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## SURVIVING HATING AND BEING HATED

SOME PERSONAL THOUGHTS ABOUT RACISM FROM  
A PSYCHOANALYTIC PERSPECTIVE

**W**E TAKE IT FOR GRANTED that psychoanalysis can inform our understanding of the human condition of hatred. But through understanding our experiences of hating and being hated, can we also inform psychoanalytic theory and its application?

I take it to be a basic truth that everyone has experienced hating and being hated. Hatred is an ordinary human experience that has extraordinary results. Maybe it is because of those extraordinary outcomes that we accord hatred the status of taboo. We seem to feel, in the common culture, that if we speak hate's name or invoke its memory we will suffer a grim consequence. On the other hand, we fantasize that if we don't speak it, it doesn't exist. The collusion of silence makes hatred unbearably dangerous.

I think that all of us have our hate-stories to tell, if we dare. We all have our hate-scars, some of which are better healed than others, and some of us are better healed, as persons who have hated and been hated, than others.

So I accept not only that our theory teaches us about hate, but also that, if we converse with one another about our experiences of hatred, we may demystify it, and that may allow us to inform and enliven psychoanalytic theory about hatred, and may even ameliorate the effects of hating and being hated within ourselves. We would undertake this piece of work on behalf of our own personal and professional development, as well as on behalf of our patients. In a small way, we would also undertake it on behalf of the global community, where the monstrous results of hatred proliferate.

I have had many kinds of conversations about hating and being hated. Some go this way: "Those hateful things are in the past. Things are different, now." Here, defenses are mobilized against the apprehension of

complexity; there is a denial of the existence of the hatred. This kind of conversation makes one feel deadened, if not actively hateful oneself.

Another conversation about hatred goes like this: “My experiences of being hated are more interesting, damaging, pernicious, catastrophic, and worthy of comment than yours.” Two experiences stand out as an example of this conversation.

When I was defending my dissertation (White, 1977) on black identity formation, I was trying to account for the effect of internalized negative projections in the development of the black sense of self. One of the readers said that the dissertation wouldn’t be worthy of inclusion in the scientific literature unless I compared the black population to the identity formation of other persecuted peoples; after all, Jews had been persecuted and they didn’t have identity problems. Isador Chein, my chairman, rest in peace, said “their persecution is their persecution, our persecution is our persecution; they don’t compete.”

Another experience I had not long ago was with a friend who was doing some work with what were then the start-up managers of the new Holocaust Museum in Washington. We were talking about the importance of maintaining the atrocities of racial hatred in memory. I felt quite identified with the “never again” consciousness that, we agreed, included our personal responsibility to stay aware of our tendency to persecute when we are powerful and to project when we are vulnerable. I said that the museum was like the one at Goré Island, off West Africa, where the holding pens and other “slave memorabilia” are available to be seen and experienced. “No African American should ever forget.” He said, “Yeah, but that’s different.” Well, how is it different? In recency, in magnitude, in effects, in outcome? If we had reached for the similarities in our experiences, my friend and I, we might have developed an empathic understanding or learned something new about the operations of hatred altogether. But we didn’t—too much time, effort, and energy. And, for me, it was too risky at that moment around losing my empathy and experiencing feelings of hatred of my friend for the rebuke.

Similarly, when the women’s movement was first launched and the diatribes about women’s persecution filled many conversations, my knee-jerk response was, “Yeah, would you like to step into my black shoes for just a minute, Ms.?”

These conversations tend to invalidate experience, leaving the lens on understanding set to the narrowest aperture, promoting disconnection, alienation, and of course, hatred. The question is: What kind of conversa-

tion would promote mutual learning? I think it would be a *joining conversation* in our various communities, a conversation in which we speak differing experiences of hating and being hated, and work at discovering, through reflection, the links between experiences and among ourselves.

Now this is no small task. It requires us all to work against the special sensitivities of our particular group experiences, to abandon the safety of “not-me” and to work toward the sensibilities of “me-too.” This is a worthy task *and* risky because, conversation by conversation, we would not be able to predict which of our “not-me’s” we are likely to discover in an attempt to broaden the understanding of the complexity of hating and being hated.

Well, let me start, given this opportunity, with my part of the conversation.

I am conditioned, from life in our times, to think about hatred in terms of racial hatred. It is not the only kind of hatred, to be sure, but it is the kind of hatred with which I am most familiar.

There are *at least* three ways of thinking about hatred as it derives from racism:

- There is *being hated*: being the object of pernicious, destructive attributions and projections;
- There is *bating the self*: internalizing pernicious, destructive attributions and projections that result in self-hating;
- There is *bating the other*: re-externalizing malignant projections and regarding the projective source with extreme hostility, which could precipitate violence and destruction.

I would like to focus on these three aspects of racial hatred from my experience of them, both personally and clinically, to see what applies to psychoanalytic practice and what applies to psychoanalytic meta-theory of hatred.

