

Abolition feminism: radical hope for expressive arts therapies

Savneet Talwar & Shelly Goebel-Parker

A gesture of hope is a powerful metaphor during uncertain times. As the world comes to grips with the mental health impact of the wars in Ukraine and the Middle East, the inadequate distribution of health care during COVID-19, the racial reckoning of 2020, and the devastating impact of climate change, scholars are arguing for a political component to the expressive arts therapies (Collier and Eastwood, 2021; Gipson, Williams & Norris, 2020; Kuri, 2019; Skaife & Martyn, 2022; Talwar 2019; Talwar & Wallis, 2021). At the center of this work is a need for “radical hope” (Kaba, 2021; Lear, 2006), which is a central tenant of abolition praxis. Abolition feminism is a political vision that sees its goal as eliminating policing, surveillance, and imprisonment by creating lasting alternatives to incarceration and punishment. Through collective organizing and teaching, abolitionists strive to raise political consciousness as a necessary step towards healing. Abolition feminism invites us to consider the world we want, and how to organize and build it. Keeping the work of therapists, healers, artists and cultural workers at the center, abolitionist feminism focuses our attention on developing strong communities beyond prison walls. It encourages us to consider our approach to problems from a healing justice rather than a criminal justice perspective; and to analyze problems systemically rather than individually (Davis, Dent, Meiners & Richie, 2022). As Black feminist and abolitionist Marriam Kaba (2021) states, “hope is a discipline,” that is, we need to need to cultivate hope every day.

This workshop will reflect on the challenges for expressive arts therapists in responding to geopolitical conditions and collective grief. Participants are invited to bring a garment, fabric or textiles that have some important significance in their life and that are in need of repair. In mending their fabric pieces, participants will collectively strategize how to create collaborative ecosystems of care and radical hope.

References

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Biography

Savneet Talwar is a professor in the graduate art therapy and counseling program at the School of the Art Institute of Chicago. Her current research examines feminist politics, critical theories of difference, social justice and questions of resistance. Using an interdisciplinary approach, she is interested in community-based art practices, cultural trauma, performance art and public cultures as they relate to art therapy theory, practice and pedagogy. She is the author of *Art therapy for social justice: radical intersection* and has published and edited several special issues in *Arts in Psychotherapy* and *Art Therapy: Journal of the American Art Therapy*

Association. She is also the founder of the CEW (Creatively Empowered Women) Design Studio, a craft, sewing, and fabrication enterprise for Bosnian and South Asian women at the Hamdard Center in Chicago. She is the past Associate Editor of *Art Therapy: Journal of the American Art Therapy Association*.

Shelly Goebel-Parker is an artist, board-certified art therapist, licensed clinical social worker, certified diversity facilitator and associate professor. She currently teaches art therapy counseling techniques, social and cultural issues, and supervises students in field work and practicum, advises student research projects, and teaches a course in arts-based cultural development. Professor Goebel-Parker has worked in crisis shelters, group homes, residential and special education settings. Her research and creative activities involve the intersection of art therapy, social work and community arts collaborations. Most recently she has been studying the open studio model Art Hives and is researching how sustainability, mutual care practices, and fiber arts processes and materials are embedded in art therapy practice.

Recent publications and conference presentations

Talwar, S. & Sajjani, N. (2022). (Guest editor) **Intersectionality and ethics of care in the creative arts therapies.** *Arts in Psychotherapy*.

Talwar, S. (2022). Foreword. In: J. Collier and C. Eastwood (eds.) **Intersectionality in the art psychotherapies.** Jessica Kingsley.

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Moore, A., Goebel-Parker, S., & Ro, E. (2023). **Exploring Art Hives: implications of virtual art studio communities on positive and negative affect.** *Arts in Psychotherapy*, 85.

Goebel-Parker, S. (2011). **Aesthetic listening: A Reggio-inspired studio research paradigm for art therapy.** In: H. Burt, *Art therapy and postmodernism: Creative healing through a prism.* Jessica Kingsley Publishers.

Brickhouse, D., George, J., Goebel-Parker, S., Ola-Afolayan, Y. (Oct 2023). Workshop presentation: **Liberation pedagogy: practices for increasing anti-racism, diversity, equity, and inclusion.** The American Art Therapy Association Annual Conference, San Diego, CA.

Goebel-Parker, S., Leone, L., Talwar, S. (May 2023). Panel: **Stitching stories: feminist care pedagogy,** Homemaking Conference, Concordia University, Montreal, Canada.

Goebel-Parker, S., Leone, L., Talwar, S. (March 2023). Panel: **Craft as embodied care practice,** Woodlawn Needlework Show, Alexandria, VA.

Goebel-Parker, S., Leone, L., Talwar, S. (Feb 2023). Panel: **Fiber crafts: care pedagogy and public art therapy,** World Art Therapy Conference, (Virtual).