

Mentally stimulating and emotionally exhausting

SAPI Annual Conference February 2021

by *Teboho Monyamane*

End-February's first online SAPI Conference was bitter-sweet. This time last year we were together at Ububele, none the wiser about the year ahead or that all our group activities would move online.

It was bitter not being in the same room. Sweet to still be together, joined by colleagues from other provinces, countries and continents who would otherwise not be able to attend.

The goal of the 2021 Conference was to examine hatred and its relationship to deeper unconscious forces and impulses, the impact these have on our individual lives, our clinical work and our broader social relations.

Ntshediseng Tlooko set the tone with a moving preamble in which she described a public health system that seems to hate both the clinic patient and the health professional. This situation is not newly created by the Covid-19 pandemic. It is only exacerbated by it.

The centre which could barely hold is definitely not holding now. There is rage and hatred in both patient and healthcare worker, both of whom depend on the system. Each feels at the mercy of the other. These dynamics are at the forefront of the Covid-19 pandemic. They are also present in our collective history.

First keynote speaker Kathleen White's paper, "Surviving Hating and Being Hated", which inspired the Conference theme, focused on three faces of hate: being hated, hating the self and hating the other. Kathleen used personal accounts and clinical vignettes to paint a vivid picture of hate's facets: being the object of toxic attributions and projections, internalising these attributions and projections and re-externalising them in hating the other.

It does not feel good to hate or to be hated, she warned, but pretending hatred doesn't exist makes hate dangerous.

Second keynote speaker Wilhelm Verwoerd gave a personal account in which he presented two images. In the one, a colour family photograph, his grandfather, Hendrik Verwoerd, who is commonly regarded as the architect of apartheid, holds a baby (Wilhelm) and feeds him milk from a bottle.

In the next image, a painting, the loving paternal figure is juxtaposed as a killer. In Ronald Harris' 1962 *The Black Christ*

CONTINUED OVERLEAF

CONTENTS

PAGE 1 & 2: Teboho Monyamane: **Mentally stimulating and emotionally exhausting: SAPI Annual Conference February 2021;** Mary-Anne Smith: **Celebrating awards and authors**

PAGE 3 & 4: Zanele Mokolutlo: **Exploring the countertransference in a home visit with a teenage mum;** Thandiwe Khumalo: **The challenges and impacts of home visiting**

PAGE 5: Chloe White, Zikethiwe Ngcobo and Rose Palmer: **1001 Days: A feature documentary looking for partners**

PAGE 6: Esther Chunga: **On *Becoming***

PAGE 7: Keketso Mopeli-Tshehla and Lesego Ndhlovu: **One droplet one child**

PAGE 8: Teboho Monyamane: **Tackling race issues to break the pattern of repetition;** Charity Mkone: **Reflections on Fakhry Davids' lecture;** Yvette Esprey: **Reflections on Fakhry's lecture and Charity's words**

PAGE 9: Deborah Ashdown, Cathy Rogers and Andy Cohen: **For anyone interested in the creative process of living**



Celebrating awards and authors

by *Mary-Anne Smith*

As we continue our journey in the development of our psychoanalytic community the landscape is marked by change, trauma, progress, celebrations and conversations. In 2020, the year of Covid-19, we transitioned to an online world. A year later we find that we have somewhat adjusted to this new normal and continue to find ways to understand and adapt to the pandemic.

Our community continues to thrive and excel. SAPA was awarded the prestigious International Psychoanalytical Association's (IPA) Sigourney Award. This honour is recognition of SAPA's ground-breaking contribution to the development of psychoanalysis in South Africa. SAPA's courage and commitment to broadening

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There was no reprieve from the truth, from that which is difficult to face.

Hendrik Verwoerd is depicted as a Roman Centurion holding a spear to the Christ on the cross figure of chief Albert Luthuli.

I found the imagery very powerful, as did many in the virtual audience.

There is something chilling about the ordinariness of Wilhelm’s family portrait. The loving grandfather, tasked with soothing a niggly baby, is the same person who was integral to the advancement of the apartheid system which dehumanised, traumatised and destroyed.

Wilhelm spoke of his personal journey of learning to hate what Verwoerd represents and to unhate Oupa Hendrik, understanding his father’s hatred of his (Wilhelm’s) critique of apartheid and learning to unhate his grandmother and father in him.

Wilhelm gave a moving personal account of a deep battle of internal and external scrutiny, of facing truths that cannot be denied or hidden.

