

Free Associations: Psychoanalysis and Culture, Media, Groups, Politics
 Number 67, January 2015
 ISSN: 2047-0622
 URL: www.freeassociations.org.uk



POLITICAL RESISTANCE AS CURE?

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Abstract: This article addresses forms of political resistance, clinical and extra-clinical, that aim at types of knowledge and ways of being in the world that are life-enhancing, broadly speaking, and that may, at the same time, resist some contexts of intimacy. More particularly, positive and negative forms of political resistance are defences against and subversions of social, cultural, political, and economic ideas, laws, policies, programs, and institutions that (1) undermine subjective and intersubjective experience of being valued or worthwhile and (2) restrict certain individual's and group's public-political space. As defences, these negative and positive forms of political resistance are attempts to instantiate a type of knowledge and concomitant shared speech and action that embody mutual recognition of individuals as persons; valued, unique, inviolable, and responsive/agentive.

Key Words: Resistance; defence; Freud; racism; politics

Transference is of its essence a form of political engagement; it is an attempt to shape society...according to an image. (Lear, 1998: 133)

As a psychoanalyst I must help my patient to "*consciousnessize*" his unconscious, to no longer be tempted by a hallucinatory lactification, but also to act along the lines of a change in social structure...my objective will be to enable him to *choose* action with respect to the real source of the conflict, i.e., the social structure. (Fanon, 2008/1952: 80)

In his book on resistance, Gerald Schoenewolf (1993) remarked that analysts, in general, 'are reluctant to confront a patient's religious beliefs or political ideology or racial biases, even though they *may* be resistances' (102; emphasis added). Schoenewolf provides a little wiggle

room by suggesting that the patient's religious or political beliefs may or may not be resistance. That is, he leaves open the possibility that political or religious beliefs may contribute to intimacy or psychological health, which, by definition, means that these beliefs are not signifiers of resistance. This is a typical cognitive schema in psychoanalytic theories of resistance: resistance is an action or non-action that is negative, therapeutically speaking, and the lack of 'resistance' is good; a signifier of openness to change. Yet, the psychoanalytic notion of resistance may be more complicated, ambiguous, and paradoxical than it is generally portrayed. What if a patient's political beliefs and actions signified clinical and political resistance aimed at cure? What if an individual's political resistance was mutative, therapeutic, etc.? What if a patient's (or therapist's) lack of 'resistance' vis-à-vis political realities is resistance to and defense against choosing an 'action with respect to the real source of conflict' (Fanon, 2008/1952: 80)?

In this article I consider forms of political resistance, clinical and extra-clinical, that aim at types of knowledge and ways of being in the world that are life-enhancing, broadly speaking, and that may also signify resistance toward some contexts of intimacy with others. More particularly, positive and negative forms political resistance are defenses against and subversions of social, cultural, political, and economic ideas, laws, policies, programs, and institutions that (1) undermine subjective and intersubjective experience of being valued or worthwhile and (2) restrict certain individual's and group's public-political space—cooperative speech and actions (agency) (Arendt, 1958). At the same time, negative and positive forms of political resistance, as defenses, are attempts to instantiate a type of knowledge and concomitant shared speech and action that embody mutual recognition of individuals as persons; valued, unique, inviolable, and responsive/agentive. This perspective can alter, in part, an analyst's stance. Like Fanon, for some patients, this may mean working together to raise consciousness about the political, economic, and cultural sources of the patient's suffering and for the patient to consider what actions to take vis-à-vis those sources. On other occasions, it may mean having the sensitivity to differentiate whether political resistance is therapeutic resistance or not (or both). At the same time, analysis itself may become a space for advertently or inadvertently encouraging or supporting political resistance whenever patients experience the demoralizing and depersonalizing political realities of his/her society. I begin with a brief depiction of resistance in psychoanalysis. This is aimed at demonstrating the general tendency to interpret resistance as something negative and, likewise,

to show psychoanalytic proclivity to overlook the political and positive realities of resistance. I then turn to two extra-clinical illustrations of resistance to identify types of political resistance and their aims, consequences, and dynamics. This leads me to consider a clinical illustration from the perspective of political resistance.

There are a few caveats and clarifications I wish to highlight before beginning. First, when addressing political resistance, I am not referring to all or most patients, but rather those whose suffering is clearly linked to political, economic, and cultural sources of oppression and marginalization. Second, one aspect of psychoanalytic therapies is identifying and raising to consciousness the source(s) of the patient's suffering, which is typically his/her childhood experiences with intimate others. To overlook or deny political and economic sources of childhood and adult suffering functions to collude with these sources, leaving the patient with a false consciousness.¹ Third, I am in no way claiming that all political resistance is mutative, whether noted clinically or extra-clinically. Indeed, I note that even positive forms of political resistance may be, at the same time, therapeutic or negative expressions of resistance. This said, even those types of non-mutative political resistance *may* signify an attempt at 'cure'. Finally, the term 'cure' generally means a permanent or complete healing of an illness, restoring a person to his/her previous condition of health. I am using the term to mean a recovery of life enhancing ways of being in the world: the recovery of subjective and intersubjective experiences of meaningfulness and aliveness.

