

American Handbook of Psychiatry

**PSYCHIATRIC PROBLEMS
OF THE
BLACK MINORITY**

Chester M. Pierce

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PSYCHIATRIC PROBLEMS OF THE BLACK MINORITY

The major and overriding psychiatric problem of the black minority is the withering effect of racism. Hence the sociocultural and community aim must be to dilute, undercut, and eliminate racism wherever and however it is located. Objective accounts of the results of racism can be found in many places such as Dr. John Norman's book on ghetto medicine. Racism's results can be quantified in terms of statistical comparison between blacks and whites in regard to such indicators as unemployment, mortality rates, longevity, substandard housing, and education level.

Although many problem areas might be selected, this chapter will discuss those problem areas thought to be both most critical and yet least often related to psychological and emotional health. The areas selected include problems concerning mass communication, formal educational channels, demographic patterns, and seeking alternative futures. As each of these areas is discussed a general solution will be suggested in terms of how the black population might move to increase its self-esteem, which is the most critical need in America's solving its most pressing domestic issue.

Before addressing these areas, however, a few introductory remarks will be necessary to orient the reader. The reader should know that black

psychiatrists may view both the problem areas and their solutions much differently from white colleagues, who in general tend to define the boundaries of psychiatric concern as no larger than those illnesses brought to the attention of the hospital, clinic, or consultation room. Second, the reader should consider that perhaps all that is written about blacks might apply to other nonwhite minorities and maybe even to the white poor. Finally, the reader should realize that since the overall aim of medicine is to help more people live longer and live better, it should not be surprising that the ultimate goal must be for blacks and whites alike to become planetary citizens, who see their province as the entire earth and who function as enlightened cosmopolites. The articulation of this long-range goal is a problem that has to be kept uppermost in mind while considering the short-term and intermediate goals and the problems that jeopardize their actualization. After defining racism, it will be the latter problem to which we turn.

The Definition of Racism

Racism in America is the behavior that results from mental attitudes about skin color. In this society all persons, black and white, are barraged by ceaseless efforts that insist that white skin color is superior to black skin color. As a result of this insistence, it is not unusual for any white to be permitted, in terms of unwritten law as well as written law, to exploit, degrade, abuse, humiliate, minimize, terrorize, and tyrannize any black. The

mental attitude about skin color, not economic status or social attributes, is what justifies this behavior for the white. Since blacks have been victimized to sustain similar attitudes, all too often they too adopt pro-racist attitudes and behavior in regard to themselves and to whites. Due to pro-racist attitudes in the United States, both blacks and whites do things that permit, promote, encourage, sustain, and insist that whites are superior and blacks inferior.

The fact that this mental attitude cannot be changed even in the face of contrary evidence makes it by definition a delusion. The tragic results of this delusion, afflicting virtually the entire population of this country, has had unsettling effects not only for us in this day but for the entire world now and for some time in the projected future.

A mental illness in which millions have been smitten of course makes racism a public health illness. Similarly, like all public health illnesses, such as smallpox or plague, the medical model would predict that such an illness cannot be treated on a one to one basis, that it would leave in its wake serious sequelae (both in terms of sociocultural and pathophysiological indices), and that it would require large sums of money to eradicate. Naturally, the most effective therapy would be prophylactic or preventive measures taken before the illness could seize a population. In sum, the society would have to commit itself and its resources to get rid of the pestilence.

Racism so far has been viewed as a mental health and public health problem. Another view that should be glanced at prior to a consideration of the problems of the black minority is that racism is an infectious disease, a perceptual disease, and a lethal disease.

This mental health and public health illness is contagious in the sense that an almost invariable experience is that wherever white Americans gather in concentration, save for exploitation, measures to discriminate and ignore blacks are instituted immediately. On a more commonplace basis, a clinical instance could be cited, such as the relative freedom of racial conflict in a classroom until the arrival of a new child, who presents with vigor his parents' and the societies' actual view of blacks. In such an instance, prolonged and bitter racial conflict ensues. Here old black-white friendships are strained, realigned, and perhaps ruptured, as a class of children in a schoolroom begins to act like the general society, when the only variable presented was the emphatic statements of presumed white superiority over the minority members of the class, who had dark skin. In the private school where this incident occurred, it took literally hours for the black parents to deal with their fifth-grade child as they attempted to aid the child in coping with the vicious dehumanization brought about by this circumstance.

