the SCRIPT

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INTERNATIONAL TRANSACTIONAL ANALYSIS ASSOCIATION

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# White Guilt, Black Shame: How Can We Heal Our Twin Wounds?

*by Diane Salters*



*We are publishing this longer than usual article by ITAA Past President Diane Salters because she addresses issues that are relevant to many people in the global TA community. Diane lives and works in South Africa, and this article was originally published in the Daily Maverick on 18 January 2022. An edited version is offered here with permission. Responses to Diane's thoughts are welcome.*

Reflecting on the December 2021 death of Archbishop Desmond Tutu and celebrating his inspiring vision of South Africa as the Rainbow Nation, it is important to acknowledge that he was well aware of the realities of our condition and the hard work that would be involved in realizing that vision. In 2011, referring to the legacy of Apartheid, he said, "We are all damaged. We all need healing … and … we do not seem to have taken on board the fact of our woundedness." What did he mean? How are we all damaged? Why do we all need healing?

It is easy to see how being disadvantaged is damaging, how it undermines not only the physical fabric of a person's life but also their sense of identity and self-confidence so that even when opportunities arise, the person may not be equipped to seize them. It is less easy to understand how being part of the advantaged oppressor class is damaging. This is more a matter of the heart, the mind, and (the Archbishop would say) the soul. Being advantaged eats away at sensitivity, empathy, humility —our essential humanity.

It is difficult for the oppressor group to acknowledge that they are damaged by their "master" position. They become adapted to living with the fear, mistrust, and distancing that is an inevitable result of their assumed superiority. The oppressed, in freeing themselves, free their oppressors, at least in part. Black people have freed both themselves and White people from the political structures of Apartheid in South Africa, but the legacy of damage lies deep in our collective psyche. To heal as a nation, we first need to understand the nature of the psychological damage and its effects. This will require courage, intelligence, and compassion.

White people carry an unhealthy burden of guilt for their Whiteness, and Black people carry an unhealthy burden of shame for their Blackness. The two are closely interconnected and yet serve to keep us apart. To talk in these broad racial categories is, of course, a risky business. Not all individual members of these groups have been affected or afflicted to the same degree or deal with the burden in the same way. Nevertheless, such group analysis does have value because we share a collective consciousness (and unconsciousness) that shapes us and our society. I use the terms "Black" and "White" here not only in the sense of skin tone but to convey a whole, embodied social and political experience.

> *"Archbishop Tutu said, 'We are all damaged. We all need healing … and … we do not seem to have taken on board the fact of our woundedness.' What did he mean? How are we all damaged? Why do we all need healing?"*

First, we need to understand the role of shame and guilt in the human psyche. They perform vital functions in helping us to identify and resolve social problems but in both cases can take either a healthy or an unhealthy form.

Shame is one of our primary feeling responses. As social beings we crave recognition and acceptance within our social group and feel ashamed when our actions are deemed unfitting within that group. The distinctly uncomfortable feeling of shame makes us aware that we have breached some taboo or broken the social contract . On its own, shame is a disabling feeling. However, with a sense of agency and responsibility, it can transmute into a feeling of guilt, and in its healthy form, guilt includes the possibility of making amends and moving on.

We can also feel shame for our group if they breach wider human norms. The author Benedict Anderson expressed this well: "If we are not capable of being ashamed of our country then we do not love it."

During the Apartheid years, Whites had every reason to feel ashamed of their country. (I say "their" because at that time the government was operating in their interests and in their name.) Few, however, have fully acknowledged this or owned how they benefited from it. By not acknowledging this shame, they cannot actively take responsibility. The result is that they either entirely deny White collective responsibility, claim that they should be absolved by now, or feel "guilty" in a sort of nameless and powerless way that leads nowhere. This is unhealthy, racket guilt. In his brilliant book, *Nation on the Couch: Inside South Africa's Mind*, Wahbie Long (citing the psychoanalyst Stephen Mitchell) called this "guiltiness." This guiltiness protects against more difficult feelings of fear, shame, or grief. It prevents the development of appropriate, healthy guilt accompanied by a sense of responsibility and the need to seek redress. It manifests instead as silent withdrawal, strident defensiveness, or competing with the formerly oppressed for the victim position.

