



# Why we all can't just get along: Exploring the hidden roots of privilege, oppression and prejudice

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VACES Conference 2017  
Norfolk, VA





# Summary

- Despite decades of apparent progress on civil rights issues and multicultural education, attitudes of prejudice and discriminatory behavior remain ingrained in people throughout the world.
- This session explores the dynamics of privilege and marginalization throughout world history, and proposes a novel explanation for the existence of European/white/colonial imperialism and genocidal tendencies.

# Content Disclaimer

- I apologize in advance this will be the most depressing presentation of the day
- None of this is intended to be provocative or controversial, but I recognize that concepts of race, ancestry, religion and evolution can be sensitive
- The attitude here is total respect for all ideas and beliefs, respectful dialogue is encouraged.
- I am open to constructive feedback of all kinds
- Much of this will be painted with overly broad strokes due to lack of time and space



# Multicultural and Social Justice Counseling Competencies (Ratts et al., 2015)

- Acknowledge a need to possess a curiosity for privileged and marginalized clients' history, worldview, cultural background, beliefs, biases and experiences.
- Develop knowledge of the individual, group, and universal dimensions of human existence of their privileged and marginalized clients.
- Assess the degree to which historical events, current issues, and power, privilege and oppression contribute to the presenting problems expressed by privileged and marginalized clients.
- Acquire knowledge of historical and current international and global affairs that are supportive and unsupportive of privileged and marginalized clients.

# Current Cross-cultural Discourse

- No group appears to feel understood by another





# The Re-emergence of White Supremacy



“As long as whites continue to avoid and deny their own racial identity, at a time when almost every other racial and ethnic category is rediscovering and asserting its own, whites will have no chance to resist their dispossession.” - Richard Spencer 2017

# The Re-emergence of White Supremacy



“What blocks our progress is the *meme* that has been carefully implanted in White people’s minds over the course of decades of programming, from *Mississippi Burning* to *Lee Daniel's The Butler*—that any kind of positive racial feeling among Whites is inherently evil and stupid and derives solely from bigotry and resentment. And that the political and social advancement of non-Whites is inherently moral and wonderful.” – Richard Spencer 2013





## Response of White Trainees During Multicultural Education

- “White trainees, as the dominant group, may become defensive and resist fully exploring their own values, assumptions and beliefs, if they sense the facilitators or others are blaming them for the historical oppression of other cultures (Torino, 2015)
- “...common white responses include anger, withdrawal, emotional incapacitation, guilt, argumentation, and cognitive dissonance...(DiAngelo, 2011)



# Hidden Roots

- What are the origins of privilege and marginalization?
  - Have they always existed?
- What are some reasons participants think that one group has come to be in a position of privilege?
- What is behind the hostility, indifference and defensiveness displayed when whites are confronted with the demands for basic dignity by “others?”
- Most civil rights and multicultural narratives begin with the enslavement and genocide of non-Europeans by Europeans during colonialism (1500-1950 AD).



# Archaeology and Anthropology

- Allow us to understand
  - Human evolution
  - Human nature
  - Universal cultural patterns
  - Evolutionary and genetic basis of human behavior
  - Extrapolation of hunter-gatherer cultural features to all behaviorally modern human ancestors



