



THE C.G. JUNG INSTITUTE  
OF SAN FRANCISCO

## **STATEMENT REGARDING JUNG’S WRITINGS ON AND THEORIES ABOUT AFRICANS**

Elsewhere on this page, you will find an Open Letter signed by analysts and academics that was sent initially to the *British Journal of Psychotherapy* on the thirtieth anniversary of its publication of an article entitled “Jung: A Racist” by Farhad Dalal, a British psychotherapist. This letter spoke for its signatories but was not an official statement by any formal Jungian organization. It was a call to acknowledge problems in certain of Jung’s writings and to apologize, not for him, but for our own silence in not bringing critical thinking and feeling on these matters to the fore as Jungians teaching about Jung’s work. Though at times Jung ironized and contextualized his remarks more than some of his critics may have recognized, it is essential to us on the Diversity and Inclusivity Committee of the C. G. Jung Institute of San Francisco that we not perpetuate stereotypes and assumptions Jung himself passed on without enough critical reflection. We cannot allow institutional racism to survive unnoticed in our midst as we read and teach Jung. We are committed to challenging the cultural basis for Jung’s views whenever we believe that such a challenge may be warranted. These biased views in their own time were closer to the colonialism of Rudyard Kipling and the armchair anthropology of Lucien Levy-Bruhl than to the constructive and creative spirit of the Harlem Renaissance and the best anthropologists of Jung’s own day, including his friend Paul Radin, who criticized Jung’s judgment in this area.

Jung's race-based remarks about Africans and African Americans, though noticed, have only intermittently and partially been publicly repudiated by Jungian analysts and organizations. There are only four African American Jungian analysts in the United States and two are members of our Institute. This scarcity of participation has prompted the C. G. Jung Institute of San Francisco to examine its own failure to disseminate critical knowledge about Jung's writing and to actively search for examples of how we have perpetuated unconscious systemic racist attitudes, ideas, and practices in our Institute.

This continues to be an ongoing group effort. We are working to repair our own failures to address our awareness gap, and are engaged in a dialogue regarding our racial micro-aggressions toward people with African heritage and other people of color. The Institute community has responded by endorsing these efforts in a survey and through participation in initiatives such as the Open Letter, which many have signed and which our community has overwhelmingly supported. The San Francisco Institute is firm in its intention and efforts to address issues of diversity and inclusivity, so that we can provide a community environment of mutual respect and cultural humility, one that is inviting to Africans, African Americans, people of color, and other subordinated groups. This is now at the heart of the Institute's mission.

We accept that it is our responsibility to correct theoretical formulations that harm people of color, to apologize for actual discrimination and harm, and to find new ways to keep analytical psychology interacting with communities and colleagues of color. As this Institute is involved in Jungian training, treatment, and scholarship, we commit to increase attention in our programs to in-depth study of clinical, social, and cultural matters that relate to bias, prejudice, diversity, inclusivity, and transcultural and intercultural perspectives in knowledge acquisition and exchange.

To reach these goals will require more active participation in dialogue, reflection, and change within our Jungian communities. We hardly imagine that ours is the last word. We are aware that many who have found problematic passages in Jung prefer to challenge them in a different way than through the Open Letter. We also note that people whose work is cited by signatories to the Open Letter are not always people who did or would have signed the Letter. The bibliography appended to the letter is, nevertheless, a useful index of how some Jungian writers have addressed problems in how race is handled and interpreted psychologically, including in unconscious material such as dreams, in the fostering of multicultural consciousness, and in under-examined layers that may come up in treatment as countertransference and transference projections. We seek conversations with individuals and institutions who are prepared to join in our efforts to critically assess depth psychological attitudes toward people of African descent, and between people of different colors so that 21<sup>st</sup> century Jungian psychology can be as unbiased as possible.

*Open Letter*

**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* 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 contextualize 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 utilizing 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 sets 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, internalized 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 organizations.

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Address for correspondence: Professor Andrew Samuels [andrew@andrewsamuels.net]

The intellectual and cultural environment of late nineteenth and early twentieth 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 apologize 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 actualizing 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 realize 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. While 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 apologize 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 recognize 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 recognize 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.