Resistance

As a physician, Freud would have been familiar with patients who resist the doctor's medical interventions, including his own resistance to medical advice (Breger, 2000: 357). As a physician of the psyche, Freud also recognized that patients often resist or oppose the efforts of the analyst. In general, Freud believed that a patient's resistance thwarts therapeutic progress (1900: 517), which by definition meant, for Freud, that resistance is a defense. Later, Freud sought to categorize the types of resistance analysts encounter with the hope that understanding the sources of the resistance enables analysts to consider how to best respond. He wrote:

the analyst has *to combat* no less than five kinds of resistance, emanating from three directions—the ego, the id and the super-ego. The ego is the source of three of these, each differing in its dynamic nature. The first of these three ego-resistances is the repression resistance, which we have already discussed above and about which there is least new to be added. Next there is the transference resistance, which is of the same nature but which has different and much clearer effects in analysis, since it succeeds in establishing a relation to the analytic situation or the analyst himself and thus re-animating a repression which should only have been recollected. The third resistance, though also an ego-resistance, is of quite a different nature. It proceeds from the gain from illness and is based upon an assimilation of the symptom into the ego. It represents an unwillingness to renounce any satisfaction or relief that has been obtained. The fourth variety, arising from the id, is the resistance which, as we have just seen, necessitates ‘working-through’. The fifth, coming from the super-ego and the last to be discovered, is also the most obscure though not always the least powerful one. It seems to originate from the sense of guilt or the need for punishment; and it opposes every move towards success, including, therefore, the patient's own recovery through analysis. (1920: 160; emphasis mine)

Each kind of resistance represented the patient’s attempts to impede therapeutic progress. By knowing the type or source of the resistance, the analyst can better devise interpretations aimed at overcoming resistance (e.g., Freud, 1893: 292).

Other analysts since Freud have echoed and elaborated on the notion of resistance. Laplanche and Pontalis (1973) noted the resistance against the removal of resistance. There is resistance that opposes remembering experiences of trauma (Abend and Shaw, 1991). For Schoenewolf (1993), resistance is an attempt to avoid intimacy. There is resistance to change (Abend, 2001; Hansell, 2000), to psychic reality (Tacey, 1997), and to negative feelings (Adler, 1980; Kogan, 2003). There is resistance to becoming aware of transference (Davies, 1994) or countertransference (Racker, 1988). In general, resistance is deemed a defense against becoming conscious of thoughts, feelings, fantasies, memories, etc., which may be exhibited in the patient’s use of narratives or actions.

Included in this tradition was the eventual recognition of the analyst’s resistance vis-à-vis the patient, a topic and perspective that Freud overlooked. There were scant mentions of the

analyst's resistance prior to the 1960s, gradually increasing in the 1970s and 1980s. Like the notion of countertransference, resistance vis-à-vis the analyst deepened and expanded. In addition, the sources of resistance moved from a purely intrapsychic focus to cultural (Corbett, 1997; Schoenewolf, 1993) and political (Brecht, 1988; Cushman, 1995) sources of resistance. This trajectory included occasions when an analyst mistakenly interprets the patient's actions as resistance. For instance, Tang and Gardner (1999) point out that an analyst may interpret a patient's response as resistance while ignoring a patient's experiences of being a minority that has been oppressed and marginalized. In a shift toward a more positive view of transference and one that does not signify an impediment to progress, Altman (2004) argued that analysts and patients should *resist* classism and racism by becoming aware of both. Altman, while understanding and appreciating the technical aspects of resistance, nevertheless advocates becoming aware of racism and classism and in the process opposing or resisting these ways of being in the world and their concomitant beliefs and practices. In a similar vein, Walls (2004: 617) pointed out that a therapist:

can observe a patient's resistance to becoming aware of deep emotional responses to political or gender oppression... This resistance is due to the patient's fears that forbidden forms of social consciousness will threaten existing emotional compromise formations and consequently disrupt essential relational ties and social memberships. Such repression of political awareness may be emotionally costly, but the inhibition of the expression of awareness of injustice may not be an entirely unrealistic appraisal of the potential social consequences, given the sometimes grossly unequal power relations involved.

Walls sensitively recognized that sometimes a patient's resistance, vis-à-vis political sources of his/her suffering, is understandable if awareness and action may have significant, negative social consequences.

Despite a few positive perspectives on resistance, the general tendency in psychoanalytic formulations of resistance is understandably clinical and negative. By negative I mean that analysts may empathically understand the patient's opposing therapeutic progress, intimacy, etc., but the aim is to help discover ways for the patient to become aware of his/her resistance and its sources, and to let go of the resistance for the sake of insight, symptom relief, change, and

greater interpersonal freedom and intimacy. By and large, patients' therapeutic or negative resistances are to be understood and overcome (Freud, 1914: 155), which suggests that resistance is not to be encouraged. Included in this literature is the recognition that analysts can not only be influenced by the patient's resistance (countertransference), but can also possess his/her own counter-resistance, exacerbating, colluding, and confirming the patient's resistance.

Illustrations of Extra-Clinical Political Resistance

I wish to turn first to extra-clinical examples of resistance with the aim of depicting types of psychosocial resistance that are political and mutative, as well as not-mutative. More particularly, I briefly examine the autobiographies of Malcolm X (Haley, 1964; Marable, 2011) and Martin Luther King (1998), arguing that their political resistances began in childhood and were attempts to become aware of and oppose the depersonalizing and pernicious effects of racism. Their resistances, in a number of ways, were similar and while distinct, each arrived at a form of political resistance that freed or 'cured' them, to a large degree, from the chains of racism's superior-inferior dynamics and perceptions, as well as the narrowing of space of appearances² or political agency. These resistances represented forms of knowledge and actions that opposed racism and its negative social, political, and economic effects.

