

Racism, Othering, and Integration: A Jungian and Mythological Perspective

Introduction: Racism is often analyzed as a social and political phenomenon, but depth psychology and mythology offer additional insight into its roots. In Jungian terms, racism can be viewed as a symptom of “**othering**” driven by an unintegrated psyche – a projection of our own unseen darkness onto those we deem different ¹. Joseph Campbell’s mythological teachings similarly suggest that failure to recognize our shared human narratives leads to division. This report investigates the psychological roots of racism through Carl Jung’s concept of the *Shadow* and Campbell’s ideas, and explores how symbolic frameworks like **The Lovers** tarot card and the **Taoist Yin-Yang** can guide inner integration, compassion, and a more conscious relationship to the “Other.” Socio-political data from the past decade (global and UK) are included to contextualize these insights in real-world trends.

Jungian Psychology and the Shadow of Othering

Carl Jung observed that every person has a *Shadow* – the unconscious part of the psyche containing aspects of ourselves we reject or repress ² ³. These can include negative impulses (rage, fear, lust for power) as well as repressed positive qualities, all of which remain unacknowledged in our conscious self. Crucially, when we refuse to face our own Shadow, we are prone to **psychological projection**: we subconsciously assign the unwanted qualities of ourselves onto others ⁴ ⁵. In other words, the traits we “*cannot accept in [ourselves]*” are precisely what we condemn in another ³. This mechanism fuels *othering* – we cast certain groups or individuals as embodiments of the “bad” we will not see in ourselves.

Jungian analysts note that **collective Shadow projections** underlie phenomena like stereotyping, xenophobia, and racism ⁵. Entire societies may project their feared or disliked qualities onto other races or cultures, scapegoating those groups for problems that actually originate within the projecting group’s own psyche. As Jungian author Rob Stux puts it, “*racism is only a symptom of not facing the Shadow.*” From this perspective, bigotry toward an external group arises from inner psychological conflict ¹. By blaming an “out-group” for everything one fears or hates, the ego avoids confronting the same capacity for darkness within the self ⁶ ⁷. The *Other* is thus dehumanized into a repository for one’s Shadow.

Integration of the Shadow is the Jungian remedy for this process. Jung believed that healing requires acknowledging the Shadow in oneself and reintegrating it into one’s whole personality ⁸. Rather than splitting the world into “good us” and “evil them,” each person must recognize the line between good and evil runs through **their own heart** ⁹. “*The best political, social, and spiritual work we can do is to withdraw the projection of our shadow onto others,*” Jung advised ¹⁰. In practice, this means owning up to our prejudices, fears, and impulses without denial. By doing so, we rob those unconscious forces of their power to distort our perception of others. A person who has made peace with their own inner complexity is far less likely to **demonize** someone of a different race or culture. In Jung’s terms, racism can begin to be counteracted through *individuation* – the process of becoming psychologically whole by integrating the shadow and recognizing the shared humanity in all ¹¹.

Joseph Campbell's Mythic Lens: Unity Beyond Otherness

Mythologist Joseph Campbell, heavily influenced by Jung, taught that the world's myths and symbols point toward the **unity of all human experience**, as opposed to the divisions created by prejudice. He noted that historically many religions and cultural mythologies reserved compassion and fellowship for the in-group, while projecting hostility outward onto outsiders ¹². For example, in the Old Testament context Campbell cites, *"love and compassion [were] reserved for the in-group, and aggression and abuse [were] projected outward on others"* ¹³. This reflects an ancient tribal mindset – the notion that only *our* people are chosen or virtuous, and strangers are fair game for suspicion or violence.

Campbell argued that in the modern era **"there is no out-group anymore on the planet"** – humanity is too interconnected for tribal othering to survive ¹⁴. He believed we are on the cusp of a new mythic understanding: one that sees the entire earth and all its peoples as a single community. A powerful symbol of this, in Campbell's view, was the famous photograph of Earth taken from space (the *"Earthrise"* image). Seeing our blue planet floating in the cosmic void was, for Campbell, a revelation that *"Earth is in the heavens"* – a whole without borders ¹⁵. It dramatized the end of the old worldview *"in which God's love is reserved for members of the in-group"*, and the dawning recognition that no one is truly separate or other ¹⁶. In Campbell's words, *"our world divided...with God's love reserved for the in-group...is the world that is passing away."* Instead, a *"mythology of this unified Earth"* is slowly taking hold ¹⁷.