Some things about racism that defy men of good will in coming to grips with the issues are a reflection of perceptual distortion. In almost any

instance of a black-white negotiation, the black sees things in one way while the white sees them differently. The white man thinks that to ask a black to consult about a film on blacks after it is made is a grand gesture, and he should be applauded and cheered by a grateful black community. It does not occur to him to utilize such consultation when the film is being written and produced. Nor does it occur to him that blacks should not always have to be grateful.

The most terrible and extreme consequence of racism is that it kills people—black and white. Black babies starving or being chewed up by rats are an example of a direct and easily visible problem. Less visible but equally fatal are deaths secondary to society's failures, such as those that precipitate drug abuse, the most immediate and pressing biosocial problem of black people. But whites are being killed also by their racism. For instance, a heavy bodily toll must be taken on thousands of whites as they commute back and forth to their outer cities. Much of the motivation for such commuting is to escape living near blacks.

Therefore, as one selects problems of the black minority, one must be aware of the ubiquitous effects of racism, a contagious and lethal mental and public health disease, which is characterized by perceptual distortion and false beliefs about skin color.

Problems of Mass Communication

The mass media more often than not see to it that blacks are portrayed in ways that continue to teach white superiority. Tire unsophisticated argue how marvelous it is that blacks are now seen regularly in non-menial as well as menial roles in films and on television. Yet the way blacks are presented on these media, in general, has immeasurable importance in keeping blacks in a reduced status. For instance, a black is more often the server than the served, for example, on a commercial the black pumps the gas while the white drives the car or the black woman is the cab driver while the white man's uncivil remarks give her a headache. The black can be predicted to be less often depicted as a thinking being. For instance, although he is the district attorney in a program, the black solves a case with his fists; an underling, who is a white police lieutenant, uses his brains to solve the same problem. That is, while the district attorney is being beat up, the lieutenant is deploying squad cars, securing laboratory assistance, and reasoning out his next move. Gratuitously, that is, unnecessarily, the show depicts the lieutenant speaking with a force and an arrogance that would not be tolerated in a real life situation between a district attorney and his subordinate. A public service advertisement tells white and black adults and youths the testimony of white children getting eyeglasses. This resulted in better school grades and increased ability to concentrate. Then one sees a black child testify that getting one's eyes tested is "fun." Thus, the black is seen over and over in such

guises as a server and a non-thinking physical creature. Even his own health is attended to only because it is fun and immediate. On the other hand, both whites and blacks are told that whites are clever and far-seeing and attend to their interest because it is intelligent. Further, for all the millions who watch television, essentially it is only a white who controls, decides, and plans.

The black, even while solving his problems at a physical level, is usually shown to be contained, controlled, and inhibited by authority. Often this authority reinforces the true life condition of police control and surveillance of ghettos. At other times, the authority takes improbable forms. For instance, a very popular cartoon show for children, "The Globetrotter," shows a group of tractable, handsome black athletes. Yet what the children of the nation see week after week is that such a group of black men are controlled and directed by a small, feisty, white grandmother. Thus, hour after hour, emotional and psychological sets are being molded whereby blacks and whites will accept as usual and routine that even a senescent white woman can boss around, direct, and guide capable black men.

All these and countless other examples show blacks as accommodating, controlled, dependent, and, of course, not creative or original in their thought. However, other mass communications do more of the same. Television is cited first because it happens to use up more of a child's life than school hours. That is, by age sixteen, most children will have spent more hours

before a television than in a classroom.

Let us look at other forms of mass media. Movies make similar claims of increased use of blacks in more dignified roles. As an aside, there can be no solution until blacks can have decision-making input into mass media, instead of merely having increased public exposure. Until this is done, pro-racist teachings will continue unabated.

