once thought that it meant increasing the number of members who are people of color. But then why is effort required to attract people of color into Jungian organizations?

I am a person of color, and I found Jungian ideas about the creative unconscious as they manifested in my dreams and life to be psychologically freeing and enabling. I did not need to be recruited.

Reading Philip Cushman's *Constructing the Self, Constructing America: A Cultural History of Psychotherapy* helped me understand why. Cushman's explanation of Hans Georg Gadamer's metaphorical concept of cultures as clearings provided a framework for rethinking what increasing diversity might mean. As I understand Cushman's explanation, Gadamer compares the creation of a culture to clearing a forested land. In this metaphor, the forest represents the worlds of unseen possibilities of how to be human; and the clearing, through the particular selections humans make at a particular time in a particular place, becomes a particular culture with its specific possibilities of what might be seen, thought, and done. Just as being in a physical clearing allows one to see and do what is possible within that space, a culture allows those living within it to see and do what is possible within that cultural space. Just as a physical clearing allows one to see the horizons and only as far as the horizons, historically situated cultures have horizons that mark the limit, exclude what else can be seen, thought, and done (Cushman 20–21). This concept of the cultural clearing led me to understand the grounded limitations inherent in the fact that Jung and his thinking arose from his cultural experiences living from 1875–1961 as a white, Christian, bourgeois, European male. Beyond the horizons of those particularities lay other cultural clearings. Increasing diversity could mean expanding the clearing to reveal other cultural clearings, other possibilities of being human, other psychological landscapes, beyond the Jungian and post-Jungian horizons.

I was able (with significant reservations, particularly with regard to his writings about women's psyche) to benefit from Jung's understanding of psyche because I shared two of the aspects of his cultural clearing—receiving a Christian education and being bourgeois. Raised Catholic, I internalized a sense of personal responsibility for my individual behavior. As a bourgeois American person living in the latter half of the twentieth century, I shared what Cushman calls the “tradition of self-contained individualism” (245) into which Jung's ideas of individuation as a maturation process fit like hand in glove. As an economically bourgeois person, I had bought into a cultural clearing where relations to the world were conceived in terms of commodities. What I had to offer was my labor as a commodity. Academia's acceptance of my skills meant that my physical means of survival were secure, so I could literally afford to address personal problems through the intrapsychic work of professional analysis, also part of a commodity culture. In addition, because my assimilationist parents had pragmatically sacrificed their

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first language, Spanish, and given me English as my language, I was able to assimilate into the dominant culture.

I discovered the underside of American history through living in America, first through realizing that America's war in Vietnam was imperialist, next through taking in white supremacist beatings of nonresistant Civil Rights advocates in the 1960s, and then through discovering women of like mind seeking human rights as women's rights in the 1970s. I became an activist for human rights, trying always to understand what could contribute to "liberty and justice for all," the phrase I had internalized through repeating it daily as a young child at the beginning of class in the Pledge of Allegiance.

Seeking to weave together integration of races and feminist consciousness, I undertook trying to increase the racial diversity of the National Women's Studies Association. As a representative of the Women of Color Caucus, I proposed a Women of Color Leadership Program consisting of members inviting women of color colleagues to the yearly conference, with their registration fees to be paid by the organization. Some version of that program continues today, over fifteen years later. A few years ago, I tried to transfer a non-gendered version of that idea to the JSSS where the results were minimal. The first year, one woman of color and one white male high school teacher were invited and attended.

Meanwhile, Jungian communities had begun to deal with the racism in Jung's ideas, partially sparked by an article by Farhad Dalal, "The Racism of Jung" (1988). Helen Morgan and Jane Johnson present an excellent summary of these early efforts, referencing *The Multicultural Imagination: "Race," Color, and the Unconscious* (1996) by Michael Vannoy Adams, "Cultural Complexes in Analysis" (2010) by Thomas Singer and Catherine Kaplinsky, "Wheel of Fire: The African American Dreamer and Cultural Unconsciousness" (2013) by Fanny Brewster, and *Phantom Narratives: The Unseen Contributions of Culture to Psyche* (2014) by Samuel Kimbles. These insightful and path-opening works have not to my knowledge identified how sharing bourgeois culture, particularly its dependence upon economic security and its prizing of individualism, makes possible benefiting from a Jungian understanding of psyche.