#### **Being Hated: *Being the Object* of Toxic Attributions and Projections**

In my life, the first recollection of learning about being hated racially was in kindergarten. The nun asked whether or not anyone could read. Because my sister, who was ten years older and thought I was a pretty amazing play doll who would delightedly follow her directives and learn things from her, had taught me to read when we snuggled up with *Heidi*,

a flashlight, and the covers over our heads, I raised my hand with enthusiasm. "I can read!" The nun said, "Don't you tell a lie, you can't possibly be able to read." "Oh, yes I can, too!" "Here, read this," she said. I read it. She said, "that's not reading; you're not reading it right, that is not the way to read. That's why *you people* never amount to anything. You make up lies when you don't know how to do things the right way! I'll have to teach you to read properly."

I was broken-hearted; I had told a lie and Sister thought I was bad cause I was one of *you people*. Who are *YOU people*?

These many years hence, of course I understand that I had undermined her immature sense of authority, and had violated her birthright expectation that our relationship would be based on my idealization, dependency, and gratitude for her bounty. My inclination toward autonomous functioning in relation to her need to be somebody by feeling superior to somebody else had infuriated her, and she spewed venom on a little person's sense of personal goodness, enthusiasm, entitlement to know, sense of fit, and readiness to compete. One could say that she demonstrated the not-unusual hatred of the converted for the heathen or the unwashed; or one could say that she demonstrated a hatred for the picture of herself *as all too ordinary* reflected in a child's innocent eyes.

Some despised self-definition was coming into my consciousness in the interaction; the nun experienced a threat; this bad child had caused the threat; the child was black, bad, and threatening; black is bad and threatening.

This is the first basic operation of racism and racial hatred. I had become a projective container of things bad for this young white woman, who persisted in calling me a "rotten apple" through all my grade-school accomplishments. A variation on this theme has been true of my lengthy academic career, peopled by whites in authority.

In response to the nun, I felt bad and guilty and learned to read her way—and this is the second basic operation of racism and racial hatred. When I told my family about this incident ("Sister said I told a lie, that I couldn't read, that I was bad like the rest of *you people*—Who are you people?), my grandmother said, "goddamn white people; there is nothing wrong with you or the way you read. White people are just crazy. Next time Sister says you can't do something, *don't you come home crying*. You just tell her she is wrong, say, 'oh yes you can,' and do it anyway."

White people? "Grandma, Sister isn't a white people, Sister is a Sister."

My confusion notwithstanding, thank god for my warriorlike family. Because of their response, I maintained both ways of reading: my sister's way that is fun and delicious, and the nun's way that is *See . . . Spot . . . Run*. Unfortunately, this is characteristic of my academic reading even now.

They taught me a thing or two, my Grandma and the nun. I didn't know that I was supposed to stay suspicious and hate white people for hating me. But the lesson was learned. I also learned that there were white people and *you people*.

There are still white people and *you people*. You remember Ross Perot? He was a presidential candidate not so long ago. He went to the national convention of the NAACP looking for support for his candidacy. In his opening remarks, he called the conservative and august body "you people." He fumbled and tried "your people," but it was too late. Everybody took the point. A delegate interviewed after the meeting said Perot had too much to learn about his own racism, and that he, for one, was sick of educating white people.

I learned that white people could think you were bad when you were good. They could get mad at you for nothing. You had to stand up for yourself or Grandma was going to be mad at you. This leads to the worst of the lessons, and the one I find trickiest to overcome: that is, being a warrior for your personal integrity is lonely. This lesson likely influenced my having become a psychoanalyst; my analyst bore witness to my shoring up personal integrity, the psychoanalytic message being: "you *can* come home crying." My analyst was able to do what my grandma couldn't bear to do, and I wanted to do it for others, too.

The nun, my grandma, and my analyst taught me the strategy of surviving being hated: see the projection, get mad, and turn the projection back. This strategy has been useful, and has become character bound (or I had the character that helped me learn the lesson): be on alert for projections from white people in general and from white people in power in particular. Erring on the side of wariness and vigilance is likely to save you a great deal of self-confusion and pain.

#### Being Hated: Application to Practice

In applying my experiences of *being hated* racially to psychoanalytic practice, I am guided by several propositions. One is that hatred is learned. I don't know whether this is true of others, but many black

patients come into psychoanalysis attributing being hated or hating to something akin to original sin, or genetic flaw, feeling somewhat like Rosemary's baby—evil and satanic. Part of my psychoanalytic imperative is to help my patients recover the learning processes in hateful experiences so that unlearning and relearning become possible.

Being hated can become a self-definition, safety operation, and defense against anxieties about separation and individuation. A common question of black people in treatment is, "Who am I, if I am not the object of white hatred?" Part of my job is to enable these patients to tolerate the anxiety of a defensive shift to arrive at this question. Having arrived, psychoanalysis has a chance. To the question "Who am I, if I am not the object of white hatred?" my analytic answer is, "I don't know, but let's find out."

Another proposition that guides me is that victimization is an interaction. This learning from my experience of being hated thoroughly informs my work. It cuts across race, gender, class, socioeconomic status, and intellectual gifts. It has become a basic truth for me: If one can't find a kernel of self-operation in a victimized condition, then despair is the correct response.