His account stirred up those of us who carry the scars of apartheid. Those whose families – as a direct consequence of apartheid – were deprived of what was depicted in the Verwoerd family portrait: grandparents, parents, children, brothers and sisters who can all be together.

The Conference helped us express and bear witness to the complexities of hating and being hated. In my view this largely happened through personal engagement and reflections. There was a lot of participation and many questions.

Some of us also expressed a desire to “move on”, to talk about something other than race, to have some reprieve from the reality that we are a long way from moving on from.

In anticipation of the difficult emotions that may come about the SAPI/SAPA Conferences Committee had offered a follow-up meeting which took place on Monday, 8 February, and had 23 participants. Conference attendees were also encouraged to join SAPI’s groups which discuss race issues monthly or to take their difficult feelings to their own therapies/analyses.

For me the conference was mentally stimulating and emotionally exhausting. Thus far my experience in SAPI conferences is exactly what Ntshediseng described in her preamble.

“[They are] not just about learning and thinking about psychoanalysis and sharing our ideas together as a group. The Conferences are also about truth seeking, about staying with that which is difficult and even unbearably difficult to face”.

This conference was no different. It was not a purely cerebral undertaking. It was also a deeply emotional one.

There was no reprieve from the truth, from that which is difficult to face. Many colleagues shared deeply personal reflections. They shared generously.

Of course there are many voices and many experiences. Hopefully there is space for all.

the scope of psychoanalytic thought and application is celebrated both here and internationally.

SAPA and SAPI take the trauma of our colonial history very seriously. We know new democracies face many battles with inequality, disparity and disruption. We focus on racism, class, violence and understanding the trauma of our past. We aspire to a responsive psychoanalysis that grows from within our context and community.

We celebrate Ububele as they received the IPA President’s Community Award for their Baby-Mat programme, just one of their many important contributions to the Alexandra community. ([IPA in the Community/Community awards 2020](#))

It is heartening and rewarding when the psychoanalytic ideas of our close colleagues and partners are recognised by the international community. We congratulate and salute Ububele, Katharine Frost, Tony Hamburger and their team for a richly deserved award and all their hard work and leadership in community-based applications of psychoanalytic thought.

Our scientific life has continued in an inspiring and ongoing way as is evidenced by our recent on-line SAPI conference: *Surviving Hate and Being Hated*. There are so many losses of the embodied experience in an online world. However, they are mitigated by the presence of diverse voices from across the country and abroad that enriches and adds texture.

The SAPI conferences are deeply committed to the ongoing journey of difficult conversations which are aided by the theoretical contributions. With the help of the Conferences Committee we come together as a community and pick up the difficult discussions and feelings about our social context and the impact on our internal worlds. We have no option but to face these thoughts and feelings, even though I am sure there are moments when we would rather not. We have to hold the paradox of the powerful and at times distressing experience of the feelings evoked while using our analytic minds so that we can think and make sense of our world: the challenge of being patient and analyst.

In these painful moments we are again reminded how psychoanalysis can assist us in listening more deeply to each other, collectively bearing the pain of our past and the things we cannot change, as well as the beginning of figuring out how to integrate that which we would prefer to project and reject.

We hope we achieve a good balance between theoretical rigour and an emotional aliveness to the lived experience of psychoanalysis. SAPI has ongoing Intergenerational Transfer of the Trauma of Apartheid (ITTA) groups where further opportunities to think and talk are provided in an ongoing way.

We proudly celebrate Mark Solms’ publication of his new book, *The Hidden Spring: A Journey to the Source of Consciousness*, and the important impact his work makes to psychoanalysis both here and globally. ([the-hidden-spring-by-mark-solms](#) and [a-brain-researcher-on-what-freud-got-right](#))

We congratulate Barnaby Barratt on winning the 2020 Theoretical book prize of the American Board and Academy of Psychoanalysis (ABAP) for his Routledge-published trilogy: *What is psychoanalysis? One hundred Years after Freud’s Secret Committee; Radical Psychoanalysis: An Essay on Free Associative Praxis; Beyond Psychotherapy: On Becoming a Radical Psychoanalyst*.

Exploring the countertransference in a home visit with a teen mum

by Zanele Mokolutlo

The Ububele Mother-Baby Home-Visiting Project is an intervention focused on strengthening the attachment between pregnant women and their babies. We visit mothers and babies in their homes, offering emotional support, marking positive interactions and reflecting on parenting.