As an example of what movies do in terms of the problem under discussion, one can mention a movie entitled *The Landlord*. In this comedy a white man buys a tenement building in a ghetto. Among other adventures he encounters three black women. One woman reaches out and nourishes and protects him, with all the devotion that whites love to recount when they talk about their black “mammies.” Another black woman, a beauty, goes to bed with this man the first night she meets him. But it is the third black woman who exemplifies on the screen all the problems we have touched on. She is a black mother. The writers have her initiate an overture to the white hero. When her husband is jailed (significantly, because he was protesting racial ills), she goes to bed with the hero. As a result she is impregnated. When the cuckolded husband returns, he discovers his plight and in justifiable wrath pursues the white. However, even though armed with a weapon, chasing an unarmed man, the black is seen as ineffective. When he finally corners his prey, the mass media producers do not permit the black man to deliver a

blow to the white. Instead, this comedy shows the black man paralyzed to act and then immobilized by a straitjacket so he can be carted away in an ambulance. The story does not stop by telling its audiences that blacks, no matter what the provocation, do not resist or cannot give effective resistance to whites. The plot goes on relentlessly, as comedy, to show the white hero living with the black mother while she awaits his child and while her black husband, the political militant, is in a mental institution. Almost all films in movies or on television can be analyzed from such perspectives by blacks. The emotional damage such mass communications do is limitless and unknown.

What the reader must bear in mind is that these assaults to black dignity and black hope are incessant and cumulative. Any single one may not be gross. In fact, the major vehicle for racism in this country is offenses done to blacks by whites in this sort of gratuitous, never-ending way. These offenses are micro-aggressions. Almost all black-white racial interactions are characterized by white put-downs, done in an automatic, preconscious, or unconscious fashion. These mini-disasters accumulate. It is the sum total of multiple micro-aggressions by whites to blacks that has pervasive effect to the stability and peace of this world.

These offensive maneuvers by whites stem from the mental attitude of presumed superiority. Thus, whites feel they can initiate actions, direct

unilateral operations, and control blacks, whom they are told over and over are unthinking, physical creatures dependent and available for entertainment, gratification, and exploitation. Unfortunately, blacks too accept such communications, and by their pro-racist attitude and behavior they all too often accept the white definition of a black or of a black problem.

Offensive maneuvers are so rampant in this society that one cannot help but witness them each day even in places where the racial component is essentially homogenous. That is, the newspapers, periodicals, radio, and so on all add their weight to the problems emanating from television, movies, films, plays, and musicals. But there are other vehicles that damage, even if no black is a witness.

Whites, for example, would not pause to consider racism in statuary. In liberal and genteel Boston there is a statue of "The Emancipator." An heroic-sized Lincoln wears a beneficent mien and holds a roll of Clio with one hand and extends another hand, as if in a blessing, over a black man on his knees dressed in diapers and wearing chains on his wrists. Since emancipators are common themes in art, one can contrast this statue with renditions of Simon Bolivar seen throughout South America or even in Central Park South in New York or off Canal Street in New Orleans. In these places there is no gratuitous degradation of another human being as homage is given to the subject of the statue. Yet there are on public display few statues or reliefs of blacks that do

not go to special lengths to assure a viewer that the black is in the inferior role. Even a rendition of a slave, if this is to communicate an historical past, need not show him on his knees in a diaper. Anyone who has viewed the powerful and awesome "Slave" in the square in front of the palace in Port au Prince, Haiti, gets a totally different emotional and psychological impact than from viewing the slave in Boston or the black who walks behind the Teddy Roosevelt equestrian (along with an Indian) in front of the Museum of Natural History in New York.

Space permits only a brief consideration of one more mode of mass communication violence to black people. Again one must not look for the gross and obvious. The subtle, cumulative mini-assault is the substance of today's racism. Thus, one must do content analysis of newspapers or periodicals in order to reckon the violence done daily to blacks. Even on sports pages white rookie athletes are hailed as certainties in their professions because they "understand the game" or "can think out a problem." Black rookie athletes are applauded for their vaunted "raw power and speed" or "blinding fast ball." Presumably, white athletes think and black athletes rely only on bodily prowess.

Yet the corrosive influences of biased content are placed more effectively and more constantly on news pages. Here, for instance, an ambiguous caption under a picture of a white woman may give the

impression that a black attacked her when in fact her assailant's color is unknown. Or by clever placement, in areas where most readership concentrates, an episode sympathetic to blacks is markedly counterbalanced by an outraged innuendo about a black political figure.