I also think that people learn lessons from being hated, which inform character development as surely as do the events of family interaction that are more typically cited in theories of development.

Finally, I find that black people develop a safety operation that I call a "survival shell" in response to racial hatred that operates in encounters across the racial boundary. This is distinct from a false-self operation, as it is more or less conscious. In my work with black patients, I inquire about the level of consciousness of this maneuver, the amount of stress that it causes, and the degree of dissonance there is between the survival-shell operation and the true self. This gives them an opportunity to reflect on what the risk level is in living in a racially hating culture, and whether or not their survival-shell operations are collusive with racial hating.

One example of a collusive survival shell that I encounter quite often is the instance in which black patients have altered their language in such a way as to sound inauthentic. I mean, really, is there any reason a person can't talk in racial cadence at IBM; do you have to wait until you go home to talk like you talk? And if so, what has been sacrificed in effective communication and personal well-being?

### Being Hated: A Clinical Vignette

These principles that I have learned about *being hated* through my own experience of it pertain to the case of Marsha.

She came to analysis fearing the worst about her “interpersonal incompetence.” She is a banker and an active feminist whose life is filled to the brim with meaningful activity. She is much in demand in her professional and political circles because she is passionate, smart, effective, and a strategic wizard. Because she is a woman of color, she has the opportunity to fill many of the choice, high-powered *three-fer* roles, which give her access to information and power. Whether to come into regulatory compliance, to assuage unconscious cultural guilt, to gain a competitive edge, or all of the above, organizations can make three tick marks on their diversity score card with the hire of one Marsha: ✓ a minority; ✓ a woman; ✓ a person of color. Is a fourth tick, ✓ a *woman* of color, a stretch too far? I’ve seen it done. While the inherent racism, sexism, personal collusion, and the bitter irony are not lost on Marsha in accepting *three-fer* roles, the current (if transient) politics of diversity suit her ambitions just fine. For all of her satisfactions, Marsha is a lonely woman. She is in her late forties, has not married nor had children. She has had many lovers; in her late twenties, she lived with a man for a couple of years. She has had many women friends, as well, although these relationships, like those with her lovers, burn hot for a time and then disappear. In relation to subordinates, Marsha is tyrannical and somewhat abusive, especially when work relations are protracted. She is the bane of secretaries’ existences, and they don’t remain with her for too long a time. Marsha has strained relations with her parents, is not on speaking terms with her sister, and her contempt for the life choices of her two younger brothers is complete. It isn’t that she has a chip on her shoulder; she has the entire tree, supported not just by a survival shell, but by armor plate.

There is a terrible ache between us when she calls herself “a typical evil nigger bitch.” The ache is the tension between hope and despair. *In her bones* she is convinced that she is doomed to hatefulness by reason of her genetic makeup; *in my bones*, I hope she is wrong.

In the course of the analysis, we discover two facts about her life that had been clouded in mystery, yet tell the tale of her early learning about being hated. Marsha is the child of an interracial couple—black father and white mother. Her father remarried after her mother’s death, when

Marsha was seven months old. Her adoptive mother, who was also white, took adequate care of her, but something had not been right with their bonding. A coldness grew between them as each of the three successive half-siblings was born, a coldness that remains to this day. The rub seemed to be that Marsha was an inconsolable baby, except in the comfort of her father's presence.

The first analytic task was to get a picture of her inconsolableness, which in my mind wasn't sufficiently explained by the early loss; Marsha seemed too traumatized in a very lasting way. Good-enough parenting hadn't ameliorated her self-suffering. Through her dreams, the transference and countertransference, and subsequently through her discussions with her father and adoptive mother, another story was revealed.

Marsha's birth parents had been politically to the far left, and had met through those activities. When they fell in love and married, they had the support of their political community of friends. When the realities of setting up a home and raising a family set in, however, they became less insular. The couple had to contend with the open hostility toward and cultural disapproval of their union—from both blacks and whites. Both sets of families, representing a wide range of social-class circumstances, cut them off.

The pressures of the isolation became unbearable. One story that has survived all these years seems connected to the outcome: on one walk in the park, two matrons who wanted to look at the sleeping baby in the stroller approached mother. They cooed and said, "what a cute little nigger baby."

The outcome was that, on that day or some other, as the baby slept in the stroller in the park, her mother abandoned her. Mother was not to be heard from again until a few years ago. Marsha was rescued by the police; she was extremely cold and, of course, beyond hunger. Reality as she had known it had shifted. There was a series of caretakers until father remarried, and Marsha became an inconsolable baby.

Two of her hate lessons have come to light. Mother couldn't bear the racial hatred; she felt traumatized and abandoned the child to bear the hatred alone. The abandonment, itself, was hateful. The message received was: "I hate my situation, and by extension I hate you." Father, who must have been quite traumatized by the events, as well, developed an unconscious link to his child as a covictim. The message Marsha received was "People will hate you and harm you; be on your guard; it's not your fault. Don't let the fuckers get you. She ruined you."