Before beginning, I need to address the reader who points out that the clinical notion of resistance refers specifically to the obstruction of therapeutic progress and that this does not refer to extra-clinical views of resistance, in particular, political resistance or political resistance in sessions where a patient is making progress. Political resistance and therapeutic resistance are likely two different phenomena, one could argue. In many cases this is true. However, a patient's political resistance to public forms of oppression may also signify, to some degree, therapeutic resistance in the sense that s/he is actively obstructing his/her own movement toward well-being or insight. In this instance political resistance signifies, in part, therapeutic resistance, though one might admire and encourage his/her opposition to public practices and structures that marginalize and oppress him/her and others. In a related situation, an analyst may overlook the relation between the patient's symptoms/communications, which traditionally would be interpreted as therapeutic resistance, and larger political realities that are sources of these symptoms and, in so doing, ignore the possibility that the patient's symptoms and communications are themselves

expressions of or attempts at political resistance; attempts at cure. In these cases, the analyst's overlooking would be an instance of counter-resistance in that s/he inadvertently supports and colludes with the social-political forces implicated in the patient's suffering. Moreover, the patient's therapeutic resistance may be, in part, political resistance; resisting the analyst's interventions because they unconsciously support the dominant political forces that gave rise to the patient's suffering.

Consider, for instance, Breuer and Anna O. We might imagine that Breuer encountered resistance in working with Anna O. in the form of her transference and symptoms. He tried to treat her, yet she opposed him and demanded that he listen while she talked about what came to mind. Anna O's eventual 'chimney sweeping' or talking cure helped her in the more immediate realm of therapy (Freud, 1910: 12-13). Later, Anna O. (Bertha Pappenheim) would become a prominent social-political activist in Europe. In retrospective, one might argue that Bertha Pappenheim's demand (opposing his regular treatment) of Breuer was not clinical or therapeutic resistance per se, because it was an attempt on her part to heal. She was not resisting treatment, but rather helping the doctor to see that this was a way for her to get better. Yet this interpretation oversimplifies the situation. If we widen the lens, we note that Bertha Pappenheim's symptoms and her speaking out, took place within the context of a patriarchal society that marginalized women's experiences and voices. Instead of problematizing patriarchal social-political realities and viewing these as sources of women's psychological distress, women were diagnosed as neurotic wherein the sources of their neuroses were intrapsychic and/or rooted in childhood fantasies and experiences. Breuer's initial diagnosis and traditional treatment took place within this social-medical-political context. That is, his diagnosis could be deemed an example of counter-resistance in that there was an unconscious avoidance in recognizing not only the social-political sources of Bertha Pappenheim's suffering, but also his own subtle collusion in maintaining the status quo of marginalizing and problematizing women. Demanding that Breuer listen was her resistance to his treatment; a subtle and private (versus public) political resistance to the domination of men. Her resistance expressed and led to greater agency; greater political resistance in the public realm vis-à-vis her later advocacy for women. Bertha Pappenheim's talking cure, to put it differently, was a step toward resisting assimilation and accommodation to the dominant cultural-political realities manifested in the doctor-patient relationship. She resisted the kind of treatment Breuer initially offered and, to Breuer's credit,

there was a course correction. Thus, her symptoms were linked, in part, to systemic political and public forms of patriarchy, which restricted women's participation in political milieu: space of appearances. Her opposition to Breuer's initial treatment, then, manifested a type of political resistance writ small in the consulting room. Of course, my friendly critic may argue that this proves the point that there is a difference between political resistance and resistance to therapeutic progress. We simply need to find ways to differentiate between them.

This is true, to some extent, but again it is more complicated, because the analyst is the one who interprets the patient's communication and behavior as resistance. The analyst interpreter may be associated, unintentionally, with the social-political power that assigns him/her privilege and status denied to his/her patient, as suggested above. The labeling of the patient's behavior as resistance may be accurate, yet at the same time, not completely accurate, because the patient's resistance may be an unconscious resistance to the dominant social-political realities tacitly evident in the analyst-patient interactions. Similarly, patients may avoid therapy not simply because they are resisting the therapeutic benefits, but because therapists and the practice of therapy may represent identification with dominant political forces; forces implicated in oppression, marginalization, and victimization (see Thomä and Kächele, 1994). In these instances, the person's resistance may be interpreted as a form of political resistance and s/he may seek other remedies; remedies that are mutative and political in nature.

The autobiographies of Malcolm X and Martin Luther King serve to illustrate the complexities and types of political resistance vis-à-vis racism (see Dalal, 2002). In both narratives there is a retrospective moment of heightened consciousness and political awakening to the depersonalizing and demeaning realities of racism; a moment that initiates forms of resistance. King (1998) was quite young (age 5) when he discovered that his white friend would no longer play with him and that King would be going to an all-black school; an initial experience of the restriction of the space of appearances. King's parents tried to comfort him, as well as educate him not only to the realities of racism, but also that despite public humiliations he was somebody; valued, unique, and significant in their eyes and the eyes of the church. King (1998: 3) wrote,

My mother confronted the age-old problem of the Negro parent in America: how to explain discrimination and segregation to a small child. She taught me that I should

feel a sense of ‘somebodiness’ but that on the other hand I had to go out and face a system that stared men in the face every day saying you are ‘less than’, you are ‘not equal to.’

Once the hurt subsided, King felt anger and later rage at the daily public humiliations he and other African Americans suffered. He wrote, ‘I will never forget what a great shock this was to me....from that moment on I was determined to hate every white person’ (7).

Malcolm X’s (Haley, 1964) abrupt consciousness of the perfidy of racism occurred when he was in eighth grade. His teacher, Mr. Ostrowski, asked Malcolm if he had considered a career. ‘The truth is I hadn’t. I never have figured out why I told him, “Well, yes sir, I’ve been thinking I’d like to be a lawyer.”’ (38). Here we see a young boy aspiring to reach for a socially esteemed profession. His teacher replied, ‘Malcolm, one of life’s first needs is for us to be realistic. Don’t misunderstand me, now. We all here like you, you know that. But you’ve got to be realistic about being a nigger. A lawyer—that’s no realistic goal for a nigger. You need to think about something you can be. You’re good with your hands—making things. Everyone admires your carpentry shop work. Why don’t you plan on carpentry?’ (38). From this point, Malcolm withdrew from white people and no longer would let the term ‘nigger’ slide off his back. This painful and jarring epiphany involved the realization that even though he had worked hard to identify with and be accepted by whites (assimilate), he would be forever excluded from privileged social-economic spaces. No matter how bright or gifted Malcolm was, he now knew that the only options open to him occupied the lowest sphere of economic, cultural, and political life: restriction of the space of appearances.