Understanding how my bourgeois, individualistic life meshed with Jung's intrapsychic healing approach led me to consider that the reason so few people of color belong to the JSSS and other Jungian organizations could well lie in the cultural limits of Jungian and post-Jungian thought itself. Although Jung and the JSSS's mission statement affirm that understanding psyche requires taking account of "everything that the psyche actually contains" (*CW* 7, par. 201), the cultural clearing of Jung's thought did not in fact include psychological experiences of all groups, certainly not those of the culturally oppressed. It is true that his awareness of shadow did enable him to see the rapaciousness of colonialism. In *Memories, Dreams, Reflections*, he writes:

What we from our point of view call colonization, missions to the heathen, spread of civilization, etc., has another face—the face of a bird of prey seeking with cruel intentness for distant quarry—a face worthy of a race of pirates and highwaymen. All the eagles and other predatory creatures that adorn our coats of arms seem to me apt psychological representatives of our true nature (248–49).

This recognition of a shadow aspect of colonial culture is not the same as understanding the psychological experiences of the colonized.

His travels, suggesting openness to other cultures, were not in fact motivated by curiosity about how cultural differences cause specific contents in psyche. He confessed he experienced Africa and America superficially as a tourist (Bair 427). The cultural differences he encountered in India, particularly a different way of conceptualizing and experiencing good and evil, at first confounded him, but he retreated into his Christian European understanding (Bair 427-30). His motives for visiting these foreign cultures was motivated by his desire to discover universals that could confirm his hypothesis of a collective cultural unconscious. His intent was not to grasp how cultural contexts create specific experiences of psychological meaning.¹

I had long thought that ignorance is a form of unconsciousness people can address by seeking knowledge. Attempting to recognize and include the psychological experiences of groups suffering oppressions such as racism appeared to me as a way to integrate diversity into the JSSS conceptually. I discovered that thinkers before me had had a similar sense of this need. Brewster's article notes a lacuna in American Jungian writing as regards the African American experience: "[there is an] invisibility of African Americans and their culture in the recorded history of American Jungian psychoanalysis" (76).

I set out to learn about psychological experiences of groups I do not belong to. As an American raised on the version of the American dream of a society seeking liberty and justice for all, therefore irrepressibly troubled by my country's history of imperialism and slavery, I focused on peoples indigenous to America and on African Americans. Obviously, access to their psychological experiences requires consulting their renditions of them. To begin that learning, I chose *Braiding Sweetgrass* by Robin Wall Kimmerer and *Four Hundred Souls* edited by Ibram X. Kendi and Keisha N. Blaine.

Kimmerer's account of her Potawatomi heritage conveys a cultural clearing that excludes relating to the world as a commodity. Instead, her indigenous culture experiences the world in a clearing of a "gift economy." She tries to explain the difference between a capitalist, private-property economy and a gift economy through a homely example of socks:

The pair of wool socks that I buy at the store, red and gray striped, are warm and cozy. . . . But I have no inherent obligation to those socks as a commodity, as private property. There is no bond beyond the politely exchanged "thank yous" [sic] with the clerk. I have paid for them and our reciprocity ended the minute I handed her the money. . . . They become my property. I don't write a thank-you note to JC Penny.

But what if those very same socks, red and gray striped, were knitted by my grandmother and given to me as a gift? That changes everything. A gift creates ongoing relationship. I will write a thank-you note. I will take good care of them. . . . As the scholar and writer Lewis Hyde notes, "It is the cardinal difference between gift and commodity exchange that a gift establishes a feeling-bond (26)

Kimmerer concludes:

From the viewpoint of a private property economy, the "gift" is deemed to be "free" because we obtain it free of charge, at no cost. But in the gift

economy, gifts are not free. The essence of the gift is that it creates a set of relationships. The currency of a gift economy is at its root, reciprocity. In Western thinking, private land is understood to be a “bundle of rights,” whereas in a gift economy property has a “bundle of responsibilities” attached. (28)

This concept of reciprocity, the inherent call of a gift to the caring responsibility of a feeling relationship, is beyond the horizon of Jung’s cultural clearing. He writes of the intentions in those giving a gift, not the reciprocity ignited in those receiving one. For Jung, gifts issue as an unconscious manipulation of the ego for a return. Reciprocity, instead of being a feeling relationship of caring for one another as in a gift economy, becomes an unconscious ego expectation of a return on investment. He writes that the only way to escape a gift’s being an unconscious way to get something in return is to give the gift “as if it were being destroyed” (*CW* 11, par. 390).