These were very powerful lessons. Marsha clad her hate-filled baby self in armor plate. She expects to be hated, thwarts intimacy, contends with major depression and arrested development, but survives by not allowing for the possibility that reality, as she knows it, will shift again.

The work of the analysis is to bring to consciousness the panic and terror associated with being hated—the panic and terror of having one's self-world teeter precipitously on the edge of collapse. We are working against the notion that she is intrinsically evil; but she has had some powerful lessons about being hated.

Now, whether her lessons can be unlearned by dint of intellectual clarification, I am not sure (that is, if she gets her story straight, will she be less vulnerable and more available to intimacy?).

My analytic hope is that new propositions can be developed from new and different experiences through the emotional lessons of our analytic relationship. I am not horrified by the malevolent transformations in the transference, and I care about her. To the extent that it is under my control, I won't leave her stranded as the going gets tougher, which it will. If an impasse were to threaten, however, I would anticipate that it would occur around the work of separation-individuation during termination. Marsha is likely to encounter regressive dependent strivings for symbiotic rejoining in the transference. An intensity in this area could stir hateful feelings in me (self-threat, detachment). The fact of the impermanence of our real relationship could stir hateful feelings in her (for all of our fancy understanding, in the end she is left again). It will take a great deal of courage to keep mutually hateful experiences from lapsing into the realm of the unspeakable.

#### Hating the Self

Let me move on to a second way of thinking about hatred that derives from racism. This is *internalizing* pernicious, destructive attributions and projections; self-hating is the outcome.

In my life, it was all well and good that my family passed on the lessons learned since the middle passage about surviving being hated. The predominant stratagem is to keep a fix on one principle: racism is ugly, not you; racism is evil, not you; racism is bileful, not you; racism is malignant and malevolent, not you. All well and good, these habits of the mind, these mantras to get one through the assaults day in and day out, year in and year out, in the media, in Zabar's, on the streets.

Just a short while ago a taxi driver took the time to slow down his cab, lean across to the passenger window, and yell out, "Niggas don't ride in my cab!" And I was standing on Central Park West, in my high heels and navy-blue corporates, looking fabulous. Malcolm X once said: "you know what they call a nigger with a Ph.D.? Nigger!" This applies as well to a nigger in high heels and corporates.

Habits of mind and useful mantras don't protect. The self and the sense of self are not made of stone, and unless the self has gone stone dead, or has dropped out of consensus, the self and the sense of self are moved by the imperatives of development to comingle with the surround.

My family, for all its fix on reality principles, fertilized little bore-holes of receptivity to toxic attributions with their legacy of racial self-hatreds. Nadinola cream to lighten my skin; hot pressing combs and hot curlers to make me look decent; my big nigger feet; stay out of the sun, you're too black already; elocution lessons so that I wouldn't talk like a backward nigger; ace of spades was my nickname; the implied deficit in "god, it's a good thing that you're smart"; don't apply to Smith College, that's going too far.

Like Jelly Roll Morton, I am Creole. Like Jelly Roll Morton, I was told that a half-breed Creole is better than whole-bred Nigger. In the play *Jelly's Last Jam*, when Jelly was hanging out with the "low-life niggers," and before she threw him out of the family, his mother says, "You are not Creole!" It was the song of obliteration.

When I complained to my mother about my realization that I was truly darker than the family and had black and kinky hair as compared to their fair skin and straight red hair, she said, "look, it's not my fault that you took the wrong genes."

This means that you are half lovable, but only if you purge, annihilate, or mutilate the unacceptable other half.

These messages from my family were hard, no less hard than the even uglier ones I got from my cultural family. The wider cultural messages, as stark and deadly as they were, caused no greater damage in promoting self-hating. I was just a kid when Emit Till was castrated, otherwise tortured, burned alive, and buried with his penis in his mouth. It was then that I understood Billie Holiday's song "Strange Fruit" to be her experience of seeing black people hanging from trees in all states of mutilation and decay.

Mutilations and legalized violence were ordinary occurrences; there was the reverence for white women's virtue, and rapes and murders of

black women. Montgomery children were burned in their church; there were the horrible atrocities in Little Rock, a town that has had its tarnish polished, and there were all manner of attempts at obliteration by my cultural family. It wasn't lost on me that many black men were in prison, that American Indians were dead, that white Australians called aboriginal people—the abos—subhuman. When Australia was settled by the ex-convicts, they developed a law that said the land was uninhabited by humans—of course, so that they could take the land. This law came off the books in 1993. In 1993, aboriginal people were considered to be human beings, officially. Ralph Ellison's *Invisible Man* gave us a picture of this kind of expedient obliteration and the consequences to the soul-self for both perpetrators and victims.

These messages from my family and from my cultural family about myself were of extreme badness and extreme vulnerability, and they fueled self-hating in me.