The solution to the problems caused by mass media lies in developing ways for every black American to become expert in the analysis of propaganda. Once this is done blacks will relate at entirely different levels to themselves and to the majority. Every community psychiatrist therefore should inform himself of the fundamentals of propaganda so that he can be in an advisory and educative role in helping masses of blacks understand and dilute, if not counteract, the ceaseless brainwashing that goes on via mass communications with the conscious as well as unconscious design to keep blacks ineffective, passive, hopeless, and helpless. In addition, psychiatrists must find ways to help blacks eliminate micro-aggressions used by all mass media and copied in white-black real life encounters.

But that effort only reaches one aspect of the system. Blacks must be more than propaganda analysts and change agents for mass media. They must also act to make the school system fail.

Problems Due to Formal Education Channels

The formal education channels must stop turning out defeated,

demoralized, passive, poorly skilled blacks. When this is done, blacks will be able to operate in an effective, cooperative manner that will make useless the debate about whether blacks should integrate or segregate.

Yet at this moment in history we must deal with the reality that most blacks go to segregated, inferior schools that are phenomenally successful in their mission. The mission of a school is to prepare children for their sociocultural and political reality as adults. In this democracy, the sociocultural and political reality is that every black is a disenfranchised, second-class citizen. The schools must be congratulated for meeting this mission with such thorough success. If masses of blacks truly believed the mouthings about democracy that American schools and mass media proclaim to the world, one could not have generation after generation of black masses accepting their second-class disenfranchisement with complacency and accommodation and often even with incredibly good cheer. If the schools had not succeeded in preparing the great mass of blacks to accept their situation and function as passive aggregations, there would already have been a gigantic counter-violence to white violence. But instead, despite the impressions one gains from the mass media, the problem is not that too many blacks are psychologically militant but on the contrary that, thanks to the schools and the mass media, most blacks are docile and accepting. It is, therefore, of interest and importance to understand how the school system can conduct such a distinctly successful program that masses of blacks are

psychologically prepared to accept all sorts of ruthless, antidemocratic practices in a land that has boasted about its democratic practices from its beginnings, when it became the world's leading slave state, to the present, when most of the people on the globe consider it the world's leading aggressor state. It is not without exaggeration to expect that if black Americans can make the school system fail in its mission to them, perhaps the entire world will feel less anxious about the aggressive proclivities of the most powerful nation that has ever existed. To understand this potential contribution to world peace and the vital role that community psychiatrists can play in its actualization, we must first determine what factors have allowed the educational system to work so effectively on the black masses. A case illustration from a Boston junior high school may be illuminating.

In all truth it is more difficult for a visitor to gain entrance to this Boston inner-city school than it is to gain entrance to the U.S. Navy Electronics Laboratory in San Diego, the presumptive repository of our fleets' secrets. The visitor or the school child approaches a formidable structure complete with bars on the windows. The large steel doors on this fortress-like structure are bereft of handles; hence one must pound hard to await someone to open the door from the inside. Once inside, the visitor is questioned gruffly as to his business in the school and as to whether or not the school authorities downtown know of the visit and its purpose. If one passes this inquisition by the white guard, he is free to observe the true method that has resulted in the

success of the school system. The point here to remember is that quality education is not the issue so long as the child is subjected to the abuses about to be described in this very obvious prison structure.

Like all successful brainwashing endeavors, the black student is never permitted to have even the dignity and independence of controlling his vegetative wants. Thus the school system locks the lavatory, and the child is told, explicitly and implicitly, that it is locked because he and his kind are so sick that if they had free access they would pop dope and fight and smoke pot. The locked handleless doors are an occasion to remind the budding black citizen, both explicitly and implicitly, that he and his kind are so sick that if the doors were open, his community would ransack the building, raping and beating teachers.

Still better and more subtle brainwashing is accomplished. One notes that all these prisoner-students are wearing coats despite the warmth of the building. The prisoner-students are told that if hangers were provided, he and his kind are so sick that they would steal one another's garments. Theorizing perfect quality of education, it is difficult to see how such a prisoner-student could grow up to be proud, independent, cooperative, or helpful. He is told over and over, at every occasion possible, that he and his are worthless and valueless and defeated. A good bulk of his conscious hours are spent in actual custody and confinement where he is subjected to sustained depreciation.