Malcolm X’s awareness of the sources of political humiliation and alienation vis-à-vis racism and his response were, in one sense, similar to King’s. Both initially were conscious of the public-political sources of their suffering and they initially resisted white racism by way of anger, rage, and hatred, yet their behaviors were decidedly different because of their family contexts and histories. I would argue that their awareness and anger/rage were initial expressions of political resistance. Put another way, their responses were attempts at cure; a demand for recognition of being a person, restoration of a positive social sense of self or in Arendt’s (1958, 179) view a who rather than a what (somebodiness), and a desire to be recognized and participate in public-political spaces. This said, I will argue below that this initial form of political

resistance, while a necessary step toward consciousness, was not life-enhancing, though aimed in the direction of somebodiness and freedom.

Imagine that Malcolm X and King were brought to therapy as boys. Would their rage, hatred, and shame be considered symptoms of childhood traumas rooted in family life, as well as forms of therapeutic resistance? Perhaps their feelings would be interpreted as projections, which were connected to unconscious narcissistic fantasies of superiority. If they were given white therapists, they may have expressed their anger and hatred toward them, projecting their own fears and disappointments. Is this therapeutic resistance? Yes, to the extent that these ‘patients’ resist both intimacy and help from a white therapist (assuming the white therapist is not colluding with racism), in part, because to them, we might imagine, the therapist represents danger, which is not merely projection and fantasy. As Malcolm X pointed out, white professionals who ostensibly sought to help his family only served to make matters worse, because they were unconsciously and unwittingly colluding with the larger racist culture. This said, disidentification vis-à-vis the white therapist would represent a therapeutic resistance in that their projections make little room to encounter the therapist as person. Moreover, we could imagine that this clinical resistance, which is rooted in public realities, would include resisting awareness of likeness in difference and difference in likeness (Benjamin, 1998). In brief, I would consider this imaginary example to represent both political and therapeutic resistance.

Moving from this imaginary consulting room, King’s and Malcolm X’s anger and hatred were, in my view, a form of political resistance that stemmed from social-political realities that fostered both black suffering. Each possessed a form of knowing, anger and belief with regard to whites, that involved an attempt to resist internalizing public humiliation. At the same time, this knowledge and action represented a resistance in understanding and relating to whites. Nevertheless, this form of political resistance was aimed at securing a social, positive self-representation in the face of political and social practices that inculcated negative self-representations and the restriction of public-political space (see Fanon, 2008/1952). So, in brief, this early form of political resistance was an attempt at a cure, but it could also, if manifested in the consulting room, be considered therapeutic resistance.

To return to King’s story, his initial form of political resistance kept bumping into his parents’ admonitions. King’s father was a Christian pastor and his wife was the ‘daughter of A. D. Williams, a successful minister’ (Carson, 1998: 3). Both parents believed that they were to

resist, socially and politically, racism, but love the racist. His parents counseled him saying, 'I should not hate the white man, but that it was [my] duty as a Christian to love him' (7). This response was singularly unsatisfying, leaving King to wonder 'How could I love a race of people who hated me and who has been responsible for breaking me up with one of my best childhood friends? This was a great question in my mind for a number of years' (7). Gradually, King would arrive at an answer. At Morehead College, King 'became convinced that non-cooperation with evil is as much a moral obligation as is cooperation with good' (14). He became involved in organizations 'that were trying to make racial justice a reality' (14). Later, while studying at Crozier Theological Seminary, King began 'a serious intellectual quest for a method to eliminate social evil' (17). This led him to agree with Rauschenbusch that 'any religion that professes concern for the souls of men and is not equally concerned about the slums that damn them, the economic conditions that strangle them, and the social conditions that cripple them is a spiritually moribund religion only waiting for the day to be buried' (18). King's intellectual passion was a marriage of intellect and action, justice and compassion, aimed toward resisting and removing social injustices and political humiliations. In short, King's intellectual and spiritual struggles with the realities of racism were forms of political resistance, which eventuated in public-political actions that non-violently opposed and resisted racism.

This second type of political resistance did not mean that King no longer felt hatred. Rather, he contained his anger and hatred, seeking to transform it by the action of fierce love and non-violence. In other words, King was not going to let hatred have the last word by similarly demeaning whites and restricting their space of appearances, precisely because he was convinced that it only fueled further hatred and division. This form of political resistance was clearly connected, for King, to intellectual and spiritual knowledge; knowledge that led directly to social, political action (not violent way of being in the world) on behalf of people who were marginalized and alienated by racism. King sought to have the marginalized recognized and included. From his theological worldview, all would be included in a public space appearances. In brief, King's final form of resistance to white racism was a non-violent way of knowing and being in the world. In analytic parlance, King's final form of political resistance disrupted the tragic concordant projective identification or societal enactment of reciprocal hatred and perpetual alienation.