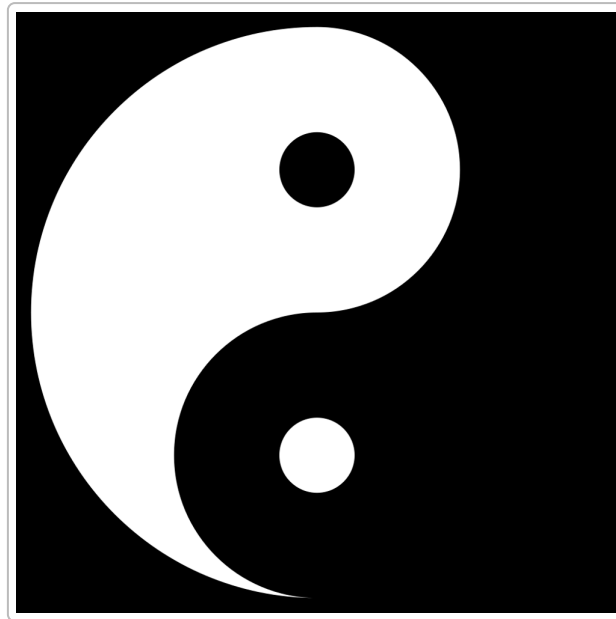
At the core of Campbell's teaching is the idea that all cultures share **common archetypal stories** – what he called the *monomyth* or hero's journey – which reflect universal truths of the human psyche. *"Truth is one,"* he quoted the sages, *"and the sages speak of it by many names."* Myths of different peoples are simply varied "masks" over the same human face ¹⁸. By studying world mythology, Campbell suggested, we discover *"our common psychological roots"* and the shared longings, fears, and virtues that transcend race or ethnicity ¹⁸. This perspective undercuts racism by showing that, at the symbolic level, the *"Other"* is not truly alien at all – their story is our story. A hero in an African tale, an Asian tale, or a European tale all undergo similar trials of ego and shadow, death and rebirth, indicating a fundamentally **common human journey**. Campbell's comparative mythological approach thus invites compassion: when we see someone from another group, we can recognize a fellow hero in the "great story" of humankind, rather than a threatening outsider.

Importantly, Campbell emphasized **expanding compassion beyond one's tribe** as a necessity for the survival of our global society. In his discussion with Bill Moyers, he noted that modern spirituality must strive to *"have compassion work for the whole of humanity"* ¹⁴, not just one's own clan or nation. Traditional myths often sanctified the in-group and permitted violence against others, but Campbell believed new myths and ethical ideals should guide us to include all people in our moral circle ¹². This aligns with the Jungian view of integrating the shadow: by accepting the *otherness within* ourselves, we become capable of genuine empathy for those who appear outwardly different. Campbell saw the **heart** as the symbolic center of compassion – the point in the psyche where dualities are overcome. As he observed, *"Compassion is the awakening of the heart from bestial self-interest to humanity. The word 'compassion' means literally 'suffering with.'"* ¹⁹. In other words, when we truly suffer with another person – feeling *with* them rather than regarding them as separate – we enact the spiritual principle that undermines racism. Both Jung and Campbell point to this **heart-level transformation**, an inner realization of oneness, as the long-term antidote to the poison of othering.