What transpires in these visits is *intandane enhle ngumakhothwa ngunina* (recognising and realising female nurturing power). However, here I discuss how the home visitor's countertransference can interfere with these goals.

South Africa has a high teenage pregnancy rate. Fifty-three per cent of the mothers we see are still at school or school drop outs.

I use a case study of myself to discuss the challenges I experienced visiting a pregnant teenager while I have a teenage daughter myself, how I struggled to maintain a non-judgmental and supportive stance.

Home visitors give support to pregnant women and new mothers. If a mother understands what my role is I talk about the *umdlezane* period, a now-fading custom. I emphasise the importance of getting support right after birth, the benefits of a reflective space for mum and baby.

In this case I struggled because I felt anger and disappointment for being pregnant when I was a teenager, feelings that seemed new, that I never had to confront and explore before.

I was anxious thinking about visiting the young mum. In the second pre-birth visit I had overwhelming anger because she did not choose a better path. I felt not only anger, but also disappointment. As if she let me down by having children while she is still a child.

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Zanele Mokolutlo is a home visitor at the Ububele Educational and Psychotherapy Trust

The challenges and impacts of home-visiting

by Thandiwe Khumalo

The Ububele Mother-Baby Home-Visiting Project is a free service for mothers and babies. We start with visits in the last months of a pregnancy. We visit until the baby is three months old.

Home visitors are repositories of trauma, stress and loss for the families we visit. Some colleagues resign if the pressure of being a home visitor is too much for them. There are ongoing challenges that can have an impact on a home visitor's capacity to provide containment. Sometimes we are left feeling uncontained and helpless ourselves.

For instance, the effect of poverty is profound. Poor mothers cannot always see when their babies are distressed or unwell. Sometimes they cannot think of their babies as separate beings. They are preoccupied with their own struggle for survival.

Visiting a family that does not have access to running water and electricity and who have no food or clothes is a challenge. Seeing mothers using newspaper as nappies is hard. Mothers expect food parcels and funding. Having to explain visiting is not about food parcels and nappies is very hard.

It makes it almost impossible to win a mother's trust and build a relationship with her and her baby. Mothers suffering poverty are avoidant and drop out of the project. They feel they are not getting anything of value from us.

Our home visitor training brings up lots of personal issues. For example, right now I am thinking about my parenting skills. It brings up memories of my own parents and how deprivation

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Thandiwe Khumalo is a home visitor at Ububele

In our two visits when she was pregnant I felt drawn into a web of disappointed feelings. She shared with me her disappointment with herself. I found myself going deeper into a space filled with judgmental words and feelings.

At the time it was hard for both of us to allow ourselves to reflect on our roles: supportive figure and mother. At home my 17-year-old daughter faced her own teenhood turmoil. It felt as if I was dealing with three 17-year-olds: myself, my daughter and the pregnant teen I visited.

I noticed how she would lean forward in her chair, never touching her belly, pulling down her T-shirt as if to hide her belly. She never said in her own words she is embarrassed to touch her belly freely, but I sensed it.

We started the post-birth visiting sooner than expected after she gave birth to a tiny baby girl. Suddenly I did not have the time I hoped to have to process the difficult feelings I felt while she was pregnant.

Now I got the sense she could not allow herself to claim her new born baby like a mother would. I recognised that feeling: you cannot even say the words “my baby” in front of your parents because you’re afraid that they might think that you wanted to be a teen mom on purpose.

It was in the third post-visit that I allowed myself to explore all my anxieties since meeting her. I took myself back to when I was 17, pregnant and feeling barred from connecting with my baby because of the shame and disappointment I brought to my family.

These feelings were not just about her but about me. Things were hard for me then. I was not able to ask for support when I needed it most. Being with this young mother confronted me with my real experience. I was in a mix of my past and the now of home and work. It was hard to be a supportive figure for her.

I realised that I needed another mind. Through supervision I learnt to accept her influence on my unconscious feelings. That is when I came to understand that the countertransference is more than just a word. It was a whole web of feelings.

Understanding this, I could allow myself to dig deep, to wake up the 17-year-old in me without fear. The process helped me think of how I could help her connect with her baby. To see her baby not as a burden but a unique individual who wants to learn about this world through her mother. A baby who is bringing something special in her mom’s life.

My exploration – my working-through my countertransference – helped me understand and appreciate what the mum felt. And it allowed me to offer her and her baby a supportive space in a non-judgmental way.