My personal mantras broke down when I went on to Smith College (mother may have had some wisdom about this—if you don't go too far out there, you might be able to protect yourself from collapse). It was my first experience of living with whites. In comparison to those white girls, I felt less than nothing. No strategy kept that from consciousness. So I invented a new self to soothe my hateful self and to fend off feelings of vicious envy in my hate-filled self: I had servants, money, a fancy house on the North Shore of Chicago, interest income, a new accent, affectations and airs (fortunately for me, in that privileged culture, the more you had, the less ostentatious you had to be, because I didn't have a nickel with which to appoint my fancy new self). Although I was eating like a horse like everybody else, I slipped under eighty-four pounds. I felt wretched. *Self-batred was burning me away*. My grandma would not have been happy about this, if I had known how to tell her about what was happening to me, which of course I didn't. "Girl, don't you let white people get to you." "But, grandma, I already have."

Fortunately, one of my teachers noticed that I was perishing. The old mantra: "There's nothing wrong with me; there must be something wrong with you for thinking so." She must have heard this before and wasn't too impressed, as she made it a condition of my remaining in school that I get help. Marianne Kris, whom I saw in consultation, wasn't too impressed with my deteriorating bluff about being just fine and persecuted either. Using what she knew of the prevailing stereotypes, she took a fairly aggressive inquiry into my racial feelings and racial experi-

ence, and led me to the awful telling—"I'm just a nigger, a low-down, good-for-nothing, dirty nigger!" "Well, that's OK," she said, "it's a feeling, you can fix it." She referred me to psychoanalysis, and to the life-long odyssey of fixing the internalization of hatred.

In my lifetime, my family and my cultural family have come a long way in expunging systematic racist practices and some attitudes that promote self-hating in African-American people. It is truly possible to embrace a greater identity beyond the atrocities of white racism and slavery; the evolution of an African-American consciousness bears witness to this. I don't expect that it will be in my lifetime, however, that we see the end of the self-hating legacy of racism. The hope is in the babies and in their babies.

#### Hating the Self: Application to Practice

At our current level of development in this culture, our main defensive strategy in managing our overwhelming diversity is to split into me-not-me and hate everything not-me. The main concern seems to be that embracing not-me will forever alter me-as-I-know-me-now. In this cultural paradigm, everyone has been, or will be, someone else's not-me; everyone is fair game for being hated. This paradigm has been true of our culture historically, is true now, and will remain true until we make a developmental shift.

I take it to be part of my analytic responsibility to assume that there are hate-filled, malignant cultural effects in the development of self-states in *any* people who seek analytic treatment. To the extent that a person is accessible to reflection on self-states, and thanks to the early example of Marianne Kris, it is my job to use my own stereotypes to inform the inquiry about the cultural mind-set and attributions to:

- Southern Italian white women
- Gay military officers
- second-generation Georgian immigrants
- Orthodox Jewish men
- What do we mean when we say "Puerto Rican?"
- ambitious African-American women
- well-to-do Jewish women
- southern African-American male preachers

*anyone*, including the wasp, male “masters of the universe,” who, it seems to me, are everybody’s favorite projective objects. We call them Goyim, the man, men, them, when we mean wasp male power structure. I think there is a cultural tendency to assume that these people are unaffected by our envy, hatred, and hateful projections. We may even assume that they take some perverse pleasure in being so powerful as to be hated. It is an assumption that I think needs to be challenged—on behalf of the individual symptomatic white man in treatment as well as on our collective behalf. White male self-hatred may contribute significantly to our collective flirtation with global annihilation under their leadership.

#### Hating the Self: A Clinical Vignette

These principles that I have learned about *self-hatred* through my own experience of self-hating pertain to the case of Michael. Michael came to analysis dissociated, alienated, experiencing catastrophic anxiety, plagued by sadistic fantasies of gynecological torture and of being genitally tortured himself. He was forty years old at the time, a white ethnic mix of Eastern European Jewish and German Catholic. He owned an inherited business that was successful.

The early analysis centered on the conditions leading to a catastrophic development halt. Michael was the first-born of middle-aged parents, in upper-middle-class circumstances, who were, by turns, remote and intrusive. The parents had live-in help from a black couple, Anne and Duane. Anne’s primary charge was domestic life and childcare; Duane was responsible for general maintenance of the family property.

Michael’s first four years seemed unremarkable, except for a difficult transition from the symbiotic attachment to his mother. His sister was born when he was about four years old, after which mother developed a postpartum psychosis. She made a serious suicide attempt, was hospitalized for several months, and after her release, she remained in a medicated, stuporous, lifeless state for several years.

Michael developed the idea that his feelings of attachment had made his mother sick, ideas that were displaced onto his little sister, and for which he tortured her psychologically and mercilessly throughout their childhood.

Mother made a second suicide attempt after an embattled divorce from her husband. Michael was sixteen, and away from home at camp. Again,

she was hospitalized. She finally killed herself the morning Michael left for college.

Michael's personal fortunes were chaotic at best. There were two redeeming circumstances: he had intelligence; he could soothe himself through reading and thinking. And he had shadow parents in the family servants whom he loved and who loved him and helped him make sense of chaotic events. They coached and counseled him, especially about his destructive relations to his sister. But, most usefully, Anne and Duane set limits on his sadistic impulses, each in their own way providing him with much needed controls.