Before addressing King's forms of political resistance as mutative, I describe further Malcolm X's paths of political resistance. Malcolm X's family suffered a series of setbacks (father's murder, economic plight, and mother's psychological collapse) that were the result of a racist culture, leaving Malcolm with little family support for navigating his painful awakening to racism. Not long after his encounter with Mr. Ostrowski, Malcolm moved away from Michigan to live with his Aunt Ella in Boston. Upon arriving, Malcolm began to explore the environs of his new city. Within a few weeks, he discovered the ghetto section of town, finding it full of intriguing characters and sensual enticements. He rejected the black bourgeois community that Ella represented, because to Malcolm they merely mimicked white culture. Just as Christianity was a white religion, he argued, so, too, the black middle-class was seduced and blinded by a white economic culture that oppressed and excluded blacks (Haley, 1964: 43-44). Put differently, to Malcolm X, black bourgeois depended on whites for the sense of being valued, even while they were restricted from public-political spaces. In the ghetto, however, he discovered that African-Americans had their own ethos: their own distinct economy and culture that established spaces of cooperation. Of course, this culture existed on the fringe of white society and much of its economic activity was deemed to be criminal. Nevertheless, black culture and economy signified a milieu of individual and collective efficacy, creativity, and value, which may be understood as a collective form of political and economic resistance to dominant white racist culture. Unfortunately, it was a resistance that involved playing by white rules and often operating out of and against white values. As Nandy (1983: 3) noted, colonialism (and its racist ideologies) 'creates a culture in which the ruled are constantly tempted to fight their rulers within the psychological limits set by the latter'. Malcolm X's sojourn into black culture represented not only his rejection of whites, but also his unwitting adoption of their psychosocial rules (whites = superiority, blacks = inferiority), as well as the cultural rules of valuation (e.g., straight hair, white women are of greater social value).

Malcolm X's initial resistance in arriving in Boston took a number of different, yet related forms. For instance, he adopted a flashy style of dress (zoot suit) and hairstyle (conk), along with nicknames that would identify him to others as unique within this subculture. He also dated white women, in particular, Sophie, whose 'looks gave me status' (Haley, 1964: 96). Malcolm X's bravado, which was seen in his scam of Russian roulette (146), was an attempt to gain a sense of self-worth and efficacy. According to Malcolm X, members of his small criminal

group admired and feared him. Malcolm X's quest, in other words, involved making use of the Harlem culture to secure the esteem and agency that were denied him in the white world. He, like King, wanted to be somebody and he did so by ostensibly resisting and fighting white culture: what might be termed a reaction formation. Even as Malcolm X recalled this period, he noted that 'Whatever I have done since then, I have driven myself to become a success at it' (40). Of course, years later Malcolm X would realize that his flight into this lifestyle involved inadvertently mimicking white values or countering white values, as pointed out above.

The beginning of Malcolm X's shift to another form of political resistance began while he was in prison. Malcolm, Shorty, Laura, and Sophie were arrested and brought to trial. The trial and the sentence deepened Malcolm X's hatred and rage toward whites, in part, because: (1) he encountered yet again the pain of political humiliation in the injustice embedded in the judicial system, and (2) the black culture he used to gain prestige and success was denied him. This did not stop Malcolm X from finding ways to be recognized and valued. For instance, Malcolm X, in his view, was recognized for his especially hateful disregard of religion. Cellmates called him Satan, giving Malcolm X a sense of being recognized as a somebody, though in an obviously negative vein. Later, when his brother Reginald enticed him not to eat pork, Malcolm X felt proud that others recognized this, it marked him as someone special, a somebody (159). This small step, he would later recognize as his first movement toward converting to the Nation of Islam, which he later came to believe is a 'natural religion for the black man' (159). It was a religion that embraced a mythology that highlighted the glories and superiority of black people (inferiority of whites) and encouraged black self-reliance. The deep desire for self-worth and efficacy were also manifested in the creation story and religious history Malcolm X learned while in prison (167-172). This is a religious myth that details how blacks were the original, blessed race that were betrayed and enslaved by whites; 'a bleached-out white race of devils' (169). The obvious reversals in this political-religious story manifest his (and others) deep desire and quest not only for freedom, but for dignity and agency. As a form of political resistance, however, these stories that Malcolm X initially believed, simply reversed the superior-inferior dynamics of white racism, perpetuating the exclusionary behaviors and splitting. Nevertheless, I would argue it was a form of political resistance that was aimed at recovering a subjective and intersubjective sense of somebodiness, as well as a reclaiming of political-public space.³

While in prison, Malcolm X, with the help of family and members of the Nation of Islam, threw himself into finding out as much as he could about Islam (Marable, 2011). His thirst for knowledge extended into history and philosophy. This religious conversion, fueled by a long history of political humiliation (LaMothe, 2012), was, at first, directed toward what he needed to learn to become a worthy member of Elijah Muhammad's religious community. Indeed, his relationship to Elijah Muhammad was pivotal in his quest. Elijah Muhammad served as a father figure, a mentor, a guide, and a coach, providing Malcolm X with positive recognition and a deepening sense of self-worth. Malcolm X internalized the attention and praise of Elijah Muhammad. In time, political machinations within the Nation of Islam resulted in a distancing of these two men. This relational conflict propelled Malcolm X into leaving the United States to go on a pilgrimage to Mecca, which included traveling to other African nations. These trips led to changes in his political resistance, changes that were similar to King's political resistance in adulthood.

