

Self-hatred disguised in racial hatred of another

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Abstract

This paper takes us into the intrapsychic world of a black supervisor and a white supervisee faced with a white 'racist' patient. The process of how their own unconscious and conscious biases are challenged and the defences employed to maintain the status quo of not seeing colour in each other is analysed. The patient tasks them with not only seeing through his racist self, a maladaptive defence at maintaining a semblance of a fragmented identity and sanity, but their own unconscious racist self too. Despite the patient's split-off 'bad' parts being violently projected onto black people, the supervisor splits by only focusing on his intrapsychic conflicts and defends against responding to the intersubjective reality of his racially assaultive utterances. The supervisee splits too, by not dealing with the racist material in the room and not bringing it fully to supervision. Not only did the patient need bad parts projected onto the black 'other' to be integrated so as to get to the core of who he is, the supervisor and supervisee also needed integration of their disowned racial unconscious. In splitting him further within their psyches, an integrated re-introjection of good and bad in the white self and in the black other could not be achieved. In an attempt to protect the 'good' black person of the supervisor, the supervisee transforms her into a hidden transparent analytic third in the room. In defending against identifying with his white counterpart's racism, the supervisee loses a connection with elements of the person of this patient, himself and his supervisor much to the detriment of rich therapeutic and supervision work.