SAPI NEWS LOOKS AT EARLY CHILDHOOD

Welcome to the fourth issue of SAPI News which shines a spotlight on early childhood needs and interventions.

In this edition Teboho Monyamane reports on our end-February Conference while Mary-Anne Smith highlights the awards and authors in our midst. Home visitors Zanele Mokolutlo and Thandi Khumalo write on what they learn from their work and Chloe White, Zikethiwe Ngcobo and Rose Palmer publicise their 1001 Days feature documentary on Zanele, Thandiwe and their colleagues. Esther Chunga, the new Ububele clinical director, tells us what it was like to be on the panel when the infant observation documentary *Becoming* by Andy Spitz launched and paediatricians Keketso Mopeli-Tshehla and Lesego Ndhlovu share about how one intervention at a time prevents infant malnutrition. Next Charity Mkone and Yvette Esprey discuss impressions they were left with following Fakhry Davids’ September 2020 lecture on Black Lives Matter. We conclude the newsletter with Cathy Rogers, Deborah Ashdown and Andy Cohen’s share on how psychoanalytic thinking and creativity come together in a conversation between senior analysts from the International Psychoanalytical Association (IPA) and artists from around the world.

was central in my upbringing, especially with regards to education. I learn such a lot here and it helps me with my parenting. I am happy to say today my children can use me as a safe space. My relationship with them is so much better.

Another challenging, impactful aspect of our work is ending our visits. The process of ending is sometimes good and at other times bad. Understanding the feelings that come with ending and no longer visiting mother and baby is not easy. Ending is all the more difficult with mothers you feel are not making a positive contribution in their own or their baby’s life.

Dealing with such mothers leaves me with a void. I feel I cannot do right. I get anxious when it is not possible to contain a mother or baby. I now know I need to understand which feelings are mine and which belong to the mum. I know I need to feel contained and understood to do this work.

At some endings I feel ready to let go. Especially when I find a mother is more sensitive towards her baby, when she can think about her baby. My endings with mothers who can use my help are good.

FROM WULF-VOLKER LINDNER, FOLLOWING THE 2021 SAPI CONFERENCE

Dear Sue and SAPI

I would like to thank you and the organisation committee for the excellent conference. Could you please pass on to those interested the following literature references on the question “How can psychoanalysis help to understand and change societies and their politics?”

1. *The Great Regression*, edited by Heinrich Geiselberger (June 2017).
2. Karin Johanna Zienert-Eilts, “Destructive populism as ‘perverted containing’: A psychoanalytical look at the attraction of Donald Trump”, *The International Journal of Psychoanalysis* 2020, 10, pp. 971-991.

The book *The Great Regression* is an international debate of distinguished social and cultural scientists who use psychoanalytic concepts to understand the mental situation of our time. It was published in 13 languages in 2017. Unfortunately, no psychoanalyst has participated in the debate so far.

The essay by Karin Zienert -Eilts, whose dissertation at the Humboldt University in Berlin I reviewed, stands out because it discusses the well-documented election campaigns and the interactions between Trump and his voters - the case material, so to speak - in a detailed way and raises general points about the psychoanalytical understanding of how politicians deal with resentment (individual and social).

Many thanks.
Sincerely
Wulf

* Wulf-Volker Lindner serves on the Liaison Committee of the International Psychoanalytical Association which helps establish psychoanalytical work in South Africa.

1001 Days: A feature documentary looking for partners

by *Chloe White, Zikethiwe Ngcobo and Rose Palmer*

1001 Days is a feature documentary which shows how Ububele's team of home visitors is helping new mothers in the first 1001 days of their babies' lives. The first 1001 days are the most critical developmental period in any human's life.

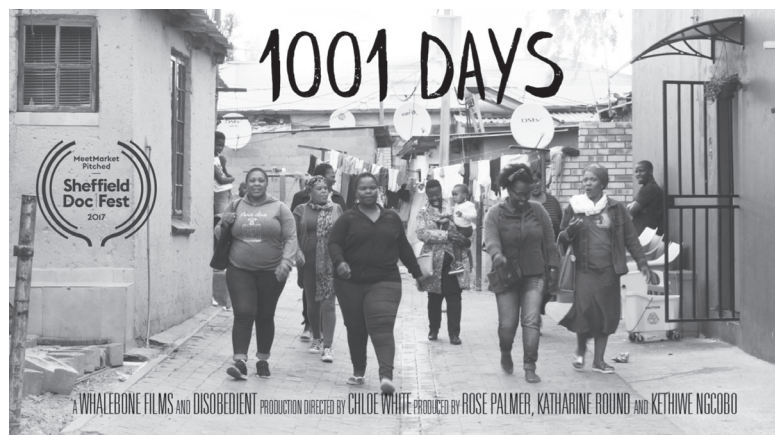
Decades of research show that in the first 1001 days the foundations of a baby's mind are being put in place. Early events and relationships in this period affect the brain in ways that have lifelong consequences.