If an observer at this school had had any experience working in a true prison setting, it would be apparent immediately that the entire genre was identical to a prison. Here too the inmates test the limits of how much they can do without losing “good time.” Here too the inmates are told step by step what to do (“Didn’t I tell you to use these stairs . . . stop . . . go that way”), as if the exertion of any independent thought would be molding a youth who might dare to imagine. And as all have known since the days that it was proverbial in ancient Greece, imagination is the friend of terror. Thus, the junior high schooler in this school, which could be replicated all over our nation’s ghettos, is made unimaginative, limited, and concrete in his thinking process. It would not do to have blacks dare to imagine, for then they might become friends of terror. At the same time, the black is the victim of a torrent of propagandistic ideation, which serves to make him accept a reduced status. The youth, even if he worked hard in the school and even if he had a quality education and pleasant surroundings to study in at home, would hardly have esteem and confidence in himself and his group. But then, as if such a school experience is not sufficient, after being in custody all day long the youth returns to the general community, where the television, newspapers, movies, and radio continue the same lesson to the black. He is taught that he is an inferior person toward whom whites can and will take prerogatives they would never consider taking with another white, since it would do violence to their sense of human rights. By syllogism, therefore, the black must be

subhuman.

As if this was not enough of a problem to the black minority, there now appears on the horizon an even more pernicious route to disenfranchisement via an education channel. It is pernicious, even though, like the public education system and the mass media, it should and could be looked to as a principal route to banish racism. This particular route is the almost incontestable certainty that within a decade thousands of black (and white) children will be subjected to institutionalized child care in the prekindergarten years of life.

An alarm must be sounded. The large monies to be made available for such child care can be a deliverer or an executioner for the black masses. Since the public school education system has been so effective in pacifying the masses of black citizens, the exact operation and goals of the prekindergarten educational schemes must be very carefully evaluated. If they do more harm than good, black hopes will be almost nonexistent because the two formal education channels will have neutralized blacks between ages zero to fifteen.

The general solution for the problem of the black minority relative to formal education is twofold. On the one hand, while our people are becoming more aware of how to eliminate the negative propaganda heaped on them, they must become much more able to command a knowledge of total systems

and how these systems integrate with one another.

Once this is done, the black, whether he is a schoolboy or a taxi driver, will know how to strengthen the formal channels to his own advantage (including constructing alternative channels of formal education) as well as to educate himself and his peers at multiple informal levels. Black cohesiveness, which is synonymous with black pride and black selfhood, depends on knowledge of where and how to exert maximum effort to modify or eliminate racist institutions.

Here too the task for the psychiatrist may seem untraditional. Some readers will be uneasy about whether or not such functions belong to psychiatry. Yet, what a present-day psychiatrist does on Park Avenue or Wilshire Boulevard would be scarcely recognizable to the man who practiced psychiatry in 1900. The society demanded and required, as all through history, that health services be given in a certain manner. Thus the role of the psychiatrist who is serious about these problems of the black inner city must be to assume an educative role so that he can help influence masses of people. Thus, he must bring to bear the knowledge of psychodynamics and psychological interactions as he teaches the value to the black psyche of understanding and neutralizing propaganda and understanding and utilizing systems theory. Yet, here too there are other cognitive inputs that blacks must have gratified in order to be maximally effective, efficient, and happy.

One more such set of cognitive needs will be mentioned before we pass on to the equally important area of affective education in the promotion of black mental health.

Problems from Demography

All black children and adults must learn demography. In order to be able to justify one's existence and determine suitably egosyntonic life goals, it is necessary to know where you stand in relation to the rest of the society. The cognitive and quantitative definition of such knowledge constitutes the field of demography.

In America today, blacks are a segregated, urban people. A goodly majority of all black children who are born today will spend a significant portion of their lives in urban, segregated situations. In fact, perhaps only one out of ten will live in multiracial circumstances during childhood. This demographic trend of increasing black clusters in cities makes such an analysis the crucial consideration in planning black-white strategy.

