

IIBA 24th International Bioenergetic Conference 2017

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Proposal: Social Work (Meeting Point with black women and men)

Responsible:

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São Paulo - Brazil

Bionergetic Conference 2017

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From 05/24/2017 to 05/28/2017
Chelsea Hotel

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Methodology:

The Meeting Point Group (Grupo Ponto de Encontro) began on 03/21/2015 in São Paulo - Brazil, east of the capital and it is intended for psychological and corporal care open to those interested (black women and men) once a week on Saturdays.

Time: It began with duration of two hours for a year and six months and currently with four hours from 9:30 AM to 1:30 PM. Average attendance of 10 people per meeting with a maximum of twenty participants. Most are women. The feelings and emotions that emerge from the participants are welcome as some person enters or leaves the group.

The themes addressed may be spontaneous connected to life experiences involving feelings, emotions, anguish as result of racism and or specific ones like "knots" that hinder personal development such as the issue of bonds in affective relationships, work and personal financial organization.

Venue: The meetings usually take place in the office of the person in charge or in a house of participants.

The intended audience has been black women and men from the clinic and people invited by these or others who know the work through social networks.

Calendar:

Open to interested parties (black women and men) on Saturdays once a month.

Summary:

The proposal to create the group came about when we noticed in the clinic the loneliness of black people in the face of the lack of space in the family, friends, professionals or groups to share their suffering lived by the experience of racism. The present work aims to provide a space of conversation, exchange of ideas and reflections of blackness in order to strengthen identity.

In Brazil little is said about the issue of race relations. The secular experience of racism and the current invisibility of its psychosocial effects are a sequence of traumatic experiences that characterizes the experiences of racism as a psychic and corporal trauma (somatic and energetic). We intend to enable the emotional expression, often disguised, aiding in the understanding and relief of psychic suffering through bodily movements.

Knowing our defensive patterns leads us to aware our chronic muscular tensions. The individual space is respected allowing the rescue of the unique being in this world.

The choice to work in small groups is due to the possibility of repairing bonds, creating a new possibility to relate to the world and each one can participate with their response pattern (characterological defense), leading to the different types of reaction to emotional and threatening experiences.

Approach to the socio-historical situation:

The formation of a country is known through its mode of production. In Brazil the Portuguese colonial slave production mode occurred since its discovery in 1500. Slavery lasted 354 years; more than 5 million blacks were transported under merchant conditions and mistreatment. As a strategy of weakening, they merged the black people in different cultures and religions in a process of acculturation before the loss of its roots, traditions, and language and original identities. They lived in awful conditions in the “senzalas” (quarters), dehumanized and brutalized.

The São Paulo State population was composed of Indigenous, Caucasian and Black people. Today, this capital city is one of the largest metropolises in the world and had been involved in this process of slave labor since the beginning of the 16th century.

At the end of the 18th century, the state of São Paulo was discovered as an appropriate place for the planting and production of coffee, in the face of this situation it demanded more manpower and so in 1870 it was home to the third large black slave population in the country. In 1888 with the end of slavery, the enslaved population was aging and insufficient, so farmers worried about the construction of national identity opted for the arrival of European immigrants. In 1893 the city was made up of 54% of immigrants. Free blacks were replaced and deprived of the labor market. There was a double objective with European immigration: to white and “europeanese” the country.

The subject of national identity and the future of the nation were discussed by Brazilian intellectuals and Europe spread the ideals of scientific racism. Scientists who tried to defend racism justified the superiority of white people as being more civilized and associated with progress, on the other hand Blacks, Indians and Asians were inferior, including morally.

To develop Brazil, due to the large number of the black population, Brazilian intellectuals thought of miscegenation as a positive value of progress. The ideal of whitening, a typically Brazilian theory, arose and overtime it was believed that there was no racism in Brazil.

Importance of the proposal:

Abolition in Brazil is only 128 years old, occurred on 05/13/1888. There were no public policy the next day of social redress for this population that had built the country ever since. Faced with the picture of enormous inequality and helplessness, it was and still is difficult for the black people to escape from invisibility, to establish his identity and to denounce racism in its various manifestations. This social situation generates intense suffering leading to various physical and mental health problems worsen by the silence of pain and the myth of racial democracy in the country. Recently this myth has been deconstructed. The blackness movement becomes necessary in the face of prejudice and discrimination and for the strengthening of its descendants.

This unequal condition causes suffering and neurotic behaviors, difficulty concentrating, and low professional performance, pain in the body, difficulty breathing and feeling of emptiness that might collapse the mind leading to a psychotic condition.

The body will try to find a defense for these constant threats and even if the reactive attitudes of the person bear fruit of personal and social victory, we know that there are reflections of this suffering. People often do not see themselves in what they have built, they do not seize their conquests and this is a generator of psychic suffering.

Feelings of freezing body withdrawal, fear, sadness, anguish, vulnerability, weaknesses, depression, isolation, constant tension, doubts about personal capacity, escape from visual contact out of fear, shame or insecurity, no recognition of what or who they are, feeling of non-identity and not belonging to a place were very common feelings and emotions found at the beginning of the group.

The black person in the attempt to attain the dominant ideology of whiteness in bodily aesthetics, beauty demanding a pattern of excellence in intellectuality leads to exhausting physical and mental fatigue. They can often become invisible in the environment in an attempt not to face conflicts out of fear or pain.