Previous to Mecca, Malcolm X advocated militant separation from whites and did not wish to have whites join him in the struggle against white racism. After his journeys, Malcolm X remained militant, but did not view all whites as evil or participating in evil. He was more accepting of whites, which, in my view, reflected his letting go of being dependent on superior-inferior interpretive frame for a sense of being somebody, as well as an opening up of his space of appearances; cooperation with some whites. Indeed, his journey to other countries led him to see diversity of adherents of Islam, coming to the belief that Allah accepted and valued people not based on color, which gave him a sense of being free (Haley, 1964: 328). While he certainly did not advocate non-violence, he, like King, did not see all whites as the enemy or inferior (Marable, 2011: 386-387). During the final months of his life, Malcolm X's political resistance was not fueled by hatred and rage and was no longer dependent on inferior-superior dynamics. Rather, both King and Malcolm X's final form of political resistance involved a political-religious belief in the somebodiness of all human beings and a shared hope of a more open public-political space of appearances. This did not mean that their respective forms of political resistance were free of anger. Indeed, both used their anger vis-à-vis social-political injustices to mobilize their followers to engage in active forms of political resistance against racism and to advocate for greater political-public access and cooperation. In brief, their political resistance, while different, signified a way of being in the world and a form of knowledge that was

confrontational but not alienating. By that I mean, they actively confronted and resisted social and political forms of alienation while also being avoiding the same alienating attitudes, depersonalization and the denial of space of appearances, that racism embodies and encourages.

Implicit in this depiction of forms of political resistance is the viewpoint that not all forms of political resistance are psychologically mutative or life-enhancing. For instance, I would argue that King's and Malcolm X's initial expressions of political resistance (e.g., hatred and alienation) were attempts at resisting diverse forms of public humiliation and establishing a sense of worth (somebodiness) and social agency. I would include here the varied iterations of political resistance in Malcolm X's life in Harlem, prison, and, in part, his initial conversion to the nation of Islam. These forms of political resistance accompanied greater consciousness of the sources of their suffering, yet they were not, in my view, psychologically mutative/life-enhancing. While completely understandable, Malcolm X's and King's hatred toward and rejection of whites kept them captive to racism's superior-inferior dynamics and exclusionary practices. That is, they were 'tempted to fight their rulers within the psychological limits set by the latter (white racists)' (Nandy, 1983: 3). Relatedly, their hatred and rejection of whites can be understood as a cultural form of enactment whereby they unwittingly played out the dance of race hatred and alienation. Put another way, their hatred represented a form of attachment (knowledge and way of being in the world) that signaled a struggle to differentiate, a similar struggle white racists have with regard to their hatred of people of color, yet they were still held captive to superior-inferior beliefs and dynamics. This said, these earlier forms of political resistance represented a heightened consciousness of the sources of their suffering. In this way, these early forms of political resistance while not necessarily psychologically mutative, were the necessary steps toward significant psychosocial changes.

The form of political resistance that was mutative for both was evident in their rejection of racism's social imaginary of superiority-inferiority, as well as the acceptance of the belief, religiously grounded, that all human beings are first and foremost persons. Their own somebodiness or dignity as persons neither depended on superior notions of being black nor on the inferiority of and separation from whites. Put another way, in racism perception of others is based on the color of their skin (Fanon, 2008/1952). Both King and Malcolm X arrived at the belief that they would not rely on race in determining whether to accept others, treating them with dignity. This change accompanied the practice of working cooperatively with whites; a

more flexible and open space of appearances. It also signified a greater sense of psychosocial differentiation vis-à-vis being dependent on or captive to superior-inferior dynamic of perception and behavior. They were no longer completely caught up in the cultural enactment of racism, though each, of course, continued, in their own way, to rail against the economic, social, and political injustices of racism. In brief, their experiences of self-worth and their communicating self-worth to others was based on a religious belief in the fundamental humanity of all; humanity based on being created by God/Allah and not based on social construction/valuation of color and the concomitant restriction of the space of appearances.

Clinical Political Resistance

Freud warned about using concepts torn ‘from the sphere in which they have originated and been evolved’ and used in non-clinical settings, possibly misusing the concept and distorting the object of investigation; though this did not deter his using psychoanalytic concepts to understand cultural and religious realities (Freud, 1930: 144; see also Coles, 1975; Meissner, 1992). He did not consider that the cultural phenomenon under investigation might alter a psychoanalytic concept or theory, because his methodology involved using psychoanalytic ideas to explain other human phenomena (e.g., religion, civilization). Only clinical realities or discoveries, Freud believed, can change psychoanalytic concepts or theory. Of course, in this article, I am proposing otherwise. I began with two extra-clinical, cultural-political cases to suggest that we might expand our understanding of clinical resistance, especially when it comes to cases of patients who have suffered as a result of political realities.

Clara was a bit north of middle-age when she sought help. In a stable marriage and with her children launched, Clara began feeling ‘out of sorts’, anxious, and depressed. As a thoughtful and intelligent woman, Clara could not find the source of these emotional experiences. She loved her husband. Her kids were leading meaningful lives and they enjoyed coming home for holidays and other family occasions. Clara recognized that part of her struggle had to do with what she wanted to do for the rest of her life, suggesting this was a mid-life crisis. That said, it soon became clear that Clara was very angry at her father and her long deceased mother. This anger stemmed from childhood where her father and mother treated her like a second class citizen, while her brother was the prince. A particularly painful and memorable example of this was

when her well-off parents denied her money to attend college, while her brother went to an expensive private college (father's alma mater) and then later went on to become a physician with the financial support of his parents. Clara always wanted to be a teacher, but ended up with an associate's degree, which was quickly followed by marriage and kids.

Clara's resentment and anger toward her father was kept alive largely because her father continued to find ways to publically humiliate her. As he aged he seemed, from her perspective, more entrenched in believing women are of lesser value or valued (objectified/depersonalized) according to their looks. Clara's response alternated from retreating angrily into silence or attacking him verbally. While Clara kept her distance from her father, she also felt obligated to help him, especially as he aged. Her relational distance was also aimed at protecting her kids when they were growing up; especially protecting her two daughters from being exposed to his misogynist views, which she feared would undermine their self-worth, as it had hers. Clara's own self-esteem was pretty low, at least with regard to working in the public sector. She often expressed feeling stupid or inadequate intellectually, even though she was very bright and thoughtful.