Unhealthy shame derives from being rejected or unrecognized because of something you can do nothing about—not for your actions but for your very being. As a group, Black people were exposed to this disabling shame during Apartheid. Their Black body, by definition, marked them as less human, less valuable in the eyes of the prevailing power structures. It rendered them even "illegal" if they moved from their designated areas, and in the case of mixed parentage, they were offered the dubious privilege of being the shameful close cousins of the powerful. This kind of unhealthy shame eats away at dignity, self-respect, and confidence. In psychological terms, it causes injury to the

*continued on page 11*

**the SCRIPT**

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# Next ITAA-EATA Joint Webinar Coming in November

## "Beneath the Surface: Unconscious Processes in Self and Systems—A Group Relations Approach"

**14:00 UTC | Tuesday 22 November 2022**

Click here to book

A characteristic of unconscious processes is their almost involuntary "pull" toward a pattern or habitual way of doing and being. We may act on assumptions that are left unexamined for their current relevance, take up roles that we do not question, hold beliefs about the world, and have embedded self-concepts of which we are not consciously aware. These unconscious patterns are set in place early in our lives, even though some are dysfunctional and continue to be defended, a process of which we are unaware.

Groups and systems have unconscious processes and dynamics of their own. This is evident when groups we are part of do not behave according to plan, thus leading to frustration, emotional turbulence, complexity, and delays or even sabotage in accomplishing tasks.

Just as we are often reluctant to learn about individual unconscious processes, we may be reluctant to acknowledge unconscious processes at play at the level of the group. This is likely because surfacing these may confront us with a set of realities and questions that we prefer not to know, notwithstanding the cost of this to ourselves and to systems to which we belong. Encountering them may lead us to uncomfortable questions, such as: "How am I behaving in the group, and what is going on here? Do I understand how the group is affecting me in taking up roles as member/leader? How can I understand my role in the system and work in a manner that enables the group to focus on its task?"

The tradition of work on the unconscious called *group relations* was influenced by pioneers in the psychoanalytic tradition such as Sigmund Freud, Melanie Klein, Carl Jung, and Wilfred Bion. Other relevant streams include systems thinking, sociotechnical systems (Eric Trist and A. K. Rice), and socio-analysis (Gordon Lawrence and Alastair Bain). The lineage of work on the unconscious and recognition of its impact can be seen in the philosophy in the Indian subcontinent in the pre-Vedic era, the Upanishads, Buddhist and Jain philosophy, and in ancient literature on yoga.

**Join us for the next ITAA/EATA webinar on 22nd November at:**

UTC 14.00 pm

United Kingdom (GMT)
14.00 pm

Europe (CEST)
15.00 pm

San Francisco (PDT)
06.00 am

Rio de Janeiro (BST)
11.00 am

Delhi (IST)
19.30 pm

Tokyo (JST)
11.00 pm

Sydney (AEST)
01.00 am (23 November)

*"Groups and systems have unconscious processes and dynamics of their own. This is evident when groups we are part of do not behave according to plan, thus leading to frustration, emotional turbulence, complexity, and delays or even sabotage in accomplishing tasks."*

This webinar aims to introduce the group relations framework for making sense of unconscious processes in groups and systems. We will have a presentation and also offer adequate space and time for reflections and connections, including what may emerge from the here and now as food for thought and further insights.

The presenters, **Ganesh Anantharaman** and **Rosemary Viswanath**, have been actively shaping group relations work in India for some decades (see www.grouprelation-sindia.org).

Ganesh Anantharaman is a consultant in leadership development and an executive coach who studied political science at Mumbai University. He switched careers when he started his training with the Indian Society for Applied Behavioural Science (ISABS). There he developed expertise in the T group methodology of interpersonal growth. He has worked with groups and systems using the group relations methodology that originated from the Tavistock Clinic in the United Kingdom. Ganesh has been on staff and also directed many programs and interventions using this methodology, including regular workshops for INSEAD.

Rosemary Viswanath began her career in the software industry in human resources and then moved on to work largely with the development (nonprofit) sector in India and internationally. She has consulted on long-term change processes for large networks, movements, and federations that work on environmental sustainability, social justice, human rights, and accountable governance. She is seriously committed to the study of Buddhism and to making connections between behavioral science approaches and Buddhist thought and practice in transforming the mind.

We look forward to seeing you, so please join us!