In order to make wise decisions and implement them, blacks must start from this base and consider the myriad advantages and disadvantages that result from the reality that we are essentially (both quantitatively and qualitatively) an urban, segregated people.

The intragroup conflicts that will stall blacks in the coming decade might be greatly reduced if black people would begin to incorporate and utilize a wealth of demographic data in the solutions of problems that require group coordination. For instance, a black response to the separate questions of birth control and population control would require more than sentiment. The decision to be best for the total society, including ourselves, has to be based on data. Further, what is required in one circumstance may not be suitable in another. Blacks, with the help of such experts as community psychiatrists, have to begin to construct desirable alternative plans, based on demographic probability and possibility. A local neighborhood will need to know such things as job markets, housing plans, population migrations, and consumer power in order to bring about positive sociopolitical action.

At a national level, blacks must develop a critical social pathway. That is, utilizing demographic data and the best available communication and systems analysis, a long-range plan should be developed that embraces a black response to all possible white interventions. For example, what steps, in fine detail, would have to be taken if tomorrow white America became truly democratic? Or what steps would be required if tomorrow the homes of blacks (about 90 per cent segregated) were cordoned off as one step toward concentration camp existence? The psychology of leadership and the psychology of life in extremely stressful, exotic environments is replete with verification that people do best who have anticipated possibilities and

rehearsed the use of options and how to develop them. Such planning in itself is psychologically helpful for both the individual participant and the group. The task of community psychiatry must be to use its expertise in encouraging blacks to plan and to believe that they are able and capable of controlling their own lives and their own institutions in a pluralistic society. The task will be made simpler if black children, from the time they can remember, begin to deal with demographic facts about buying power, occupational skills, health services, and political blocs.

There is a regrettable tendency in American society not to permit blacks to be powerful in any manner. Blacks, as a whole, fail to realize strengths, since the system focuses always on black weaknesses. As an example, black mental illness is the focus of concern for psychiatrists rather than the investigation of the factors that permit blacks to endure. If black strengths, especially group strengths (as opposed to individual skills, talents, strengths), were emphasized more, black esteem would be heightened.

Therefore, in a demographic sense blacks must be more conscious of the strength of the nonwhite world, both in terms of numbers and skills. The American black has something precious that could be emphasized and used to help the whole world to peace. Compared to white America, we are bereft of skills. But compared to the rest of the world, white and nonwhite, we have abundant skills. For instance, tomorrow, without any jeopardy to the health

services of the nation, black doctors and personnel for an entire first-class medical school could be exported to, say, an African country in temporary distress. In no way would such a school be inferior. In the move toward planetary citizenship in the ever smaller world, American blacks must think more in mass terms in regard to white-non-white alignments and contributions. For a psychiatrist in a ghetto to concentrate on a work program training upholsterers, while neglecting to get blacks, particularly black youth, to have a better cognitive map of who we are and how we can or could relate to the rest of the world, is to be helping to apply a Band-Aid in an instance requiring radical surgery.

So far we have considered how blacks think. It follows that how one thinks determines much about how he functions. But mental illness comes about not only from how one thinks and functions but also how one feels and believes. A problem in the black community is to make people feel and believe that they have hope. To do this requires a consideration of providing something that is not now provided.

The Problem of Constructing the Future

Futurologists take the view that we can no longer afford to plan *for* the future but must plan the future itself. A society of affluence and technology no longer should plan for the welfare of illiterates. It must take steps to plan that

there should be no illiteracy. In terms of problems of minority blacks, steps must be taken to ensure help for each black citizen.

For the community psychiatrist, hope might be broken down into psychodynamic components which would include provisions for self-confidence; provisions for feelings of being needed, wanted, and useful; and provisions for feeling satisfied and satisfying. Yet the component parts that will occupy us at present are those that relate to feelings of being loved, feelings of controlling one's own destiny, and feelings that one is aware of multiple, positive options that he may exert.

The emphasis on feelings and motivations must result in blacks taking antiracist, instead of pro-racist, stances in interpersonal interactions. Black people must be ever more sensitive about how and when to take counteroffensive measures against whites. This means, in practice, being aware of our options and feeling we must exercise them in the service of reducing racist behavior. The black would thereby be constructing his future, since all actions must be devoted to planning not for the effects of racism but for its elimination.