If we were to remain within this family drama, we would overlook the social-political and religious sources of her suffering. Clara's father (and mother) grew up in a very patriarchal culture; a culture that found religious support for views regarding men and women. Only 17 when he arrived in the United States, Clara's father was the only one of his family to go to college. Indeed, Clara was told that his parents and sisters worked to support him financially. There was, of course, in the United States during the 1940s and 1950s, cultural and political narratives, laws, social practices, etc., that also supported his patriarchal views. Yet, her father seemed to take patriarchal views regarding females to another level in that he actively shamed his daughter, undermining her beliefs in her own intellectual gifts and her desires to achieve her dreams. My point here is to problematize both her father and the cultural milieu that supported and legitimated his negative, objectifying views of females.

Clara's first clear awareness of this patriarchal humiliation was when she was denied help to go to college. Anger became her companion, advising her to strike out on her own and, when she had children, Clara vowed do the opposite of whatever she thought her parents would do. This seemed to work quite well with regard to her children. Clara said that she was very deliberate about insuring that they knew they were loved and that she and their father would

support them as best they could in achieving their dreams. Clara and her husband made sure to attend as many extracurricular activities as possible, communicating to their children their support and love.

When Clara began working in therapy, she was initially vocal and in touch with her rage, anger, disgust, and resentment toward her father. It was understandably difficult for her to see her father's humanity and I would suggest that this resistance served to protect hers from being wounded by him again, as well as, perhaps, to return the favor. During this time, Clara said that even in young adulthood she was aware that her father's beliefs were held by others in her church and in the larger society (though less so than in her youth). Indeed, as her daughters developed, Clara made sure they knew that some of what her church taught about women was false. She encouraged all her children to obtain college degrees so that they would not be hampered as she was. I suggest that Clara's early anger and resentment at her father and her encouragement of her daughters were seeds of political resistance. Her political resistance was manifested in wanting her daughters to be recognized and treated as persons, for them to be included in the space of appearances, if you will, by having educations. This is analogous to King's parents' desires that their son be educated, which itself was a form of political resistance in the face of racist attempts to exclude blacks from political and economic spaces.

As Clara began to face and work through some of these emotions and experiences, she also was seeking to find work that she would find meaningful; a job that was a vocation, which she felt was denied her as a young adult. This desire was also constructed in terms of her religious faith. That is, Clara wanted to find work where she felt called by God. Initially, she began working as an administrative assistant in a religious organization that had programs for helping the poor, immigrants, and prisoners. In time, her boss recognized Clara's other talents and she began working directly in programs for prisoners and the poor. Clara loved her job and the people who came for help. She found the work meaningful and she felt as if God wanted her to do this.

Clara was passionate about her work. These groups of people, she noted, were neglected by the larger society and looked down upon by most of the population. Clara wanted the people who came for help to be recognized and treated as persons, regardless of their circumstances. At the same time, Clara was staunchly progressive, believing that elected officials, Republicans and many Democrats, had little or no interest in helping the poor. During one session, Clara talked

about her anger and helplessness when a program was cut because of the cutting of federal funds. Eventually, she responded by organizing a group of people to meet some of the needs of those who had been denied help through the loss of government funding.

In my view, Clara's work, her political beliefs, and organization of others represented, in part, political resistance. That is, she resisted social-political forces that were aimed at publically humiliating and marginalizing the poor or prisoners. At the same time, her political resistance represented an attempt to provide self-esteem that was undermined in her childhood. Moreover, the idea that God called her to help the poor and prisoners signified a loving father who supported, and valued her contributions, unlike her earthly parents. Could this religious belief be an expression of therapeutic resistance and not simply political resistance?

When Clara was secure in her job/vocation, I sought to make a connection between her desire to help marginalized and publically humiliated people and her own experiences of marginalization during childhood and humiliation by her father in adulthood. Initially, Clara reacted with quiet anger, withdrawing from the conversation. The next session she reported having felt deflated and deeply hurt after the previous session. Clara felt deflated because it seemed to her that my interpretation was taking away or diminishing the meaning and purpose she derived from her work, reminding her of a depriving father. I took this to mean that pointing out an unconscious or unstated motivation and meaning were mere psychologizing, undermining the value of her vocation and, hence, herself. Understandably, she resisted attempts to explore analytically her work and beliefs, fearing that it would drain them of meaning or reduce them to 'mere' psychological attempts to deal with childhood wounds. Another related form of therapeutic resistance involved Clara's avoidance of exploring her relationship with her father, other than to highlight his many failures. It was safer to keep him as a one-dimensional character, because that way she would not have to be vulnerable. In other words, it was difficult for Clara to gain a fuller sense of her father; a man who was deeply flawed, but also someone who has suffered himself and who had profound insecurities. Similarly, Clara did not want to acknowledge her own concordant transference to her father. He denied her affection and personal recognition, so she would return the favor in kind.

When encountering her clinical resistance, I decided to respect it, as well as understand it as an attempt to hold onto something valuable and to avoid being vulnerable. I noticed, however, some lessening of Clara's clinical resistance over time. As Clara became more ensconced in her

job, she gradually seemed more secure about her sense of worth. During the same period of time, Clara decided on her own to have dinner with her father once a week. These dinners, not always pleasant or enjoyable, served to help her see him in a new light. She felt less reactive and better able to see how lonely, weak, and insecure he was; not simply as an old man, but as a human being. I wish to stress that this did not mean that their relationship was healed or reconciled. Indeed, he seemed very much the same man, but Clara had changed. Accompanying these changes was her willingness to explore connections between her vocation and the hurts of childhood. Clara still felt some anxiety that these kinds of interpretations would diminish her sense of God's call, though this anxiety did not get in the way of exploration.

