



As the South African National Arts Therapies Association (SANATA), we are aware of the challenging times we are living in. Challenges can either blind us from seeing clearly or enable us to respond with heart to opportunities that are afforded us by uncertainty. In the midst of perturbation of the COVID-19, we are painfully disturbed by the attack on the lives, personhood and dignity of black people across the world and here in South Africa. These attacks reveal underlying structures of racism in our society.

In SANATA, we are guided by the vision, mission and values enshrined in our constitution and confirm that we have prioritized a commitment to social justice and the transformation of oppressive systems in our society. It is these oppressive systems that adversely affect the lived experience of our colleagues and that deeply impact the clients that come to us for therapy. These issues are not separate from our profession and our responsibility as therapists. Therefore, SANATA condemns the racist policies, systems, and individual actions that kill, wound, and neglect our fellow human beings. What happened to George Floyd in America should not happen. What happened to Collins Khosa in South Africa should not happen. Extrajudicial killings of black people by police officers and members of the armed forces – whose duty is to protect and serve – should not happen. We open our arms and hearts to stand with all those experiencing the pain of this ongoing injustice.

BLACK LIVES MATTER.

Racism impacts us all. The collective wounds of racism must be healed. Inherited lies told and retold about our fellow humans must be undone. Hundred's of years of trauma, slavery, segregation, inequality, enforced poverty, abuse and neglect need healing. This healing requires anti-racist action.

While it may appear that we are not making progress in our quest for creating a diverse, open and inclusive organisation, and our profession, many of our practitioners exhibit a deep commitment to social justice. We are inspired by those who continually challenge us to stay on the long "arc of the moral universe" that always "bends towards justice" [Martin Luther King]

As SANATA we affirm that those among us who live with privilege should use that privilege in service of justice. The responsibility to acknowledge

unearned privilege, remove barriers, create inclusive spaces, and confront racist thought and policy rests largely with those advantaged.

We recommit to a path of justice, self-examination, and action. We will be putting a programme together of resources, spaces and actions that can support us individually and collectively on this path.

While deeply embedded racism devalues black lives, we will never realize SANATA's vision – that of being "*socially just professions in a South African context*". And this work must start from the inside out.

It is only to the extent that all of us 'do the work' that we might succeed in changing the culture. Only through evolved understanding, deconstruction of our limiting beliefs, and anti-racist action will we impact the internal and external structures that perpetuate racism.

As arts therapists and arts based healers and practitioners, our work helps our clients connect with their humanity, healing and integrating fragmented and broken parts of themselves. We know that pain and discomfort can be overcome. We know what is possible....

So let us embrace the work that we need to do within ourselves and collectively as an Association of arts based healers to help heal society. Let us use this opportunity to strengthen our relationships as human beings in this space together.

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