Broadly speaking, there are two sets of options for blacks. On the one hand are those options that must be viewed and selected for action that relate to macro-problems. These are the large and broad issues that engage the race

as a group and that demand concerted group action as the group labors to control its own direction. For instance, macro-problems would include such issues as how to combat anti-intellectualism in the inner city, or how to control the police forces in a community, or how to make a viable black economic subsystem that would function to our mutual benefit in the richest land the world has known.

However, it is the set of micro-problems that will require our present consideration. These are problems that arise in individual interactions, almost always secondary to a white's offenses, which are initiated and spewed out as micro-aggressions . These problems are micro only in name, since their very number requires a total effort that is incalculable, even though each single effort might be only a micro-effort. The black must be taught to recognize these micro-aggressions and construct his future by taking appropriate action at each instance of recognition. He must see options for his behavior.

Here is an example witnessed recently in a well-to-do neighborhood, where a black couple and a white man, probably all of similar economic and educational circumstances, stopped at a newspaper machine. Recall that blacks and whites in America take pro-racist positions. Thus, a black is expected to defer to a white, to seek white guidance and advice, to accept white instructions, to laugh at himself in the presence of whites, and to

minimize any black in comparison to a white. The white man, operating from presumed superiority, gave instructions, directions, and advice to the black woman as she tried valiantly, but unsuccessfully, to get the machine to operate. While laughing at her ineptitude she dropped a coin. She elected to tell her black companion to pick it up, although all the verbal interaction had been between the white and herself. She accepted the coin without any response of gratitude for the kindness rendered as he gave her the coin. However, in the same natural and unwitting manner, she extended another coin to its white owner, while dignifying her effort by statements of thanks. The white walked off with more evidence, even if unconscious to him, that blacks extend themselves to please him and that they defer to his judgment, accept instructions, laugh at themselves, and treat their own as inferiors. In this interaction, none of these negative aspects had to be reinforced by the black woman. She could have elected, for instance, to tell the white to pick up the coin or she could have let him reach out and ask for the other coin.

But this brings up the matter of awareness of nonverbal cues as vehicles for racism. To accept such cues forecloses the future for blacks. These cues are kinetic racisms. In a real sense, how skillfully a black comes to recognize and deal with them may determine whether the white world wears him out, as is all too often the case.

A few examples will suffice. A black man stands exactly at the usual

place where a bus stops and where the sign says it will stop. A white man, the only other waiting passenger, stands some fifteen feet away. When the bus arrives it stops right in front of the white man. Or a line of people are waiting to get into a movie. People leaving the movie must cut across this line. If a black happens to be in the line, almost surely outgoing patrons will decide to cross in front of him. In crowded hotel lobbies, whites who must find a route through the maze will usually walk as close as possible to a black person, expecting him to yield ground, in order to give them both more space. On a crowded street, such as Fifth Avenue in New York, whites do not waver as they approach a black. Their expectation is that, since their life space is more prized and valuable than the blacks', it should be the black who gives ground, who moves out of the way, who dips his left shoulder and pulls in his arm as they pass each other. In restaurants or stores if a waitress or salesman approaches a group of customers and one happens to be black, there is a case of "ease of selection."

The selection is easy because you know who does not have to be served first. Being black in these United States means that in such routine interactions there is an ease of selection based on ideas of presumed superiority. That blacks can and will be offended is the first law. The second law states that, whenever possible, offend the black, even by kinetic means, so that there will be reinforcement of the ideas of white superiority and black inferiority.

Once a black is aware of these mechanisms and how they determine his and his society's future, he can predict occurrences and take steps to despoil them or at least dilute them.

For instance, a black at a dinner where the table is round can assume, before the fact, that he will be the last served by the waiters as they come in and ladle out food. That is, the service will start with the person next to him.

But suppose, for instance, one was boarding an airplane with assigned seats, and one saw a white cripple at the bottom of the stairs to the plane waving everyone to go ahead of him. Doubtlessly, in these circumstances, most anyone would have let a man on crutches go up the stairs ahead of him. However, if one was the only black in the line and he witnessed this behavior, he would have to be alert for the fact that the cripple would decide to go up the stairs when the black arrived. In this true story, had the black allowed the cripple to go up first he would have reinforced racism and at the same time aggravated himself psychologically and possibly psychosomatically. Thus, when in fact the cripple made his move to cut in front of the black, the black had to use greater mobility and nimbleness to get up the stairs first.