I call Anne and Duane "shadow parents" because Michael had no conscious, affective memory of his relationship to them until four years into the analysis. That aspect of his identifications was dissociated. We got to it through transference-countertransference interaction.

Michael was an extremely difficult patient. He pretended to have auditory hallucinations, he threatened to pass his bowels on my couch, he went into the private spaces of my office, he was smarter than I, knew it, and flaunted it. He baited and switched my emotions and sorely tested by basic goodwill toward him. He was a pain in the ass.

For all my understanding that these were transference maneuvers to transform me into a mother who found him toxic and noxious (into the mother who ruined his life), I was in perpetual waxing and waning of despair about my work with Michael. It occurred to me, however, that my countertransference response was out of synch; rather than feel hateful, I would often shake my internal head and say "this boy is in trouble!" I suspected that my benign feelings toward him were not unlike those of Anne and Duane. With my memories of Marianne Kris to guide me, I pushed a rather aggressive inquiry into their relationship. Not only did I find the potency of their mutual love, but I learned that Michael had not revealed, either to me or, it turned out, to himself, some connections between facts of his current life and his relationship to Anne and Duane. Michael's music was black; what friends he had were black; his artistic pursuits were in black theater and dance. He ate in black restaurants and he belonged to the Harlem Y. Michael was powerfully black-identified. This probably saved him from psychosis, but it was otherwise problematic.

Michael maintained a split in his self-perception: what was related, masterful, and loving about him was black-identified, and as such, was degraded, defiled, dirty, and had to be kept in the shadows of his func-

tioning. The black bits of himself—his humor, his language, his people, his very odor—caused him humiliation and shame. He had taken from his identifications with Anne and Duane self-capacities and a drive to self-actualize. He also took from their identifications with the dominant culture, and his own, the feeling that these very capacities were worthless, hateful, and in him, anomalous, freaky. On the other side of this split, what was white-identified about him felt alienated, potentially psychotic, sadistic, and destructive. As we became conversant with this reality, he would say of himself, “I’m sick of being a nigger; I want to come out of the shadows and be white like everybody else. But then what will I be? A robber baron? A sadistic fake? A suicide? Psychotic, like my sister? I don’t want to be white either.”

He had this dream that we came to refer to as the hideous black cat.

I had another nightmare. I had on a brand-new sweater from Paul Stuart; it was a gift to myself. I realize that there is this cat hanging by threads from the sleeve, and it could tear the sweater. I try to shake it off of me, or pick it off and hold it, because it’s as scared as I am; but I’m also disgusted by it and hate it. It’s not just a cat; it’s a hideous thing, skinless, deformed, grotesque. Mostly, you would say it’s some kind of primitive life form. Why is it attached to me? I think I’m going to kill it, but I’m scared to because of the attachment.

*Associations:* “I’m this white yuppie on the one hand, and this doo-wop nigger on the other. I really can’t get rid of either one; I guess I’m both. I’ve been trying to come up with an acceptable description for this. Your term is OK, ‘black-identified white person.’ I’m going to work on something more snappy. You know what feels hideous today? You’re not like me either. The best stretch is that you’re a ‘white-identified black person.’ I want to know one of these days how this works for you.”

As the dissociative barrier against his black identifications dissolved, the analysis focused on working through the despair around Michael’s disparate self-aspects. My role has been to “adjudicate” the differences through simple permission to observe them and give it a name: Michael is a black-identified white person.

We did encounter an impasse right at this moment of his development. When Michael began to identify with me as a white-identified black person, I lapsed into a kind of ennui. The identification acted as an accurate interpretation of my survival operations which, until then, had become

more or less seamless. Like his men friends at the Y, I got irritable with him for the metaphor of his “blackness” housing his feelings of degradation, when he is white. In fact, I had *not* had the luxury of “metaphoric blackness.” I was saddened to have to reconnect to black self-hatred feelings in myself in order to understand him, and to do this on behalf of this white person has felt eerie. It was equally odd to relate to this white person as I would to a black person struggling to cope with residual racial self-hatred, and I didn’t feel like it.

We both survived my irritability in the role, however. I think that it was the momentum of his development that resolved the situation. It turned out that I had to ascend a difficult learning curve: once Michael had discovered his emotional language, I had to move out of psychoanalytic poetry into the poetry, rhythm, and cadence of my earlier life. I learned from him, and I am afraid that he is right, that this aspect of my black self, my original language, has not found an easy integration into my white-psychoanalytic-self. Of course, the analysis didn’t end here, but the integration of his black identifications laid the groundwork for Michael to make psychic sense of the violent losses of his mother, whom he only remembered as his persecutor and tormentor. His feelings of love and attachment to her remained split-off and unavailable for his functioning.

I have learned that if a white person chooses to work with me, it may not be a random event. So I inquire about household help, especially nannies.