*EATA/ITAA Webinar Committee*

## Webinar Recordings Available to View Online

We have now uploaded to the ITAA YouTube channel the recording of the May 2022 webinar. Here is the link:

**Ethics Committee webinar:**

"New Ethics in Practice: Less Parent, More Adult"

23 May 2022

*This recording will be posted for a limited time; be sure to watch it soon.*

## Third Ethics Committee Webinar

## 27 October 2022
## 09.00 UTC

### Integrated Ethics? Theory and Politics

There is a good deal of change in the air when it comes to the theory and practice of ethics. In this webinar, a guest of the Ethics Committee, Karen Minikin, will discuss the role of all three ego states (Parent, Adult, and Child) in both ethics theory and ethics policy. You are invited to come and listen, to join the conversation, to refine your opinion, and/or to get new ideas. However you want to participate, we hope you will join us!

**Register for this webinar on Eventbrite here.**

Once you have registered, we will send out an email a few days before the event with the Zoom link, so be sure to add info@itaaworld.org to your contacts list.

Please note that if you cannot make the event, we will be posting a recording of the webinar on the ITAA YouTube channel several days after the event. You do not need to register on Eventbrite for the recording. We will send an email when it is ready.

We look forward to meeting up with as many of you as possible to share and discuss this deeply important topic.

**The ITAA Ethics Committee**
*Anne de Graaf (cochair), Jan Grant (cochair), Tomoko Abe, Trudi Newton, Sylvie Monin, Pete Shotton, Anne Tucker*

# ITAA 2022 Service Award Acceptance Speech

*by Sue Eusden and Jacqueline van Gent*

In this shortened version of our acceptance speech, we first want to express how thankful we are for having received this award. We are delighted to be recognized by the ITAA, whose values of accessibility and inclusion resonate strongly with ours. We feel fortunate to have had the opportunity to contribute to the ITAA community, and we thank everyone who contributed to both our nomination and our work for the International Board of Certification (IBOC).






*Sue Eusden (left) with her award plaque*

*Jacqueline van Gent (unfortunately, her award plaque did not arrive in time to be shown here)*

We will now give you a brief update on how the pandemic changed the work of the IBOC and the Professional Standards Committee (PSC) and then describe what we see as future developments.

## Reflections on What We Did

We begin back at the start of the pandemic that overwhelmed the entire world at the beginning of 2020 and initially caused a slight "freeze" response. Exams were suspended as COVID lockdowns took hold. As committee chairs, we are very much aware that we not only have a policy-making role but also a serving role and that we need to keep a sharp eye on the changing needs of ITAA members. It was obvious right away that members wanted to continue their professional development and needed to be able to take either CTA or TSTA exams as well as TEWs even during times of COVID restrictions.

The worldwide response to the pandemic has taught us that it is possible to have professional communication with each other over large distances. Organizing consistent, high-quality online exams has therefore proven feasible. We must admit that we threw ourselves into that with some naive hubris at first. What helped enormously, and something that we are still grateful for today, is the trust we received from the start from the ITAA executive (then VP Professional Standards Thorsten Geck, President Elana Leigh, and President-Elect Chitra Ravi) and Deepak Dhananjaya (who helped us with technical knowledge). We also want to thank the chairs of PSC (Karen Pratt and Giles Barrow), with whom we have worked closely in recent years. Our collaborative work has resulted in building the foundations of the online exams on the principles of social justice, diversity and inclusion, and eco awareness.

Within the ITAA, the lines of communication are pleasantly short, and a brief Zoom meeting was often enough to make great strides. The trust we received lifted us up to do what was necessary to create inclusive and effective online exams.

For us, it was important from the beginning that online examinations contribute to the core principles of the ITAA as a professional community that is committed to social justice, diversity, and inclusion. Although online exams are here to stay, we also hope that in the future, linked to an international congress somewhere in the world, we will be able to organize onsite exams because it is also nice to meet TA colleagues live and look them in the eye.

> *"Our collaborative work has resulted in building the foundations of the online exams on the principles of social justice, diversity and inclusion, and eco awareness."*

During the early online exams, it became clear that we needed to identify cultural gaps that emerged between examiners, candidates, and volunteers and see how we could reduce them. The power and charm of our international exams is that people from all corners of the world form a real community in just a few days. At the same time, in practice, there is not always equality and mutual respect. The examination system is traditionally based on the Anglo-Saxon model and is therefore different from that of countries with a different cultural background. We took a first step toward discussing this issue by bringing a cross-cultural group together. This group met a number of times prior to the exams in March 2022 and produced various useful ideas for paying more attention to cross-cultural differences during examiner training. We are also talking with candidates about the implications for them of preparing and taking an international exam. We would like to follow up on this in the future and hope that members are interested in contributing constructively to such cross-cultural dialogues and learning.