Another true story of anticipating and despoiling racism rooted in kinetics involves an airline hostess serving coffee to three men. She began at the aisle seat, then served the man in the middle and then the man in the

window seat. At the next set of seats she was in trouble, because here too were three men (had there been a woman the problem might have resolved differently). Yet, by chance, black men occupied both the aisle and window seats, while a white man was in the middle.

Her dilemma was where to start. If she started on either the aisle or window seat she could not serve the white man first. The black on the aisle was sensitive to her problem. The hostess solved it by saying, "Coffee anyone?" as she stuck her tray under the nose of the white man, so that he could put his cup on first. The aisle black answered politely, "Thank you," as he deftly put his cup on the tray before the white could react. Had the black not been calculating her behavior in this situation there could have been another reinforcement that blacks can and will and should be offended.

A community psychiatrist will see dozens of episodes of micro-aggressions and kinetic racisms toward blacks. If blacks recognize and react to these in a different fashion, then indeed they are constructing a different future. The psychiatrist with his knowledge of interpersonal dynamics must help blacks to construct such alternative futures.

Conclusions

Community psychiatrists are concerned, and properly so, about such questions as the number of first admissions of blacks to state hospitals or

whether blacks have special forms of mental illness or whether treatment of a black will have to be different from methods used to treat whites. These are problems and solutions will be sought, for instance, many black psychiatrists feel that traditional, middle-class, white methods of psychotherapy may not suit the needs of many blacks.

Yet the community psychiatrist who is concerned with the whole society should address also other issues in regard to the current black-white problems. An important question, for example, is by what means upper-class (and to some extent also upper-middle-class) white females perpetuate racism. Perhaps studies on the attitude formation of young, white, upper-class females would do far more in understanding racism than all sorts of studies by whites in the ghettos, as they choose to call the inner-city communities. It is the young, upper-class, white female who will become wife and mother, whose influence as a culture transmitter needs to be studied. It is instructive to think how the white majority has sent white men to study blacks in black communities, but how unsettling it would be to consider sending black men to study white females in white communities. The very uneasiness such a thought promotes indicates how large a problem the community psychiatrist faces. The barriers are tough but hopefully not unyielding.

In the next decade perhaps more community psychiatrists will involve themselves in neighborhoods, schools, homes, mass media offices, and so on

in an effort to help make blacks flexible, hopeful, thinking, adventuresome, cooperative citizens who control their own destiny. Much work needs to be done in which psychiatrists work with other specialists in matters ranging from developing curricula and games to producing movies and television (for a global electronics educational system among other usages) to advising government and industrial leaders.

Like Euripides, the community psychiatrist should see the entire world as his province. In this analogy the cities of America constitute the backyard of the community psychiatrist. And before he can go out to engage this wonderful world, he must put out the fire that burns in his backyard and threatens to burn even more. This dangerous fire in his backyard is racism. It must be put out before the whole province is destroyed.

The day may be close at hand when community psychiatrists and other consultants are used by blacks in their effort to decrease group divisiveness and reduce their acceptance of patronizing or condescending behavior from whites. Such blacks may project futures and predict critical pathways by using forecasting techniques such as trend analysis or correlation plotting. Such blacks may understand complex interlocking systems and make group plans while exemplifying deliberate individual behavior, which is regarded as essential in eliminating micro-aggressions by whites. For instance, they might have been schooled in informal or formal school systems to practice such

maneuvers as never arguing with each other in the presence of whites. These blacks will understand the value of levity control and publicity control. Hence, they will not resort automatically and casually to laughter, jocularity, and cheerfulness when confronting whites in serious negotiations. Nor will they be indiscriminate about revealing or discussing plans with whites before the appropriate occasions and circumstances. Many such blacks will shun and avoid most petitions by whites to publicize them or their ideas. Such blacks will be a force to aid the entire black community to enhance its esteem. And surely these blacks would find other titles more positive to group image and solidarity than "Psychiatric Problems of the Black Minority."

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