Unsurprisingly, efforts by the capitalist American culture to assimilate the indigenous peoples has consisted of pressuring them to relinquish their understanding of their relationship to their lands as gifts requiring reciprocal care from them as a community and instead to assume a relationship of private, individual ownership (Kimmerer 18–19). The Jungian profession offering mental health treatment as a commodity to be paid for has been assimilated into the capitalist economy, thereby excluding the psychological experiences of indigenous peoples raised to experience the world as a gift exciting gratitude and requiring reciprocal care from them.

The Potawatomi seek to resuscitate their collective psychological identity by periodic gatherings of the nine remaining bands in the land where the way pecan trees survive by uniting in their timing of when to produce nuts for regenerating taught their ancestors the necessity of “standing together for the benefit of all”—taught them that “all flourishing is mutual” (21). This relationship to the earth sees nonhuman life symbolically teaching groups of people how to live, a contrast with framing the symbolic in terms of a human individual’s intrapsychic life. Jung himself acknowledged his prioritizing of the individual: “my whole life work is based on the psychology of the individual, and his responsibility both to himself and his milieu. Mass movements swallow individuals wholesale, and an individual who thus loses his identity has lost his soul” (qtd. in Brewster 78).² Jung’s seeing only the soul-destroying possibility of group identity fails to include the psychological experiences of the soul-enabling aspects of group identity.

These aspects are central to the experiences of African Americans in Kendi and Blaine’s *Four Hundred Souls: A Community History of African America, 1619–2019*. This history is written by eighty authors, in itself an attempt to integrate diversity of viewpoint and experience and to share interpretive authority. The eighty authors include: “historians, journalists, activists, philosophers, novelists, political analysts, lawyers, anthropologists, curators, theologians, sociologists, essayists, economists, educators, poets, . . . cultural critics,” all Black people of various genders, sexualities, ages, and skin colors who are “descendants of enslaved people in the United States” (xv). Each writer was assigned a five-year period from which to identify an event or person significant to the history of African American people in America; that is, each writer was tasked with giving voice to five “souls.” As the book title indicates, each year of African life in America is imaged as a collective “soul.”

This collective experience of “soul” is all the more amazing given that Africans brought to America came from different cultures and shared neither language nor religion. What they shared, according to co-editor Ibram X. Kendi, was being constructed as a “them” by racist power, a series of constructions that he says African Americans “reconstructed, turning *Them* into *we*, defending the Black American community to defend all the individuals in the community. *Them* became *we* to allow *I* to become *me*” (xvii).

The term “soul” and the concept of individual identity are central in Jungian and post-Jungian thought. In *Four Hundred Souls* they are expressed in a context describing psychological experiences quite other than those Jung describes. Soul, psyche as conceived by the Greeks and appropriated by Jung to refer to individual inner life, is here conceived as collective suffering of racist constructions robbing individuals of “I” and “me.” People perceived as iterations of a race rather than as human individuals were constructed as animals to be worked and bred for the benefit of white masters and economies. Kendi claims that these people reconstructed themselves so that their individual identities could be experienced. Pursuing Jung’s idea of individuation as a primary psychological purpose depends first in this context on a people’s *resistance* to being seen only in terms of race. Jungian thought does not affirm group resistance of oppressive social constructions. Jung certainly does not frame individuation as dependent upon resisting racist constructions. His view assumes the superiority of white, European culture over that of indigenous peoples, so he never imagines the collective struggle of enslaved people against racist, colonial constructions as necessary to achieve the identity of an individual self. That cultural reality exists beyond the horizons of his cultural clearing.