We have witnessed a widening of engagement with the examination system and recognize that there is no turning back the clock. The number of exams we now run each year has increased, and we are currently committed to organizing two exam sessions per year and two TEWs, if numbers allow. The number of IBOC contracts, both CTA and TSTA, have significantly increased, and this bodes well for the future of our certification system.

## What's Coming

We are satisfied that we have taken significant steps toward values-based arrangements for examinations and the TEW. However, we have not had the opportunity to address this in relation to the general arrangements for professional education.

At the heart of the matter is our commitment in IBOC/PSC to three core intentions:

- To ensure that our professional education continues to support the wider ITAA agenda for social change. This includes developing our arrangements and requirements to extend diversity and inclusion.
- To increase engagement by widening the educational reach of our systems—in other words, expanding the ways in which we acknowledge educational diversity in terms of learning styles, teaching philosophies, and educational frames of reference.
- To acknowledge a growing awareness and commitment to ecological dimensions of theory and practice emerging among both practitioners and clients.

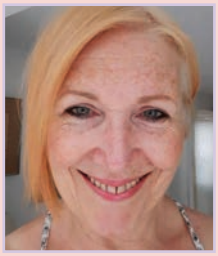
Finally, we are mindful of the issue of mutual recognition of certification and examinations between PTSC/COC, on the one hand, and PSC/IBOC on the other. We are aware that many of our members are concerned that we are slowly losing this principle of mutual recognition. There are already many points of differentiation that we navigate between the ITAA and EATA as we have both shared and different needs. Mutual recognition does not mean being the same. We would like to move toward a way of working together in which we respect each other's individuality and the ways in which we differ. We hope we will find a way forward on the basis of mutual trust in the quality of each other's systems. That way we may serve our members better.

So, we have exciting work ahead of us. We hope that all those involved in the worldwide examining community will continue to engage with us in these professional dialogues and develop trust so we can best learn and grow together.

*Sue Eusden (sue@itaaworld.org) and Jacqueline van Gent (jacqueline@itaa-world.org) are cochairs of the IBOC.*

## Good-Bye to Caroline Donovan

It is with sadness that we said good-bye and a warm thank you to Caroline Donovan on 1 September 2022. Caroline had been IBOC's administrator since April 2021. When we first asked her to take on that job, we thought that an average of 2 hours per week would be sufficient to do the work. But it soon became clear that organizing online exams and TEWs created a lot of extra administrative work and also attracted many new exam candidates and TEW participants. So, those 2 hours a week soon became more hours than Caroline could free up for us.



She performed her duties with enthusiasm and tireless good humor. It was a great pleasure to work with her.

We hope her life will settle down a bit now that she has handed over the IBOC duties to our new administrator: Niva Manivannan (for a brief introduction of Niva, see the August *Script*, p. 11).

Farewell, Caroline, and all the best to you!

*Sue Eusden and Jacqueline van Gent, IBOC Cochairs*

## IBOC Exam Calendar

| Type | Exam Date | Location | Application Deadline |
|---|---|---|---|
| CTA | 23-25 Mar 2023 | ONLINE | 23 Dec 2022 |
| TSTA | 23-25 Mar 2023 | ONLINE | closed |
| CTA | 5-7 Oct 2023 | ONLINE | 5 July 2023 |
| TSTA | 5-7 Oct 2023 | ONLINE | 5 April 2023 |

## IBOC TEW Calendar

| Type | TEW Date | Location | Application Deadline | TPO Deadline |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| TEW | 4-6 Nov 2022 | ONLINE | closed | closed |
| TEW | 31 Mar-2 Apr 2023 | ONLINE | closed | closed |
| TEW | 27-29 Oct 2023 | ONLINE | 27 Feb 2023 | 27 April 2023 |

Please send applications for exams and TEW to Nivashini Manivannan, the IBOC administrator: iboc@itaaworld.org

For the EATA exam calendar, please refer to: https://eatanews.org/exams/#coc-calendar and for the EATA TEW calendar, go to: https://eatanews.org/ta-training-2/#tew-calendar

## Write for *The Script*!

We invite you to become a contributor to *The Script*. We are especially interested in hearing from members who are using transactional analysis in socially responsible efforts to impact the world in a positive way. We also want to hear from practitioners who use TA in all four fields (psychotherapy, counseling, organizations, and education). Send us your articles (around 1000 words) and letters (around 400 words). Or if you have other ideas for *Script* material you think our readers would be interested in, please get in touch. Contact *Script* Managing Editor Robin Fryer at robinfryer@aol.com .