# Timeline of Human Pre-history

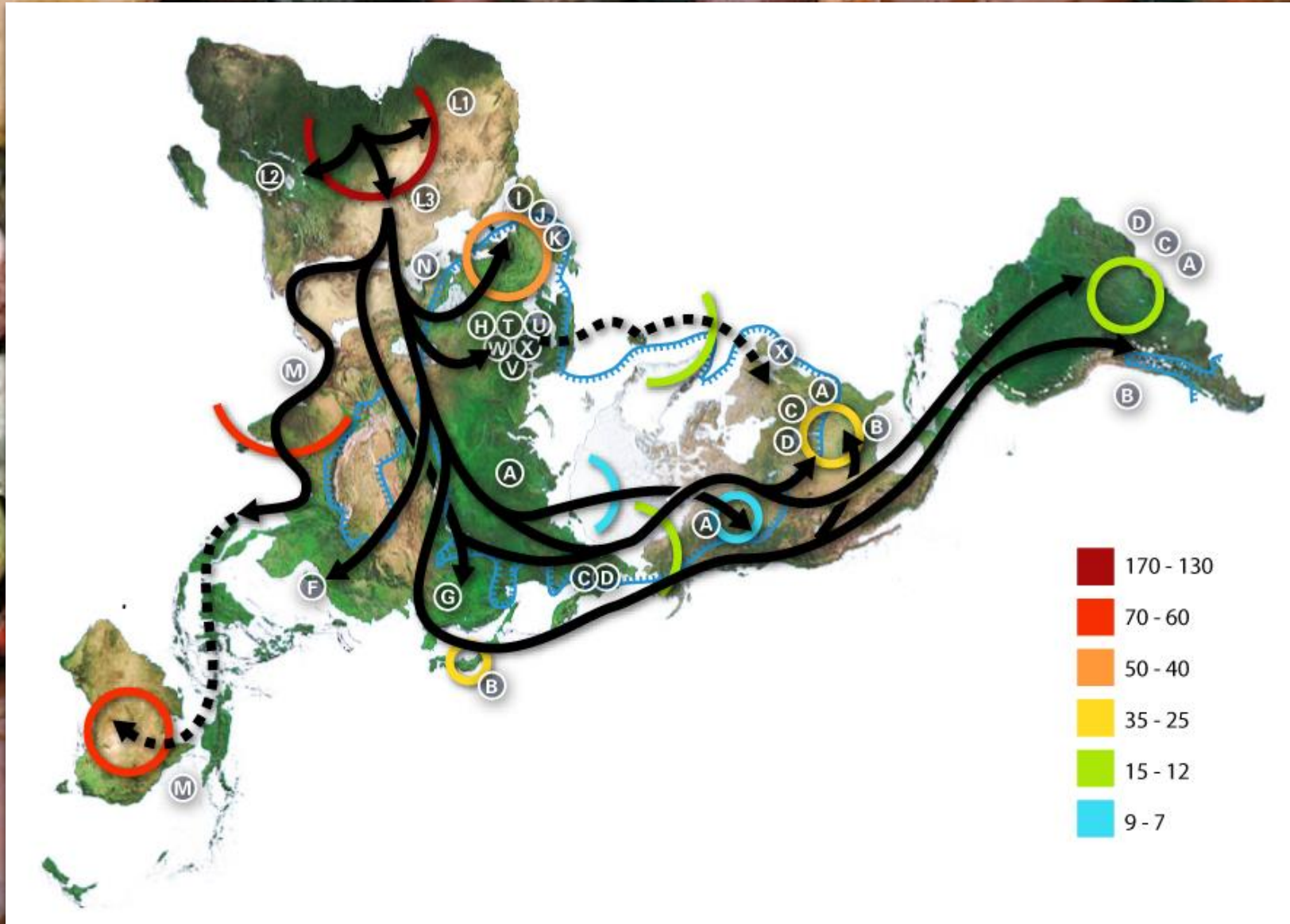
ca. 2,500,000 BC-present					
1			2	3	4 5 6
1	2	3	4	5	6
<b>Lower Paleolithic</b> ca. 2,500,000- 200,000 BC	<b>Middle Paleolithic</b> ca. 200,000-50,000 BC	<b>Upper Paleolithic</b> ca. 50,000-10,000 BC	<b>Mesolithic/ Neolithic</b> ca. 10,000-3000 BC	<b>Bronze Age</b> ca. 3000- 1000 BC	<b>Iron Age</b> ca. 1000 BC-present
Not human — almost human	Human body, not quite culture	Fully human body + culture			

# Human migration

- There were numerous hominid species (Habilis, Neanderthal) that migrated out of Africa, ours came later than most but outcompeted or interbred with all others
- Anatomically modern humans = 200,000 BP
- Behaviorally modern humans = 50,000 + BP
- There is more genetic diversity between all groups endogenous to Africa than between all of the groups who developed from the original migratory group.
- The historical concept of race has no genetic or biological basis.