After reading these two books with an eye toward what has been excluded in Jungian thought, I turned to James Hillman’s “Notes on White Supremacy” for a version of post-Jungian thought. Jung sought psychologically structural universals. He sought repetitions of psychological patterns in different cultures and called the ones he found archetypes. Hillman applies Jung’s method by ranging through many cultures’ privileging of whiteness as supreme, thereby concluding that white supremacy is archetypal. Hillman argues that acknowledging this root of racism allows for a therapy seeking the shadow of each form of white supremacy. Since whiteness projects its shadow on darkness or blackness, its opposite, Hillman opposes (ironically) oppositional thinking as the way to “move beyond” white supremacy:

[Alchemy’s] way of resolving oppositional thinking is *not* by a balancing admixture of both, *not* by a golden mean between them and *not* by a transcendent third beyond them; but by desubstantiating the principle of opposition itself. . . . If inherent to white is supremacy and if supremacy maintains itself by denying shadow, then it is “only natural” to white consciousness to think and feel in opposites, to take them as ontologically fundamental, that is, literally. . . . Give up the opposites, and you can move beyond white supremacy. (50)

What I wish to point out in this passage is Hillman’s familiar move to psychologize experience and demean the “literal.” The suffering of oppressed peoples, e.g., the removal from their lands of the indigenous peoples and the ongoing Jim Crow suppressions of African Americans, has been literal. That suffering cannot be alleviated with a shift in epistemological habits. Hillman’s resistance to addressing the literal level of suffering of

oppressed groups is based, I believe, on his vision of the intrinsic coincidence of good and evil. He writes, “Let us define evil not as the absence of good (*privatio boni*) but the very presence of good, in all ways and forever, inextricably coincident” (39). Hillman’s claim that evil is “the very presence of good . . . inextricably coincident” makes pursuit of the good willy-nilly also a pursuit of evil. This vision of evil “in all ways and forever” concomitant with any manifestation of “good” undermines ethical justification for group resistance to social inequities. It literally demoralizes efforts to transform unjust conditions. In this way, his perspective supports the status quo of a culture’s power relations.

Hillman’s commitment to psychologizing literal reality is most evident in his challenge to the Jungian understanding of pathology as illness to be cured. Hillman contends that pathology is a condition enabling vision, not one requiring healing. In *Revisioning Psychology*, he writes,

I am introducing the term *pathologizing* to mean the psyche’s autonomous ability to create illness, morbidity, disorder, abnormality, and suffering in any aspect of its behavior and to experience and imagine life through this deformed and afflicted perspective. . . .

Were we able to discover its psychological necessity, pathologizing would no longer be wrong or right, but merely necessary, involving purposes which we have misperceived and values which must present themselves necessarily in a distorted form. (57)

Hillman argues that understanding psyche requires no longer asking whether a content is right or wrong, but instead seeing through its perspective. He writes, for example, regarding individual complexes: “Our complexes are not only wounds that hurt and mouths that tell our myths, but also eyes that see what the normal and healthy parts cannot envision” (*Revisioning* 106). The purpose of such seeing is to deepen soul. Hillman’s perspective, when applied to pathological unconscious cultural forces undergirding social injustices such as racism, omits the purpose and hope of transformation. In fact, as the above passage illustrates, Hillman ascribes pathology not to external forces such as societies’ legitimizing owning people or removing them from their lands, but to psyche itself, its “autonomous ability to create illness.” What oppressed people would want to embrace such a paralyzing psychologizing of their literal lives?

Fortunately, healing individual psychological pathologies and ameliorating pathological, unjust social relations can be done. In my lifetime, limited transformation has occurred even in what is perhaps the most intractable site of American societal injustice, legitimized practices of white supremacy. The changes that have occurred have emerged from the many forms of African-American resistance since the abolition of slavery. Decades of systemic racism— Ku Klux Klan violence, destruction of Black communities as in Tulsa, sharecropping, convict labor, segregation, miscegenation laws, underfunded schools, bank redlining, lynchings, police violence, and denial of the right to vote—have spurred ongoing resistance.

A key development in this history occurred when Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. introduced Mahatma Gandhi’s method of nonviolent resistance into the American Civil Rights Movement. His adapting Gandhi’s method forced the ferocious pathology of white supremacy into public awareness as television brought the bloody mayhem wrought upon seekers of equal rights for African Americans to the general American public. As Aniko

Bodroghkozy's book-length study shows, we viewers from the comfort of our living rooms watched unresisting people beaten viciously, then dragged to jail instead of to a hospital. We Americans congratulating ourselves on being color-blind were faced with how our unconsciousness of racist oppressions in our country made us unintentionally complicit. That realization worked a consciousness jujitsu in many non-African Americans, leading us actively to join African Americans in seeking racial justice. Many joined African Americans in mass marches to state capitals, lunch counter sit-in's, economic boycotts, and, of course, voter registration drives.