## *Transactional Analysis Bulletin* Available Online

We are happy to report that the *Transactional Analysis Bulletin* is available and searchable online through the Eric Berne Archive at the University of California San Francisco. These publications, from 1962-1969, were the precursor to the *Transactional Analysis Journal* and offer a fascinating look into the early days of transactional analysis. They include reports from Berne's early San Francisco Social Psychiatry Seminar; articles by Berne, Steiner, Karpman, and other TA luminaries; news of training and early certification; and much more. This invaluable collection is accessed via this link: https://archive.org/details/transactionalana00chen (Internet Archive)

## An ITAA for the Future: From Public Benefit Corporation to Professional Association

In the last *Script* (September 2022) you will have read about the project to restructure the ITAA toward becoming a professional association. This is an update of what has happened since then.

At the Annual General Membership (AGM) meeting, the members present gave a vote of confidence for this project. This encouraged the Board of Trustees (BOT) to continue with this exciting change. A core team, including the president, the past president, and the president-elect, discussed the next steps with the ITAA lawyer. Together we outlined action items and sorted them in meaningful lists of things to do. You will hear more about that in the upcoming *Script*s.

First, we will prepare thorough background information for our membership so that you are able to give a binding vote based on valid information. If you, the members, agree on moving forward, we will then unfold actions that will involve adapting bylaws and establishing a meaningful and effective structure for the new association in the service of the membership. As described last month, a professional association serves to advance members in their profession and their standing in the community.

We foresee that many interested members will want to be involved either with questions, comments, or even contributions. If you are interested in participating in any of those ways, please write to restructure-itaa@use.startmail.com .

*Thorsten Geck,*
*ITAA President-Elect,*
*for the Core Restructuring Team*

## Events and Reminders Calendar

**27 October 2022**.....Ethics webinar
**22 November 2022**.....ITAA/EATA webinar
**1 December 2022**.....Deadline for Eric Berne Award nominations
**1 January 2023**.....Deadline for ITAA Research, James, Goulding, Capers, English, and Service Awards
**1 February 2023**.....Deadline *TAJ* theme issue on "Neurodiversity"
**1 February 2024**.....Deadline *TAJ* theme issue on "Intimacy and Creativity: Revisiting Berne's Secret Garden"

*For more details about these and other events, visit the ITAA website at www.itaaworld.org .*

## Welcome to New Members

**AUGUST 2022**

Patricia Azevedo, Brazil
Christel Coolen, Netherlands
Jensey D, India
Karthikeyan Jawahar, India
Jayne Morris, United Kingdom
Jeganathan Palanisamy, India
Ana Popovic Paripovic, Serbia
Myles Reilly, New Zealand
Shyamala Sarma, India
Maria Senina, Russia
Sudha Sundaram, India

## *TAJ Theme Issues*

**"Neurodiversity and Neurodivergence"**
Coeditors: Steff Oates and Helen Rowland
*Deadline*: 1 February 2023

**"Intimacy and Creativity Within the Real Self: Revisiting Berne's Secret Garden"**
Coeditors: Edward T. Novak and Karen Minikin
*Deadline*: 1 February 2024

Please follow the submission requirements posted here. Email manuscripts to *TAJ* Managing Editor Robin Fryer, MSW, at robinfryer@aol.com .

# Saroj Welch

*by Annie Cariapa*

Sarojini Welch (nee Sarojini Macwana) passed on at the age of 96 on 28 August 2022. Saroj trained in the United States as a psychiatric social worker and counseling psychologist. It is difficult to think of Saroj without thinking of her husband, Carlos Welch, who passed on 2 years ago.

The Welches served as missionaries of the Board of Global Ministries of the United Methodist Church for 42 years, developing pastoral care and counseling programs. They established several counseling centers, including Parivarthan, Bangalore. They were two of the earliest TA Teaching Members and pioneers in developing counseling and TA in India, primarily in Jabalpur, Vellore, Bangalore, and New Delhi.

Saroj and Carlos were also supportive of Athma Shakthi Vidyalaya (ASV), a therapeutic community for severely disturbed young adults founded by Jacqui Schiff. Saroj had several parenting contracts, and, in the words of her son Ashwin Kumar in a touching letter to his mother on Mother's Day in 2014, which she shared with his permission: "Mama, you taught me that there are many people who don't have mothers like you. And you took them into your home. You helped them heal. You gave them as much love as you gave me, and there was still enough for me. You helped reparent those young men and women with broken minds, loving them into wholeness and health."