# Human Migration





# Common Ancestry

- Early human societies were likely hunter-gatherer bands similar to the Kung-San of Botswana (Lee, 2012)
- They were probably matriarchal, egalitarian, and probably did not have a social hierarchy





# Misconceptions about Human Origins

- Ancient people did not “invent” things like agriculture or the wheel.
  - All native people understand how plants grow and how to propagate them
  - Circles and things that roll are common in nature (nuts, sticks)
- Our ancient ancestors were not any less intelligent than modern people, they simply lived a different way of life with different needs.
- Behaviorally modern humans (means culturally) have existed in our current genetic form for at least 50,000 years, but most history books start only 5-10,000 years ago.
- Life was not “nasty, brutish and short” in the past, improvements in standards are subjective – longer, but less healthy and well lives?

# Human Universals (a-c) (Brown, 2004)

- actions under self-control distinguished from those not under control
- aesthetics
- affection expressed and felt
- age grades
- age statuses
- age terms
- ambivalence
- anthropomorphization
- anticipation
- antonyms
- attachment
- baby talk
- belief in supernatural/religion
- beliefs, false
- beliefs about death
- beliefs about disease
- beliefs about fortune and misfortune
- binary cognitive distinctions
- biological mother and social mother normally the same person
- black (color term)
- body adornment
- childbirth customs
- childcare
- childhood fears
- childhood fear of loud noises
- childhood fear of strangers
- choice making (choosing alternatives)
- classification



# Yamna Culture

- Eastern Europe 3500-2000 BC





# North America

- Mandan



## Maya



- Susquehanna





# Time Map of Cultural Change

- The Near East in 3500 BC



# Impact of the Ancient Near East

- Western agricultural, technological, writing, legal, accounting, administrative and criminal justice systems originated in this culture approximately 8000 years ago.
- Ancient Babylon, Sumer, Mesopotamia, Akkad. (Podany, 2014)





# Impact of the Ancient Near East

- Adapted, replicated and elaborated by Greek, Roman, and later European nation states (France, Britain, Spain, Germany)
- This culture developed iron and steel, and pioneered the technocratic paradigm that we live in (technology will save us, nature is hostile, the future will be better than the past)
- Strict property rights, legal codes, biblical religion.
- Western culture has spread from the Middle East to the Mediterranean, and then through conquest and trade to the rest of the world.

# Time Map of Cultural Change

- Europe in 3500 BC





# Time Map of Cultural Change

- Europe in 2500 BC – 50 generations later



# Time Map of Cultural Change

- Europe in 1500 BC – 50 generations later





# Time Map of Cultural Change

- Europe in 1000 BC – 25 generations later
  - Stability
  - Low trauma



# Time Map of Cultural Change

- Europe in 500 BC – 25 generations later





# Time Map of Cultural Change

- Europe in 200 BC – 15 generations later



# Time Map of Cultural Change

- Europe in 30 BC – 9 generations later





# Time Map of Cultural Change

- Europe in 200 AD – 11 generations later



# Time Map of Cultural Change

- Europe in 500 AD – 15 generations later
- “Dark Ages”





# Time Map of Cultural Change

- Europe in 750 AD – 12 generations later



# Time Map of Cultural Change

- Europe in 979 AD – 11 generations later





# Time Map of Cultural Change

- Europe in 1215 AD – 12 generations later



# Time Map of Cultural Change

- Europe in 1453 AD – 12 generations later



1350 – Black Plague – 25 million died



# Time Map of Cultural Change

- Europe in 1648 AD – 10 generations later



# Time Map of Cultural Change

- Europe in 1789 AD – 7 generations later





# Time Map of Cultural Change

- Europe in 1837 AD – 3 generations later



# Time Map of Cultural Change

- Europe in 1871 AD – 1.5 generations later





# Time Map of Cultural Change

- Europe in 1914 AD – 2 generations later



15 million die WWI

# Time Map of Cultural Change

- Europe in 1960 AD – 2 generations later



- 65 million die WWII



# Time Map of Cultural Change

- Europe in 2005 AD – 2 generations later



# Historical European Folk Traditions

- Few original indigenous European ways of life have survived.
- Few white Europeans and fewer white Americans are aware that their ancestors were also tribal people who were at times assimilated into Roman Christian society by force.





# Current European Folk Traditions

- Comparable to the remnants of local Native American traditions that are syncretized, generalized and borrowed.