Too many babies, especially those living in poorer countries, do not get the start in life they need. Focusing on food, water and security just isn't enough. It has been proved over and over again that supporting new mothers can help children achieve their potential.

1001 Days bring these ideas and evidence to life through the stories of home visitors and the mothers they visit. Over three years the film captures intimate conversations between home visitors Zanele Mokolutlo, Thandiwe Khumalo and Khosi Sithole and their reflections on these visits in supervision.

Moments of hope and small victories are followed by an invitation to Zanele and Thandiwe to speak at the World Association of Infant Mental Health conference. They leave South Africa and fly to Rome to present their work in front of an audience which includes world leaders in the field of early childhood development.

Having shot the film, we now are looking to build a network of individuals and groups who are focused on child development



Ububele's home visitors grace the poster of the documentary *1001 Days*. The film is directed by Chloe White and Zikethiwe Ngcobo and Rose Palmer are its producers.

and child and maternal mental health to help us in a crowdfunding campaign. The crowdfunding will raise funds to complete the editing of the film which is launching in April 2021. We need help to disseminate the film once it is completed. Offering to show the film for a fee to an audience of your choice will assist us most.

GET IN TOUCH

We'd love to work with you so, if you're interested, please get in touch and we can have a chat.

Please email rose@whalebonefilms.com

Visit: www.1001daysmovie.com

Who are we?

by *Chloe White, Zikethiwe Ngcobo and Rose Palmer*

We are an all-female team based in the United Kingdom (UK) and South Africa. Together we have award-winning film-making and editing skills, expertise in child mental health, personal experiences of motherhood and an understanding of the unique culture and history of South Africa.

CHLOE WHITE

I am an award-winning documentary filmmaker, photographer and director from the UK. My films are intimate, considered portraits, focusing mainly on the female experience. My clients and partners include *The Guardian*, *Topic*, *Nowness*, BBC Channel 4 and the organisations Oxfam, Save the Children and the British Film Institute. I lecture on ethnographic and documentary film at University College London (UCL).

KETHIWE NGCOBO

I have been in the film and television industry for 30 years and run a production company called Fuzebox in South Africa. I have produced and directed a number of critically acclaimed films, including *Baby Fathers*, *High Hopes*, *No Safe Place* and *Belonging*. I was head of drama at the SABC from 2004 to 2011. I am currently working on a series about empowering women to transform their lives despite poverty, gender-based violence and self-limiting beliefs.

ROSE PALMER

I am a freelance producer based in the UK and my focus is on telling female and social justice stories in a creative and imaginative way. I have a doctorate in early child development from UCL and was the deputy director of the Psychoanalysis Unit at UCL and communications manager at the Anna Freud Centre before moving into documentary film-making. Recently I worked in the Economist Films team on many documentaries, including the politicisation of abortion and transgender rights in sport.

On *Becoming*

by Esther Chunga

The COVID pandemic took a lot from us, especially regarding the ways in which we meet and make contact. It also gave us something. There are new ways in which we meet and make contact. One of its gifts is the ability to reach out further in an almost-borderless way.

My recent experience on the *Becoming* panel brought that to light for me. *Becoming* is an infant observation documentary film by Andy Spitz which was launched on 30 January 2021. The launch was an online event that sought to “challenge how one sees, experiences and reflects”. *Becoming* follows three South African infants and their families in their first year of life.

I was one of an international panel of psychoanalysts, psychotherapists and the filmmaker who shared their thoughts, experiences and reflections on the film.

Andy Spitz, who is a South African, is the award-winning documentary filmmaker and creator of *Becoming*. Her work focuses on social justice issues including gender based-violence, xenophobia and, most recently, on Covid-19 and hunger.

Andrea Sabbadini from the United Kingdom who is a Fellow of the British Psychoanalytical Society chaired the event. Andrea works in private practice in London and is a lecturer, consultant and former director of the European Psychoanalytic Film Festival. He has written extensively on psychoanalytic literature.