*Annie Cariapa, STA (P), can be reached at spanda.asia@gmail.com .*



*Saroj and Carlos Welch*

It was not unusual to see Saroj knitting or weaving for community service. In retirement in Baton Rouge, Louisiana, USA, she continued to involve herself in the stitching community.

Saroj is survived by Ashwin and Peg, Ravi and Gunhild, Arun and Jody, Yasmin and Joe, five grandchildren, and six great grandchildren.

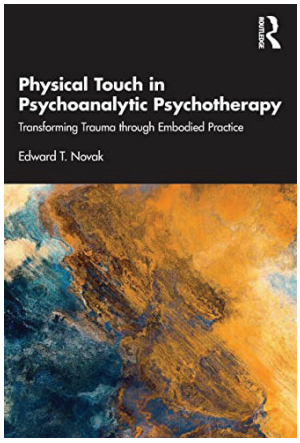
## Here are some remembrances of Saroj:

***Susan George:*** I first met Carlos and Saroj in their script workshop and then at therapy marathons where they combined healing and education with compassion and wisdom. They were patrons of TASC Madras and conducted several workshops for us. Their workshop "TA at 80" about their work after retirement was inspiring and motivating. So much healing and learning from them! Looking back with love and gratitude!

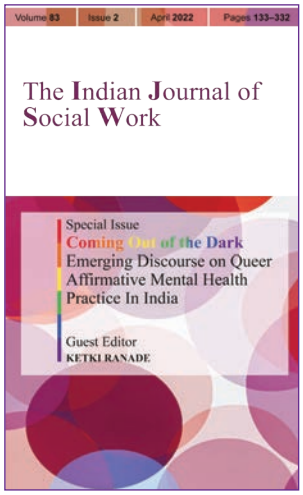
***Suriyaprakash C:*** I met Saroj, with Carlos, at a TA Study Circle meeting. They both stood up to introduce themselves. What followed for about 3 minutes was mesmerizing. One would start a sentence, and the other would complete it. That was only the beginning of a long period of learning not just from their therapy and training marathons but from what they lived, loved, and modeled. Saroj was gentle, firm, strong, and fully present. Such a full life needs to be celebrated even in death. Bless us, Saroj!

*continued on page 10*

***Edward T. Novak*** has published *Physical Touch in Psychoanalytic Psychotherapy: Transforming Trauma through Embodied Practice* (Routledge, 2022). In it he presents a new model for incorporating the human body, and specifically physical touch, into psychoanalysis and psychotherapy, particularly for patients or clients who have experienced trauma. In her comments on the cover, Charlotte Sills wrote, "This . . . offering—an integration of embodied therapy with psychoanalysis and transactional analysis—is a wonderful, courageous, provocative invitation to extend the methodology of talking therapy into work that directly engages with embodied trauma. Novak describes the life-limiting embodied effects of trauma and introduces five categories of therapeutic touch, designed to help clients reclaim their 'stolen body.' The book is written with enormous care and thought, including accounting for every type of professional or personal resistance to the idea of touch in therapy, and the style of writing mirrors the evident care, thought, and generosity for clients that shine through many rich case studies." The book is available through Routledge and Amazon.




***Deepak Dhananjaya*** writes that he has an article in the special issue of the *Indian Journal of Social Work* on queer and trans mental health (https://journals.tiss.edu/ijsw/index.php/ijsw). His contribution, entitled "Happily Ever After: Implications for Therapeutic Work With Queer Intimacies" (https://journals.tiss.edu/ijsw/index.php/ijsw/article/view/822) describes how the idea of marriage is reinforced as a "Happily ever after" milestone for all adults in various ways. In India, where same-sex marriage is not recognized socially or constitutionally, the queer community is excluded, which means that queer people do not get to experience the "Happily ever after" milestone. Deepak's article focuses on the sociocultural-political aspects that contribute to the formation of marriage as a social construct and includes references to Richard Erskine, Bill Cornell, and Muriel Stark. His article further focuses on the impact of this on queer clients at multiple levels through a trauma-informed lens and proposes a working method for mental health professionals to engage with queer clients. The table of contents for this special issue can be found at https://journals.tiss.edu/ijsw/index.php/ijsw/issue/view/46, and the editorial is open access and will soon be uploaded in soft copy on the journal's website.




