

Washington Baltimore Center for Psychoanalysis Commitment to Anti-Racism

The recent murders of George Floyd, Ahmaud Arbery, and Breonna Taylor are terrible reminders of the persistent, dehumanizing effects of systemic racism and bigotry in our country. This is not simply the result of “bad apples” in police departments but of racism that is embedded in our institutions and can no longer be ignored. Psychoanalytic approaches to group dynamics teach us that silent bystanders are not innocent bystanders, and we, at the WBCP, regret the extent to which our previous silence has made us complicit with the horrors to which we now react. We acknowledge our complicity, and we dedicate ourselves to finding a different path, consistent with the values of diversity and equal rights that we have consciously held and espoused. We commit ourselves to new dialogues and new understandings aimed at dismantling the structures of racism in our own institution, our communities, and the country at large. We are also obligated to bring our voices and understanding of unconscious motivation, trauma, roots of violence (including that perpetrated by the state), and group dynamics to these conversations and to join with other organizations and fellow citizens to bring about lasting social change.

To this end, we join our colleagues at the American Psychoanalytic Association and at other Centers and Institutes around the country to make a Pledge for the WBCP (including the Washington Baltimore Psychoanalytic Institute) to become a more anti-racist institution. We especially acknowledge our colleagues at the Boston Psychoanalytic Society and Institute (BPSI) who generously shared their commitment to anti-racism on the APsA list serve and encouraged us to adapt their statement as we drafted our own. The format and contents of their action items were especially helpful. We are also most grateful to our colleague, Dorothy Holmes, and her group in the Carolinas (the PCC), for their cogent position statement, which Dorothy generously shared with us.

WE PLEDGE continued attention to the values and priorities needed to create meaningful change.

WE PLEDGE to build an increasingly diverse organization at all levels that with time will reflect the diversity and richness of our community.

WE PLEDGE to become an organization that commits to acknowledging and understanding the legacy of slavery, brutality, disenfranchisement, and racism that has seeped into psychoanalysis and has been previously disavowed.

WE PLEDGE to be an Institute and Center that commits to examining internalized racism within our own organization, and the unconscious barriers to change.

WE PLEDGE to promote and foster a psychoanalytic approach to understanding of racism, discrimination, and the many forms of othering.

WE PLEDGE to create a culture that values curiosity about race and diversity in all its forms: in the clinical situation, in the classroom, and in our dialogues.

WE PLEDGE to be open to the voices of people of color within our Center so that they may feel welcomed, heard, and safe in our midst.

Change will take time. We commit to beginning.

June 9, 2020