Suzanne Maiello from Italy is a child and adolescent psychotherapist, adult analyst and a faculty member of the master's course in psychoanalytic observational studies at the University of the Essex. She has lectured in both Cape Town and Johannesburg and is the author of a number of publications.

The coming together of the panel – across country, continent, language, race, gender, culture and generational borders - felt fitting with this multi-faceted film that so intimately afforded the viewer an unfiltered telling of the stories of three infants in South Africa who were continuously “becoming” as they were filmed weekly for a year.



A picture from a scene in *Becoming*



As I watched the film and offered my reflections and thoughts I constantly held the question about what it means to become in a country like South Africa in my mind. We have so much trauma in our history with the complexities left by apartheid. Many systems still reel from the scars it left. We are a country with extreme contrasts and diversities, with separate worlds and unequal opportunities.

The film brought to light difficult issues such as sibling rivalry, sibling love, race, co-rearing, fatherhood, cultural practices, depression, attachment, power, neglect and unexpected hope. Perhaps it was the ordinariness of some moments, the extraordinariness of others and the fact that a lot of the moments in between were relatable that attracted an audience of nearly 1300 people from all over the world.

What felt most rewarding for me as a participant in the process was the real contact that happened in the most unexpected and unforeseen of circumstances, despite the pandemic. There was a clear parallel process about what it means to find beauty and ‘good-enoughness’ even in dire situations, in hardship. Something good and beautiful can result even if becoming human does not come easily!

* Use the link here to get more information about *Becoming*.
<https://www.threeinfantsobserved.com/home>

One droplet one child

by Keketso Mopeli-Tshehla and Lesego Ndhlovu

There is a uniqueness about the way children present to healthcare facilities in that they are often a mirror to the lived experiences of many South African communities.

Poor education, food insecurity and poor access to healthcare and job opportunities are barriers to improved overall health and livelihood for many communities in South Africa. These societal inequalities often have spill-over effects on children who, alongside women, are among the most vulnerable members of our society. It then seems prudent to improve the lives of women and children if we have any hopes of improving the lives of every day South Africans.

One of the tale-tale signs of the poor socio-economic status of any community is the nutritional status of a child. It is no wonder, then, that improved under-five nutrition remains a global health target. Malnourished children are hard to miss: they are stunted (low height-for-age), miserable, sick children

TALKING ABOUT SAMENESS AND DIFFERENCE: TWO LECTURES BY BOB HINSELWOOD AND JAN ABRAM

05.06



Saturday, 5 June 2021, from 11am to 1pm (SAT): The clinical paradigms of Melanie Klein and Donald Winnicott

In this presentation Bob Hinshelwood and Jan Abram revisit theoretical comparisons and dialogues arising from the process of preparing their book of the same title, published in 2018. After their short presentations they will briefly dialogue and then invite audience participation.

23.10



Saturday, 23 October 2021, from 11am to 1pm (SAT): The clinical paradigms of Donald Winnicott and Wilfred Bion

Jan Abram and Bob Hinshelwood will focus on the differences in the clinical paradigms of Winnicott and Bion, based on their soon-to-be-published book which bears the title here above. Their presentations will be followed by a dialogue and audience participation.

RD (BOB) HINSELWOOD is a Fellow of the British Psychoanalytical Society, a Fellow of the Royal College of Psychiatrists and Professor Emeritus, University of Essex. He is the author of many publications, including *A Dictionary of Kleinian Thought* (1989).

JAN ABRAM is a training analyst in the British Psychoanalytical Society, a visiting professor at University College London and the vice-president of the European Psychoanalytic Federation. *The Language of Winnicott* (1996) is one of Jan's publications.

The cost is R300 per lecture; students pay R150.

More details and a link to book will be available soon.

The devastation of one malnourished child will be experienced for at least another generation as most of the cognitive impairment is irreversible.

who have had poor nutrition for at least a couple of months. They are miserable because they have no energy sources left. They regress in their developmental milestones because of the cognitive impairment malnutrition has on a developing brain. They have a suppressed immune system which makes them vulnerable to recurrent infections. The devastation of one malnourished child will be experienced for at least another generation as most of the cognitive impairment is irreversible. It seems so unjust that any child could suffer from such a preventable illness.