## Saroj Welch

*continued from page 9*

***Usha Srinath*** (senior clinical psychologist and psychotherapist in ASV): I had close interactions with Saroj when she came to ASV during Jacqui's absence. She was a parent, trainer, therapist, and supervisor for all of us. Three words come to my mind as associated with Saroj: warm, nurturing, and accepting. May her soul rest in peace.

## Unnikammu Moideenkutty

Unnikammu Moideenkutty, who introduced P. K. Saru to TA, passed away a few weeks ago. He was instrumental in getting Fr. George Kandathil to begin TA training and so in a way laid the foundation for the spread of TA in India. Unnikammu was a CTA-O but not active in the ITAA and did not do TA training, but Saru had high regard for him. (Our thanks to Suriyaprakash C for this information.)

## White Guilt, Black Shame

*continued from page 2*

healthy narcissism that we require for self-recognition and recognition by another. This leads to the psychological defenses either of passivity and self-harm or a grandiose narcissistic defense that allows us to export the shame to those in an even less powerful position. These wounds and their psychological defenses can be found in individuals of all groups, but in terms of group dynamics, the oppressed group is more often called on to bear this unhealthy shame.

There is now, I believe, a deep fear among Whites that they are being called on to take on this kind of overwhelming shame simply for having White bodies. That is, in part, why they resist acknowledging the historic and appropriate collective guilt (let us call it "moral responsibility") of their group. Ironically, by resisting that responsibility, they remain locked in denial and trapped in the disconnected and impoverished "guiltiness" that Wahbie Long identified. It is important that Whites do the work they need to do to distinguish between being shamed in this way and being awake, accountable, and active in seeking social justice.

There is another aspect of unhealthy shame—well documented in psychological studies—that occurs when a person is violated. When a violator does not acknowledge their culpability, the shame is borne by the victim. Indeed, simply the fact of having been rendered powerless and a victim is, in itself, shaming. Rape victims often experience this, as do victims of torture. This shame is not theirs to bear, but it often becomes internalized and prevents healing. Again, this is something that is experienced more by members of oppressed groups.

So, how has this damage shaped us as South Africans and what do we need to do to heal?

I will look at White guilt first because I know it literally from the inside out. I also write in the first person to make it clear that I am not exempting myself from what I write about Whites as a group. As a White South African, I was born into a group that was advantaged in terms of education, health, freedom of movement, and social power. I was also part of a group that had exercised global dominion for a long time: the White, English-speaking world. Belonging to such a group encourages self-confidence at best, a sense of innate superiority at worst.

> *"It is less easy to understand how being part of the advantaged oppressor class is damaging. This is more a matter of the heart, the mind, and (the Archbishop would say) the soul. Being advantaged eats away at sensitivity, empathy, humility—our essential humanity."*

Like so many South African children, I was raised by a Black carer. Her Christian name was Elizabeth. I never learned her African name and had to address her as "Nanny." It was clear to me from a young age that Elizabeth was not accorded respect by most White people she encountered. I can still remember how I burned with shame when she was refused access to the bus to accompany me to nursery school and when, at the park, she had to sit on the grass not the bench and when Whites (even children) spoke to her as if she were less than human. I remember too being pained and puzzled by her shame about her hair, which she kept covered in a doek at all times.

As social beings we are, if we are not trained out of it, able to experience the pain, joy, fear, or anger of another. I felt Elizabeth's experience of shame. I also felt ashamed on behalf of my group, who were behaving toward her in that way. Over the years, like so many others, I learned to adapt to my group, to shut down my empathy in relation to Black people, and to exercise it only around White people. Nevertheless, the vague sense of guilt was there, leading me to believe that I had to somehow "look after" Black people as I had frequently had to "look after" my Nanny despite being a child. This rendered me both powerless and condescending.

It was only at university, exposed to fresh challenges to my thinking, that I reawakened to that early shame, to the powerlessness of my potentially patronizing White "guiltiness" and to a new kind of moral responsibility. Gradually—for this healing takes time—I could acknowledge the extent to which I was both damaged and advantaged by the warped society in which I had been raised.

Whites in South Africa may hope that their collective responsibility was washed away by the remarkable forgiveness of Nelson Mandela and Desmond Tutu, and nothing more is required of them. But true healing requires a lot more: a full and empathic acknowledgment of the extent of injury to Black people (both outwardly disadvantaged and inwardly damaged) and a humble acknowledgment of the extent to which we too were damaged and alienated by our very advantage.