One way to interpret these changes is to view them in terms of political and therapeutic resistance. I suggest that Clara's forms of political resistance (e.g., reactive anger, aiding the poor, organizing for the poor, and critiquing politicians who were responsible for austerity measures) provided her a sense of worth and meaning, while at the same time she sought to give value and meaning to people who were poor or marginalized. In the beginning, these forms of political resistance accompanied therapeutic resistance. It was as if they were one in the same. However, her political resistance involved attempts at cure, a restoration of self-esteem, while her therapeutic resistance involved attempts to avoid vulnerability, which meant that both were intertwined. Eventually, her forms of political resistance were central to changes she made; psychologically mutative. That is, Clara was less reactive or more self-differentiated vis-à-vis her father. She moved from a one-dimensional view of him to a more complex view of him, as well as herself. Political forms of resistance, which secured her sense of self-esteem, ultimately made possible her willingness to explore the connections between her childhood cumulative traumas and her vocation to help the marginalized. So, at one point, her political resistance was part of her therapeutic resistance, while later her political resistance became instrumental in the lessening of therapeutic resistance and the concomitant arising solidifying of psychosocial changes.

Clara's political resistance parallels the political resistances of Malcolm X and Martin Luther King. All three suffered at the hands of political realities that communicated they were not somebody. Their initial expressions of political resistance were understandably filled with righteous anger and desire to deprive the Other of somebodiness, while also aimed at trying to secure a sense of being a somebody; a person. I am arguing that these initial forms of political

resistance were aimed at ‘cure’, yet also represented ‘therapeutic’ resistance. This initial expression of political-therapeutic resistance is understandable given the social-political deprivations and may be a necessary step for later changes in political resistance. In time, and for various reasons, their initial forms of political resistance changed into a resistance that established a sense of being a person while including the Other as person, suggesting a more secure self: a self not dependent on superior-inferior dynamics or humiliation of Others, and, thus, more open, more willing to be vulnerable.

Conclusion

I suspect that many therapists like to imagine that changes vis-à-vis the patient occurs as a result of interpretations aimed at insight or raising what is unconscious to consciousness. So, when we encounter a patient’s resistance, we are apt to see this as inhibiting insight, consciousness, and change. In this article, I considered forms of political resistance as aimed not only at insight, but also psychosocial change. Instead of seeing resistance as negative or obstructing therapeutic gains, I argued that it is often more ambiguous and paradoxical. Forms of political resistance, in other words, can represent both therapeutic resistance, as well as a necessary step toward change vis-à-vis political realities that marginalize and oppress people. Moreover, I indicated that some forms of political resistance may themselves be psychologically mutative. In recognizing this, I, like Franz Fanon, believe that patients should be aware of the sources of their suffering, which includes, at times and with some patients, identifying political, economic, and social variables that gave rise to and maintain their suffering (see also Dalal, 2002: 220). In knowing this, then they can decide what course of action to take (Fanon, 2008/1951: 80). While I recognize the pitfalls of this approach, failing to do so can be a form of counter-resistance whereby the therapist colludes with marginalizing or oppressive social-political practices, which only contributes to mystification of the patient’s suffering. In addition, just as analysts explore patients life and encourage constructive or healthy behaviors, so to forms of political resistance should be analyzed, as well as recognized, encouraged, and supported to the degree that they lead to life enhancing forms of knowing and being in the world.

Notes

¹ Schoenewolf (1993) rightly points out the dangers of an analyst who has a political agenda and subtly or overtly imposes this on a patient. Interestingly he provides an imaginary example of an African American analyst who believes in black pride and togetherness and his patient who wishes to assimilate into white culture. What I find curious is that Schoenewolf questions and critiques the therapist's agenda as counter-resistance, but not the patient's desire to assimilate. That is, Schoenewolf does not consider the African American patient's desire to assimilate as resistance or his/her lack of black pride and togetherness as resistance. It is just as likely to imagine that a white therapist might subtly collude with this patient's desire to assimilate, indicating the therapist's counter-resistance. Granted, therapists need to be wary of imposing a political agenda, but to neglect, in this case, raising questions about assimilation, as well as failing to indicate the cultural sources and psychosocial consequences of white racism vis-à-vis the patient, would, in my view, represent a form of mis-analysis that gives rise to a false consciousness. By this I mean that the patient would not be conscious of and understand some of the main sources of his/her suffering and this misunderstanding would likely lead to actions that would function to collude with the status quo. The patient would be conscious of his/her suffering, but wrongly attribute this to simply a desire to seek acceptance through assimilation.

² In Hannah Arendt's (1958) political philosophy, the space of appearances ideally involves individuals speaking and acting cooperatively in the public realm, expressing and acting on their unique subjectivities as persons. In my view, the space of appearances within a given society depends on mutual recognition and treatment of each other as persons, unique, valued, inviolable, and responsive subjects, and the use of shared power. Power, for Arendt, is the shared, cooperative action in public spaces. The presence of coercion, force, or violence, which accompanies forms of depersonalization, signals a collapse or attenuation of this space. In the case of racism, it is the denial of blacks as persons and the concomitant restriction of blacks from political-public spaces, as well as an attenuation of cooperation among whites and blacks.

³ If Malcolm X had been a patient and told this religious story to an analyst, one might imagine the therapist silently interpreting this as illusory and, perhaps, as a manifestation of therapeutic resistance. Clearly there are illusions in this religious myth, which Malcolm X later realized. Moreover, a story such as this could be seen as an expression of therapeutic resistance: a defense against the pain of profound humiliation. However, it would still represent a form of political resistance aimed at securing a sense of worth in the face of depersonalizing and humiliating social practices of racism.

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