Marotholi Outreach was established in 2016 to address this injustice. It was founded by two work-colleagues-turned-friends who shared a common passion for improving childhood nutrition. We are a team of paediatric and non-paediatric medical professionals, as well as non-medical professionals passionate about ending childhood malnutrition. Our aim is to identify children under five years old in vulnerable communities with signs of growth faltering and/or signs of malnutrition before the child develops severe acute malnutrition which can be life-threatening. We aim to actively find these children in their communities and rehabilitate them.

Every six weeks we can be found in the community of the Motsoaledi informal settlement in Soweto. On those Saturday mornings we conduct screening activities, implement interventions where needed and educate caregivers on appropriate infant feeding. We believe that by educating and empowering caregivers we can achieve more sustainable results within this community.

Our organisation is still small-but-growing and our activities are mostly self-funded. We receive donations from our volunteers and other generous entities, such as the Gift of the Givers.

To date we have screened nearly 200 children under five years old and have found a malnutrition prevalence of over 20%.

Marotholi is a Southern Sotho word which means droplets of water or raindrops. We use it in our logo (see marotholioutreach.org.za). We believe that children need to grow in order to thrive. Just as droplets of water nourish a growing plant our hope is to be the metaphorical droplets in the lives of many children. We believe that we can end childhood malnutrition one droplet at a time and one child at a time.



***Keketso and Lesego are paediatricians. Keketso is the chairperson and Lesego the chief executive officer of Marotholi Outreach. Click on marotholioutreach.org.za and make a donation to their very worthwhile cause.**

Tackling race issues to break the pattern of repetition

Charity Mkone and Yvette Esprey share reflections on Fakhry Davids' August 2020 lecture, "Personal and Psychoanalytic Reflections on BLM"

by *Teboho Monyamane*

In the wake of the most recent wave of Black Lives Matter (BLM) protests around the world United Kingdom-based psychoanalyst Fakhry Davids presented a lecture on what it means to identify as black at Ububele in August 2020.

Fakhry's lecture on the effects of racist, brutal policing came after the public murder of George Floyd which sparked the BLM protests. Reminding us that black people have been marching for a long time, Fakhry explored what goes on beneath the surface, why everything stays the same despite the outrage.

He explained how protesting has a profound impact on minority groups and people of colour. How it stirs up deep personal and collective trauma, also in him.

What can we do beyond solidarity? Can psychoanalytic thinkers begin to think about and discuss lived experience without glossing over what is difficult? Fakhry's observation is that psychoanalysis generally doesn't discuss race, that our profession is unfamiliar with it.

A black analysand with a white analyst needs to ask whether the analyst sees blackness. How often is an other group identity seen let alone analysed? For the black patient the double bind is that speaking about blackness is likely seen as revealing one's hang-up or preoccupation yet, in being silent one is complicit in making yourself invisible.

He asks if there are patients who want to speak to psychoanalytic practitioners about these traumas but find us less than optimally receptive since black colleagues' attempts to bring the profession's attention to acknowledging and working with racial difference can be seen as revealing their so-called "unresolved difficulties with race".

Fakhry ended the lecture with a video of the Clark and Clark Doll Experiments which suggested that from early white children identify with their own group whilst black children identify against their own group with whiteness, seeing whiteness as desirable and blackness as not. What path does black four-to-five-year-olds have if not that of George Floyd and Medgar Evers?

It is the reactions of white colleagues to the clip played that sparked Charity's reaction and her and Yvette's sharing here. We publish it with Fakhry's interest in how this discussion can be taken forward. At present we are trying to set down a lecture date with Fakhry for July to which all will be invited.

***Fakhry Davids is on the Liaison Committee of the International Psychoanalytical Association (IPA) which is assisting with the establishment of psychoanalysis and psychoanalytic thinking in South Africa. Charity Mkone and Yvette Esprey belong to a group that discusses race issues, the group is similar to SAPI's Intergenerational Transfer of the Trauma of Apartheid (ITTA) or race groups.**

Reflections on Fakhry Davids' lecture

by *Charity Mkone*

What started off as a very emotive and no-holds-barred talk slowly became a tense and overwhelming experience.

Although I have immense gratitude and respect for Fakhry's generosity in sharing his own lived experiences and capturing the pain of being black in the world, the awe-inspired feeling quickly turned into a deep discomfort.

At first I was not able to describe or even make sense of this feeling -- until we were shown the doll experiment.

As revolting and painful as that experiment was, this I soon realised was not the source of my discomfort.