DEIRDRE BAIR PhD. Independent scholar and writer. Author of *Jung: A Biography* (Gradiva Award for biography 2004). USA

JOHN BEEBE MD. C.G. Jung Institute of San Francisco. USA

FANNY BREWSTER PhD, MFA. Philadelphia Association of Jungian Analysts. Professor of Clinical Psychology, Pacifica Graduate Institute. USA

ROGER BROOKE PhD, ABPP. Professor of Psychology, Duquesne University. Affiliate Member, Inter-Regional Society for Jungian Analysts. Executive Committee International Association for Jungian Studies. USA/South Africa

STEFANO CARTA PhD. Associazione Italiana per lo Studio della Psicologia Analitica. Professor of Dynamic and Clinical Psychology, University of Cagliari. Italy

MOIRA DUCKWORTH BA, BEd. Association of Jungian Analysts. UK

BETTY S. FLOWERS PhD. Professor Emeritus, University of Texas at Austin. USA

HEATHER FORMAINI PhD. Australian and New Zealand Society of Jungian Analysts. Italy/Australia

LYNN ALICIA FRANCO, MA, MSW, LCSW. C.G. Jung Institute of San Francisco. USA/Colombia

CHRISTINE HEJINIAN PhD. C.G. Jung Institute of San Francisco. USA

BIRGIT HEUER PhD. British Jungian Analytic Association. UK

GOTTFRIED M. HEUER PhD. Association of Jungian Analysts. International Association for Otto Gross Studies. Independent Scholar. UK

BARBARA HOLIFIELD MSW, MFT. C.G. Jung Institute of San Francisco. Adjunct Professor, California Institute of Integral Studies. USA

ANTONIO KARIM LANFRANCHI MD. Analytical Psychologist. Italy/Egypt

SAM KIMBLES PhD. C.G. Jung Institute of San Francisco. USA

MONICA LUCI PhD. Associazione Italiana di Psicologia Analitica. Italy

BEGUM MAITRA MBBS, DPM, MD (Psychiatry), MRCPsych. Retired Child and Adolescent Psychiatrist. Association of Jungian Analysts. UK/India

JON MILLS PsyD, PhD, CPsych, ABPP. Professor of Psychology and Psychoanalysis, Adler Graduate Professional School, Toronto. Executive Committee International Association for Jungian Studies. Canada

HELEN MORGAN. British Jungian Analytic Association. UK

GORDON MURRAY MFT. C.G. Jung Institute of San Francisco. USA

KONUYU NAKAMURA PhD. Professor, Otemon Gakuin University. Executive Committee, International Association of Jungian Studies. Japan

EVA PATTIS PhD. Centro Italiano di Psicologia Analitica. Italy

DENISE G. RAMOS PhD. Brazilian Society for Analytical Psychology (SBrAP). Vice-President for Americas of the International Society of Sandplay Therapy.

- Full Professor at the Post Graduation Program in Clinical Psychology at Pontificia Universidade Católica de São Paulo. Brazil
- SUSAN ROWLAND PhD. Professor of Jung and the Humanities, Pacifica Graduate Institute. USA/UK
- ANDREW SAMUELS. Society of Analytical Psychology. Professor of Analytical Psychology, University of Essex. Past Chair, UK Council for Psychotherapy. UK
- SULAGNA SENGUPTA MA. Former member, India Jung Centre. International Association for Jungian Studies. Author of *Jung in India*. India
- THOMAS SINGER MD. C.G. Jung Institute of San Francisco. USA
- KHENU SINGH MD. C.G. Jung Institute of San Francisco. Staff Psychiatrist, Adult Forensic Behavioral Health, Alameda County at Santa Rita Jail. USA
- ANNA M. SPIELVOGEL MD, PhD. C.G. Jung Institute of San Francisco. Clinical Professor of Psychiatry, University of San Francisco. USA
- MARTIN STONE BSc. Association of Jungian Analysts. UK
- TRISTAN TROUDART MD. Israel Institute for Jungian Psychology. Israel
- ALAN G. VAUGHAN, PhD, JD. C.G. Jung Institute of San Francisco. Core Psychology Faculty, College of Social Sciences, Saybrook University. Association of Black Psychologists. USA
- RUTH WILLIAMS MA. Association of Jungian Analysts. UK
- POLLY YOUNG-EISENDRATH PhD. Jungian Psychoanalytic Association. Clinical Associate Professor of Psychiatry, University of Vermont. Past President Vermont Association for Psychoanalytic Studies, USA
- LUIGI ZOJA PhD. Centro Italiano di Psicologica Analitica. Italy

#### APPENDIX: ABSTRACT OF DALAL (1988)

Dalal, F. (1988) Jung: A racist. *British Journal of Psychotherapy* 4(3): 263–79.

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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