### Hating the Other

Let me turn to the third way of thinking about hatred that derives from racism. It concerns *re-externalizing* malignant projections and regarding the projective source with extreme hostility, which could precipitate violence and destruction.

I don’t know what internal toxic pressures mobilized the architects of the first condition of racism in this country to revile us and to murder us. Beyond the economic imperatives, I have to wonder whether there was something noxious internalized in them from being made outcasts from their motherland. I can’t account for the re-externalizing hating in white people, and I wish white people could think about this and add to the dialogue about racism.

In my life, however, I do know about this kind of hating in African-



American people. In my own experience, after I had a chance to “fix it,” my hatred and vocal hostility and racially hating single-mindedness spared no white person in my purview. My race-baiting politics had me abusing and losing friends, flaunting personal safety on dusty Southern roads, and balancing precipitously on the edge of cashing in my professional class citizenship. I was in analysis during the turbulence of the re-externalizing recovery from internalized hatred. My analyst didn’t have any theories to guide him, I’ll tell you. Should he interpret acting out destructive behavior in the transference? Or should he interpret malignant, preoedipal envy? Should he interpret suicidal impulses, and should he interpret these as a defense against separation and individuation, or should he cross his psychoanalytic fingers while the forces of hatred and destruction in me vented to exhaustion?

He and I have had some very interesting conversations since then. From his side, he talks about becoming conscious of being white during this time: about the terrible anxiety of not knowing how to think about my hatred, and not being able to get help for his not knowing. One of his supervisors said that my racial fervor was simply penis envy and should be dealt with in the transference. One colleague said that my hatred should be medicated. From my side, I talk about how his capacity to bear witness helped me find a way to survive being hated and hating.

I have sublimated the racially hating single-mindedness in work (not unlike a former Black Panther, who was elected to the Senate some years ago, representing a Southern state). My hatred and destructive impulses are focused on organizational and individual processes of victimization and unenlightenment. Where there are efforts to work at awareness and change, my time, experience, and energy are committed. It is extremely satisfying. I discharge a great deal of aggression, and I feel vindicated. I have the opportunity to affirm my fit in the cultural community, and my grandma, Marianne Kris, and my analyst live on in me.

#### **Hating the Other: Application to Practice**

I am committed to the proposition that people can survive being hated and hating, and that the process of re-externalization of toxic projections is a necessary condition for further self-development. I am committed and I feel the passion, but I don’t have a theory or metatheory to guide me. My experiences are of no use to me when I come to the question, “what should people do with their hatred?” Members of my generation were quite fortunate: when we were coming along, hatred was in fash-

ion. So great was the support for the re-externalizing recovery that one's very group membership could be called into question if one couldn't find one's hatred and commit to the politics of its expression. While my analyst had no theories to guide him, he did have a massive cultural context to use for orientation.

Times are very different now. Our psychoanalytic profession is brilliant in helping people uncover, recover, develop the capacity to love and admire the complexity of self, to sculpt lives broadened and enlarged with capacities to love and work. But if, perchance, we awaken hatred in this brilliant process, we have little to guide us beyond faith (if we have it) in the prevailing goodness in human nature. I think that we close our eyes and hope that *if* patients have to fix their passages through hatred, they do so without ruffling the frame unduly.

Case by case, I am frightened and plagued by ambiguity, because I don't know what people should do with their hatred. Case by case, what should Jewish patients do when they turn back anti-Semitic self-hatred? What should African-Americans do? What about white South African expatriots? Armenians? American Indians? Women patients? White male patients? Clearly, I need help from my colleagues.

Michael took a six-month break from the analysis during the re-externalizing period. He returned, reporting an abatement of violent fantasies and the onset of his particular sublimation. He was going to pursue a degree in biology, hoping that despite his advanced age, he might enter training for medial research. He was preparing to sublimate his gynecological torture fantasies in cancer research.

Marsha, on the other hand, is not there yet. My experience does not lead me to a hypothesis about what her re-externalizing will look like. Taking Michael as my example for comparison, I wonder whether I send subtle signals—out of my fear and ignorance—that she is on her own during this part of her passage to selfhood.

#### **Hating the Other: A Clinical Vignette**

I do have one patient, Adrienne, currently in the recovery phase. She is a woman of color who was physically, emotionally, and sexually abused in her birth home. She was in the foster-care system by the age of four, where she was likewise abused. By the time she was nine, she was in the juvenile-justice system, where she spent the greater percentage of her time in lock-up—no windows, no company.

When it was discovered that she had a genius IQ, she became the

ward of the state; she was sent off to a fancy prep school and was adopted by the chairman of the board of the school. She finished her teens and early twenties in upper-class, white, old-moneyed circumstances. She went on to train professionally and is now a high-ranking woman in authority in her field.

I have been working with her for fourteen years, helping her integrate the bits of herself that had fractured into multiple dissociative states in the prolonged and multiple atmospheres of hatred and abuse. We have done good and hard work together and have indeed achieved an analytic partnership.