Such an effort will be a trigger for illnesses such as anxiety, migraine, high blood pressure and depression, pain and muscle tensions.

Finding your peers (black people) and speaking before these others what they feel gives strength, allows them to reframe a piece of history giving strength to face racism and pain.

In this work, verbal and corporal communication is aimed at speaking the same language together, favoring the exchange of contact through the touch, enabling bonds of trust and leaving the silence.

Bodywork makes it possible to humanize this black body. It is a great ally in restoring the flow of energy in the body generating a feeling of being alive and can lead to an increased ability to feel pleasure.

Naming for the black person the suffering caused by racism, showing that it is not about his imagination, giving credibility to his speech and his bodily reactions, makes it possible to rescue his existence. Opposite situations can nourish a state of mental confusion traumatizing the individual again.

Used Tools:

The body is the great home of our present and past experiences because it involves our ancestry.

The environment and relationships constantly influence us and when we lose our own strength in the face of the racist act, we believe that the body is place of restoration of strength and humanized identity.

This brings us much encouragement and hope because the resources are with us mainly.

In this way we show the need for a closer look at racial relations and their unfolding influenced by social history through the corporal work.

The body is energy. The black body attacked by racist looks and attitudes usually paralyzes and their actions become restricted, collapsed and this will influence their personality. We intend to turn these barriers into libertarian attitudes by assuming their identity as a black person.

Bioenergetics – We use exercises instituting a process of growth that leads to an exit from covert conflicts, mainly through grounding in its various possibilities. The goal is to bring the participants to the sensitization and body awareness, always attentive to the specificity of the black body, to favor the energy balance through the breathing, to recover the self-expression arriving at the self-esteem and joy.

The Grounding concept has been one of the cornerstones of bodywork in this process:

1 - Grounding Posture - Encourage the flow of energy down through the pelvis, legs and feet. Being in the world. There is the intention of the quest for autonomy and greater bodily excitement. Believing that we can be in the place we choose. Racism dictates that the place of a black person is in subordination.

2 - Internal grounding and breathing - It aims to develop the person for himself. Rescue self-confidence and belief in yourself. Realize your emotional state through silence and breathing. Listen to your own voice and do not let yourself contaminate too much with the outside voices.

3 - Grounding of the look - Perceive yourself and let the person's look constitute you in a humanized way, recognize the beauty through the black aesthetic body and its greatness. The racist look tries to dehumanize the person.

4 - Grounding in culture, family and community - Ancestry has been lost, black people do not know their origin. Rescuing family memories, values from the history of Africa in a positive way and respect for African religiosity.

Touch – A body that carries in itself ancestral marks of the brutality of the whip, a stigmatized body invaded and treated many times as an object in various ways, resignifying to touch as a place, perception of muscular tensions with sensitivity, affection and respect.

Biosynthesis – Meditation has also been used as a tool to bring focus to the moment, reconnect to our body, increase the sensation of relaxation, reduce the risk of stress, increase immunity.

Dynamics – We made use of some dynamics that aided in group phenomena, recognition of personal values and financial organization.

Results obtained and expected:

The group began with schizoid character defenses with expressions of distrust, fear and with the thought dissociated from the feelings, little contact and difficulty of relationship. Individually during these two years of work, we realized that those who came once or twice, presented a sensible load of corporal energy, made possible the expression of their feelings when being with their peers, because they realized that they were not alone in the world. For those who attend the group more than four times we realized these people found:

1 - New ways: They expanded the places to attend socially reducing the tension state of the body. They have the right to be in places they want.

2 - New organizational habits: They started to manage their own money better. Previously they had difficulty in believing and currently authorizing themselves in the possibilities of acquiring materials such as a car and an apartment purchase and having other social representation.

3 - Better self-awareness: Increased self-belief. Decreased the “boycott” of social intellectual and academic rise.

4 - Rescue of the energetic flow of the body: decrease of the corporal tension, less fatigue, lighter in the attitudes.

5 - Rescue of affective relationships: The contact increased by expanding relationships with each other outside the group environment, improved the expression of affection, self-care and self-esteem and increased confidence.

6 - Reducing insecurity in attitudes toward racism: They are more self-confident and aware of their human rights.

Challenges:

Fuller energy: The group is in the process of recovering their fullest energy.

Empowerment: The goal is to achieve a more entrenched sense of empowerment.

The feeling of pain is present. Sometimes they feel stagnant attitudes.

Depositions:

“The corporal work allows me to access pains and powers that would hardly be revealed otherwise. It is a window into the soul, an opportunity, a chance for healing and self-knowledge.” (A.A, woman, 39)

“The group is a space of self-knowledge, sharing, empathy, experiencing encounters of the self, the other in us, perceiving us as human beings, women and black.” (J.O.G.S, woman, 30)

“The group strengthens me as a person, makes me understand, listening and seeing other people experiencing pains and similar achievements.” (M.L.R, woman, 33)

“My relationship with the body has always been difficult, because it implies stripping the black female, erected on the flag of the violation of the body. Participating in a group like this, looking at other female bodies and to perceiving grace, lightness and strength in them has been essential for that I gradually improve my self-image. Thank you. The body work has been a fundamental ally.” (M.C.G, woman, 44)

“The group gave me the possibility of treading my own body on the light of affection and hope”. (R.O, woman, 34)

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