# Historical Trauma Experienced by Europeans

- Origin of word slave: Reference to the Slavic peoples who were forced to labor by the Byzantine empire
- “Witchcraft” hysteria and genocide
- Black Plague
- Christianization
- Inquisition
- Endless Wars





# The Trauma of Culture Loss

- What would make one culture so indifferent to the suffering of its genetic and human kin?
- From an attachment point of view, what is the intergenerational impact of all this lack sensitive caregiving, trauma, separation and loss, whether through trans-atlantic slavery or endemic war and plague?



# Epigenetics

- On/off switching of gene activation controls
- Explains how the salient experiences of one generation can immediately alter the genetic endowment of the next generation (Halgrimsson, 2011)







# How voluntary was any group's first historical assimilation to Western culture?

- Slavery, oppression, enculturation all exist on a continuum of loss and trauma. For most people:
  - Economic freedom and independence were lost
  - Traditional religion was lost
  - Relationship to place was lost
  - Language, customs, art, story, heritage were lost
  - Atrocities abound in the genetic and cultural ancestry of most people
- Hunter-gatherers, the lifestyle that most resembles our evolutionary origin, continue to be the most marginalized people in the world.

# New Possibilities

- If individualism emerged from historical trauma, collectivism is the baseline nature of humanity.
- Privilege and marginalization are relative statuses, those closer to nature and more collectivist are most marginalized.
- Extreme individualism, racial aggression, defensive projection, atrocities, genocide, oppression may be the psychotic, sociopathic responses of a population of inter-generationally traumatized individuals.



# Tracing individual lineages - Hypotheticals

- 50 year old African American man – Ghanaian ancestry
  - Time since separation from long term low-trauma, earth-based culture: 500-300 years, 15-25 breeding generations
  - Adapted to state-level control systems for 300-500 years, only 150 as “free”
  - Adapted to Prussian education system for 100 years? Less?
  - Major ancestral trauma: 10 generations of enslavement
  - Attachment disruption
  - No large scale war exposure
  - No plagues/ famines, chronic health neglect
- 50 year old White man – German and Irish ancestry.
  - Time since separation from long term low-trauma, earth-based culture: 2000 years, 100 breeding generations
  - Adapted to state-level control systems for 2000 years
  - Adapted to Prussian education system for 200 years (10 generations)
  - No slavery or imprisonment in genetic lineage
  - Multiple episodes of attachment disruption
  - Numerous episodes of war, displacement, famine, plague

## Case Example – Cultural Conflict

- Attachment theory-based in-home services (psychodynamic, long term, trauma informed)
- High-conflict couple, after several months pattern of conflict over differing senses of roles and values, communication standards
- Wife (Hispanic 2<sup>nd</sup> gen, collectivist) often felt husband (Polish?, individualistic) was too selfish, isolated
- Husband felt wife was overly considerate of others, over-involved, and too needy of personal relationships
- Exploration of ancestry helped each develop empathy and acceptance of differences



# Implications

- We can understand how and why it has been so difficult to resolve and move beyond racial and intercultural conflict, prejudice and oppression in this country and the world.
- If you have multiple traumatized populations shouting at each other through their pain, how are they supposed to hear each other?
- So what can we do? Seek to understand ourselves, heal our wounds, go forth and continue to heal others. Embrace our common humanity and meet each other where we can.
- Most importantly, this explains once and for all why white people cannot dance. It has simply been too long since our ancestors danced around our tribal fires.

# Whitesnake – Lament of the White Soul

- I don't know where I'm going  
But, I sure know where I've been  
Hanging on the promises  
In songs of yesterday  
An' I've made up my mind,  
I ain't wasting no more time  
But, here I go again  
Here I go again
- Tho' I keep searching for an answer,  
I never seem to find what I'm looking for  
Oh Lord, I pray  
You give me strength to carry on,  
'Cause I know what it means
- To walk along the lonely street of dreams
- An' here I go again on my own  
Goin' down the only road I've ever known,  
Like a hobo I was born to walk alone  
An' I've made up my mind  
I ain't wasting no more time
- I'm just another heart in need of rescue,  
Waiting on love's sweet charity  
An' I'm gonna hold on  
For the rest of my days,
- 'Cause I know what it means  
To walk along the lonely street of dreams
- An' here I go again on my own  
Goin' down the only road I've ever known,  
Like a hobo I was born to walk alone  
An' I've made up my mind  
I ain't wasting no more time





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