It is the partnership on which I am relying as she passes through this recovery phase, because Adrienne hates everybody and God himself: truck drivers, the homeless, liberal whites of any class, the black social-service class, all professionals, me included, or especially. She truly feels quite homicidal at times: "I want somebody to pay!" "I want somebody to hurt the way I hurt"

Adrienne is particularly frightening when she talks about her driving: "Driver beware, 'cause I don't care!" The most intractable place in our work, though, is Adrienne's baby wish that someone—some big person—would hold the accountability for her pain: "I want somebody to say 'I'm sorry!' And mean it!"

If you believe, as I do, that re-externalizing the hatred is part of the work of developing a stable self, what would you do? Hospitalize? Medicate? Terminate? Make conditions? (If you hurt somebody, I won't see you). Bear witness?

That I have these questions suggests that Adrienne and I may be in a rather prolonged state of impasse in this recovery phase. I am by turns cowed by her hatred, slow to take up the inquiry into her homicidal fantasies, feeling hateful of being the container for this part of the work, proud of her, wondering what termination will hold for us. Mostly, I wish that I had a theory to guide me, or better yet, I wish that I were in conversation with colleagues about their experiences.

#### A Professional Puzzle

The realization that we have yet to develop theories to guide us about what people should do with their hatred once it is uncovered sheds some light on a perplexing professional puzzle that concerns me, which may or may not have something to do with externalized hatred.

That is, relative to the numbers of people, *of color or otherwise*, who are struggling to free themselves from the slavery of collusion with hateful projections, *racist or otherwise*, there are very few African-American psychoanalysts—people who know this passage so well, and have so much to give us in understanding an aspect of human development.

Over the years, there have been many hypotheses developed about this situation. Some black men say they wouldn't be psychoanalyzed in the first place, because the process would take away their righteous anger or creative rage. Some black revolutionaries say that psychoanalysis is an agent of majority oppression because it makes people accepting of the status quo. Some black psychologists say that fundamental precepts in our social science maintain that people of color experience primitive states, but are not sufficiently developed to engage in reflective processes on those states. Psychoanalysis, the elite guard, hasn't refuted this. Many, many black people ask "Why would a black person be a psychoanalyst?" as if the term "black psychoanalyst" is an oxymoron.

I haven't been particularly compelled by these ideas because the rhetoric doesn't fit my experience.

But there may be a simple effect operating. To the extent that we analysts haven't gone public with our not knowing about what people should do with their hatred, their being hated, hating and recovering from hate—to the extent that we are not yet having debates in our literature about these matters or raising questions in the popular press—there may be no way for people of color, or other people, for that matter, to identify with the developmental processes in psychoanalysis that are not really so different from their own. In my opinion, the processes of self-development of black people and the processes of development of psychoanalysis are similar, to the extent that both groups are dealing with issues of residual hatred and the necessity for differentiation.

I hope this article sparks some interest in our going public. I hope we take many next steps. Opening up conversations among us would be a good start.

What shall we talk about?

### Beyond Three Faces of Hatred

People *are hated*; people *bate themselves*; people *bate others*. Until we can find in our own experience even the most odious hate and the most humiliating self-abasement, we cannot reach those same parts of the peo-

ple we try to help in our clinical work. If we have within us an appreciation of all three faces of hate, we may be able to feel more acutely and usefully the sense of strong, hateful agency that survives even the worst victimization, and the hateful, weakening victimization of self that accompanies even the most vicious expressions of hate toward others.

But perhaps there is even more. In thinking through the application of my experience to clinical practice, I hold in mind a simple picture: Victims of racial hatred hate themselves and hate others. Perpetrators of racial hatred have themselves been hated and hate themselves. This is a collusive engagement that serves defensive purposes for individuals and perpetuates the cultural institution of racism.

For blacks to come out of collusive racial self-hatred, we have to take back the good projections (white is good) and tolerate the experience of our own self-hatred (black is bad). For whites to break the collusion of racial hating, they have to take back the bad projections (black is bad) and tolerate the experience of whatever self-hatred they experience as a result.

Against this clinical picture of racism, I hold another, paradoxical awareness: racial hating is so old that it has come to define us, and maybe not only in awful ways. The mutual identifications (and projective identifications) between blacks and whites, historical and current, have harmed us incalculably. But they also contribute to depth and complexity in our relatedness to one another, and to our individual and cultural identities. I can see possibilities here, but my awareness is shadowy. I sense that I have only barely caught onto the edges of a richer, deeper reality.

We have learned from the art of deconstruction in psychoanalysis to look for what is missing when we want to understand experience more deeply. What seems missing from the understanding of racial hating is an appreciation of the texture of being white in relation to the experiences of racism. We are used to thinking about what it is to be black. What is the experience of being white? Does the experience of being white in our world create faces of hatred other than those I know? Would thinking through and feeling through the experience(s) of being white tell us more about racism, and through racism, about the nature of hate itself? And perhaps just as important, would thinking and feeling through what it is to be white, in relation to what it is to be black, tell us something about who we are in this world of ours?

Now, *these* would be interesting conversations!

REFERENCE

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