There is a big difference between this kind of acknowledgment and going around "feeling guilty." It offers the possibility of Whites and Blacks engaging in a manner that recognizes both groups as wounded, although differently and to very different degrees. It would restore to Whites their sense of full humanity, belonging, giving a sense of agency in the work so they could then take responsibility and engage in repairing both social structures and relationships.

So, what about the Black burden of unhealthy shame? One can legitimately ask whether a White woman can write about Black shame. Well, as I have said, we humans come equipped with empathy. We also have imagination. We can ask "How would I feel if …?" and approximate another's response. Finally, as a woman, I claim the right to know something of what it means to be oppressed by the system of patriarchy and to have been shamed simply for being a woman. Nevertheless, I acknowledge my limitations and will draw on Black voices.

> *"We all need to understand and respect each other's healing journeys, challenging and encouraging each other as we go. Each group needs to do its own work—separately and together. Wounds received collectively are best healed collectively in groups that offer safety and encourage authenticity."*

The burden of unhealthy Black shame is manifest in many ways. Some Black people still experience themselves and their group as "less" than Whites, which leads to a lack of confidence and passivity. As Frantz Fanon, psychologist and philosopher, put it, "The oppressed will always believe the worst about themselves." For his part, Archbishop Tutu sadly reflected on how many Black people act out their self-hatred in violence, particularly against those most like themselves, even their own children. Others develop a narcissistic defense against the shame whereby they maintain a grandiose sense of their own power and importance. This latter defense is particularly observable in people who have been offered real-world power and who come to rely on that power to safeguard themselves from any breakthrough of the denied and unbearable shame.

The famous "Do you know who I am?" question is an example, as is the need for large ostentatious cars and a phalanx of bodyguards. When Tutu called on ministers to give up their flashy vehicles, he perhaps underestimated how much he was asking of them. Giving up a car is one thing; giving up the symbols that protect you from a disabling sense of shame and inadequacy is quite another.

Gwen Mahlangu-Nkabinde, when Minister of Public Works, bravely spoke out about the way in which incompetent people were being placed in positions of public service, to the disservice of us all. Given our history of "Bantu" education and subsequent failures in education under the African National Congress (ANC), we are still short of skilled Black people. The need to appoint Black individuals in government is obvious, but placing people in jobs that they cannot do is risky if shame prevents them from acknowledging what they need to learn. Such unhealthy shame makes any questioning of competency not a useful chance to up-skill but an intolerable threat to the person's fragile and defended sense of self. Many of our government institutions are rife with stories of people in powerful positions who are simply not competent to hold them but who cannot be challenged or helped.

> *"White people carry an unhealthy burden of guilt for their Whiteness, and Black people carry an unhealthy burden of shame for their Blackness. The two are closely interconnected and yet serve to keep us apart."*

As many have pointed out, only Black people can free themselves from this internalized and inappropriate shame. Holding office or gaining wealth may persuade the Black elite that they have escaped the burden of shame. For the poor and the disempowered, that defense is not available. Instead, the tendency to export the shame to another is evident in our high levels of domestic violence and xenophobia.

So how do we proceed? As I said, with courage, intelligence, and compassion.

Whites need to acknowledge their long-standing and unearned privilege and the historic injury to Black people and to responsibly face the damage done by their ancestors without taking on an unhealthy shame simply for being White. They need to demonstrate moral responsibility and actively seek ways to make reparation, offering their skills and resources as appropriate. They need to do this in the full knowledge of their own woundedness and the realization that they need to do it as much for their own healing as for the healing of others.

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Black people need to learn to face the shame they carry as victims and recognize that it is not theirs to carry—nor must it be passed on to the next generation or exported to others. They need to step out from under that shadow, freeing themselves from victimhood through empowerment and self-love, declaring in the proud words of Fanon: "I am not the slave of the Slavery that dehumanized my ancestors."

We all need to understand and respect each other's healing journeys, challenging and encouraging each other as we go. Each group needs to do its own work—separately and together. Wounds received collectively are best healed collectively in groups that offer safety and encourage authenticity.

It is time for us to heed Archbishop Desmond Tutu's call to attend to our woundedness. He never gave up hope. Neither should we.

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Send EBMA nominations to committee chair Lis Heath at lis.heath@gmail.com

### *Hedges Capers Humanitarian Award*
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### *ITAA Service Award*
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