My increasing annoyance and irritation came from scanning the screen and observing white colleagues' - as always in the majority - facial expressions and gasps of shock and disbelief.

The questions I had in my mind 40 minutes into the presentation were:

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Reflections on Fakhry's lecture and Charity's words

by *Yvette Esprey*

Yes, there was a familiar and repetitive rhythm to the evening, a circularity to the parading of black pain and the invitation to respond with white shock and dismay.

I wondered what we, as a cross-race collective, are practicing and whether, in the practicing, we make any movement forward.

Yes, I see that as a white person I have choices that Charity doesn't have.

I can choose to respond to the invitation given by this BLM moment, by the Fallist moment and countless other eruptions which have thrust black experience to the fore.

And, then, I can choose to turn away from the announcement and evidence of white violence and consequent black pain when the reality of it becomes too hard to witness. When I feel complicit through my privilege and whiteness.

The doll experiment footage left no choice: it was brutal, horrific, nauseating. Unambiguous.

CONTINUED OVERLEAF

continued from "Reflections on Fakhry Davids' lecture"

Did no one hear Fakhry share his personal stories of racial discrimination?

Were they perhaps absent for the myriad images and displays of black rage and movements against black subjugation that, centuries later, still look identical to those of the recent Black Lives Matter (BLM) movement?

I was both stunned and filled with rage.

My rage was about how I felt the presenter(s) needed to amplify so-called black pain. For me the need to parade our pain and one-up each other with horrible stories of being treated badly or differently because you are non-white is all too familiar in these spaces.

Many non-black colleagues coming into anti-racism learning spaces often don't know what to do when we, as black people, stop letting them use our anger, trauma, pain and exhaustion as fodder for their consumption.

It is difficult.

It is burdensome.

continued from "Reflections on Fakhry's lecture and Charity's words"

Perhaps Fakhry realised too that if he were not to show us those images he would be letting us off the hook, lulled by the gentle cadence of his speech and words, even though they were, as Charity exclaims, words which detailed the racist violence woven into Fakhry's own life.

Yes, we whites do move to temper the violence of racism, to dilute the moment-by-moment ways in which it continues to structure the daily experience of black colleagues.

Complicity, shame, guilt and melancholic helplessness are costly alternatives which we will side-step if we can.

But side-stepping is no longer an option.

Fakhry's words were a clarion call to whites to stop depending on black voices and experience to conscientise and jolt us into action.

We know the history, we know the present, we know that racism repeats and repeats, we know that it resides within.

It is long overdue for whites in our profession to take responsibility for recognising and acting against racism in ourselves, our practice and within our community.

Let us stop leaning on our black colleagues to bear the burden of having to enact their pain in order for us to be awoken.

For anyone interested in the creative process of living



20.05
2.00PM

Listen to Dylan Lewis' creative journey
as sculptor on Saturday, 20 May,
at 2pm (SAT)

by Deborah Ashdown, Cathy Rogers
and Andy Cohen

Freud said about the artist (*Collected Works, Vol 12, p 224*):

"He finds the way back to reality, however, from this world of phantasy by making use of special gifts to mould his phantasies into truths of a new kind, which are valued by men as precious reflections of reality. Thus in a certain fashion he actually becomes the hero, the king, the creator or the favourite he desired to be, without following the long roundabout path of making real alterations in the external world."

Our training in psychoanalysis and interest in art got us involved in the International Psychoanalytical Studies Organisation (IPSO) of the International Psychoanalytical Association (IPA) and their Psychoanalysis in Art day on 20 May.

Their Around the World in a Day is an exciting project that brings together psychoanalytic thinking and creativity through webinar conversations between senior analysts and artists from around the world.

The three of us make up the South African team in this project. We teamed up with student colleagues in Latin America and organised a conversation between South African artist and sculptor Dylan Lewis and IPA president Virginia Ungar.

We hope that you can join us. Funds go towards emerging artists and making psychoanalysis more accessible to those who cannot access it.

The other webinars also look fascinating. The contentious Amish Kapoor is one of the many artists who will discuss creativity. Of note as well is a Chinese artist who had to cautiously consider participation. Please see the brochure for more details.

We invite you to join us for the day, but in particular in the South African hour at 2pm on Saturday, 20 March, to listen to psychoanalytic thoughts on the forces and sources of creativity. The webinar is open to anyone interested in the creative process of living.

Click on the Book Now option in the attached brochure or www.trybooking.com/uk/book and www.dylanlewis.com