The seismic shift in collective consciousness brought about by televised scenes of the violence enforcing white supremacy prepared the psychological ground for the passing of the civil rights legislation in 1964 that ended legal segregation in the United States, a culmination of the Supreme Court's acknowledgment in *Brown v. Board of Education* that segregation is inherently inequitable.

Inarguably, some evolutionary progress in lessening American racial injustice subsequently occurred. Ending segregation enabled greater participation of African Americans in public, prestigious roles—television personalities, actors and actresses, sports heroes, authors, professors, attorneys, doctors, mayors, legislators, judges, supreme court justices, military generals, Chair of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, United States Attorney General, Secretary of State, even Vice President and President of the United States. This public participation gave the lie to racist constructions of African Americans as less able, even less human. Of course these increases in access to equal rights for African Americans do not address many forms of Jim Crow oppression still operating, the ongoing white supremacist efforts to take away African American voting rights, or the legacy of centuries of unjust treatment. The pursuit of racial justice in America is far from over. But some transformation has already occurred, proving that meaningful pursuit of justice and incremental transformation of injustice are possible.

Hillman's treating pathology as a way of seeing excludes the possibility of healing the pathology, a morally crippling choice. Why should students of psyche not seek psychological knowledge of pathologies driving collectives such as white supremacists that could enable healing? That effort would require seeking understanding of unconscious forces at work in the psychology of white supremacists. But even before that knowledge could be used to seek ways to transform white supremacist pathology, Jungian and post-Jungian students of psyche would need to have a fuller understanding of the psychological experiences of oppressed people. Otherwise attempts to transform white supremacy, as Hillman's proposed solutions demonstrate, emerge from the psychological landscape of a culturally-privileged consciousness. Hillman was profoundly influenced by the legacy of ancient Greek culture, including its explorations of how we know. This culturally-influenced interest underlay his using Jung's method of searching for archetypes, resulting in his claim that white supremacy is archetypal. It led to his proposed solution for moving beyond white supremacy through abandoning a form of knowing—oppositional thinking. My guess is that quite other solutions would arise from understanding the psychological perspectives emanating from the lives of oppressed peoples, solutions including questioning the collective mental health of people embracing a commodity economy that has been willing to use human beings and natural resources, even land and water, as commodities.

I am currently thinking that increasing diversity in the JSSS needs to mean examining ways Jungian and post-Jungian approaches to the study and conceptualizing of psyche exclude and fail to understand “all that the psyche contains.” I am suggesting that increasing diversity requires that members of Jungian communities actively seek understanding of experiences of people suffering oppression. As even my beginning efforts toward this goal reveal, Jungian and post-Jungian thought fail: 1) to address the role of culture in creating psychological landscapes; 2) to recognize the positive value of resistance and group identity in the realization of oppressed peoples; and 3) to appreciate and address the causal role of literal unjust conditions in psychological suffering.

I am asking our Jungian communities to consider whether increasing diversity means opening to cultural clearings existing beyond Jung’s founding, individual-oriented psychological landscape. If that is the meaning and we seek it, moving the horizons to include the psychological experiences of groups such as the Potawatomi and African Americans will extend Jungian understanding of the human psyche. This path invites Jungian communities to become more diverse through becoming more conceptually inclusive. If followed, it may enable Jungian and post-Jungian students of psyche to imagine and generate processes helping heal the pathology of white supremacy.

Contributor

Inez Martinez, Ph.D., applying understanding garnered from Jungian and post-Jungian thought, tries through study of imaginative literature and cultural histories to fathom collective psychology in ways that might further our human dream of realizing more just societies. She writes in various genres— essays, fiction, drama, poetry.

Notes

¹ See Brewster’s critique of Jung’s use of a dream by an African American patient to confirm his belief that archetypes in the collective unconscious are “nonracial” (p. 70).

² Brewster cites R. F. C. Hull and William McGuire, eds., *C.G. Jung Speaking: Interviews and Encounters*, Princeton UP, 1977.

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