Symbols of Integration: The Lovers Tarot and the Yin-Yang



*The Lovers (Tarot Card VI) from the Rider-Waite deck, depicting a man and woman with an angel above. This archetypal image symbolizes union, choice, and the harmony of dual forces. **The Lovers tarot card** offers a potent symbolic lesson in unity through the reconciliation of opposites. In the imagery of the card, a man and woman stand **facing each other as equals**, blessed by an angelic figure above. They represent the masculine and feminine archetypes – polar energies that are different yet deeply complementary ²⁰. The Lovers card traditionally signifies **love and relationship**, but on a deeper level it speaks to the “*union of opposites and the balance*” between dual forces ²⁰. Their nakedness in the garden suggests vulnerability and openness to one another, implying that true harmony is achieved by revealing one’s authentic self and accepting the other without disguise ²⁰. Tarot interpreters note that The Lovers is also about **a transformative choice** – a decision to unite separate paths into one, often through love or commitment. In a psychological sense, this can be seen as the choice to integrate aspects of oneself or to form a conscious relationship with someone who is “other.” The card’s symbolism celebrates *integration*: modern descriptions list keywords like “*unity, alignment, commitment... empathy...integration of opposites*” among its meanings ²¹. Countering racism requires a similar heart-centered choice – choosing to **bridge divides** and acknowledge the shared humanity between oneself and those who appear different. The Lovers teaches that wholeness comes from embracing the *Other* (whether an internal part of the psyche or another person) as part of oneself, under the guidance of higher wisdom (the angel). In effect, it is a visual reminder that through **love, empathy, and openness**, the two can become one.*



The Yin-Yang (Taijitu) symbol in Taoist philosophy, illustrating black (Yin) and white (Yang) teardrop shapes each containing a dot of the opposite color. It represents the interdependence and unity of opposite forces. The **Yin-Yang** of Taoism is another powerful symbol of balance that can illuminate a path away from othering. The classic yin-yang symbol (Taijitu) shows a circle divided into swirling dark and light halves, each containing a small circle of the opposite color. This image embodies the concept that all dualities are **“inescapably intertwined”** and form a greater whole ²². Yin (the dark side) and Yang (the light side) are opposite in quality – traditionally yin is associated with the feminine, the moon, passivity, and darkness, while yang is masculine, sun, active, and light. Yet Taoist philosophy insists that neither is absolute or independent of the other. *“No quality is independent of its opposite, nor so pure that it does not contain its opposite in a diminished form,”* explains one description of the symbol ²². Thus the black yin portion holds a dot of white, and the white yang holds a dot of black, indicating that each contains the seed of the other. The curving line between them is not a hard border but a flowing S-shape, suggesting continuous movement and interchange. **Harmony** in this worldview is achieved not by isolating one force from another, but by recognizing their interdependence and allowing them to balance each other.

Applied to the issue of racism, the Yin-Yang symbol is a reminder that the self and the other, *us* and *them*, are part of a larger unity and cycle. Taoist metaphysics even teaches that distinctions like good vs. bad or self vs. other are ultimately **perceptual illusions**, since reality is an indivisible whole ²³. The yin-yang invites us to see that what we consider opposite categories (such as different races, cultures, or any binary groupings) exist in relationship, not in isolation. Each needs the other to be complete – just as there is no meaning to “light” except in contrast to “dark.” Moreover, each side can only thrive if the balance with its counterpart is maintained; an excess of either yin or yang is detrimental, and the Taoist ideal is a dynamic equilibrium. In terms of human society, this suggests that **diversity is not a threat but a source of balance** and vitality. The presence of an “other” group can be understood as a complement that, when integrated, makes the whole stronger. If one part of society is marginalized or cast out (too much yin or too much yang), the whole system falls out of harmony. The Yin-Yang symbol urges a mindset where differences are **integrated** rather than feared – each culture or group seen as contributing a necessary piece to the *One*. Embracing this holistic principle can foster respect and curiosity in place of prejudice: the “other” is simply the contrasting color that completes one’s own, not an enemy to be eliminated.

Inner Integration, Compassion, and Relationship to the “Other”

Both Jungian psychology and these spiritual symbols (Tarot and Yin-Yang) converge on a key insight: **wholeness** – within the self and within humanity – emerges from integrating what is divided. To counteract racism, a strategy of *inner integration* and *compassionate connection* is therefore essential. This means working on two levels:

- **Within the Self:** An individual must confront and heal the splits in their own psyche. Jung’s approach encourages people to acknowledge their Shadow – all the biases, fears, and aggressive impulses that they might prefer to deny. By bringing these to light, one can prevent them from being unconsciously projected onto others. Practical steps might include honest self-reflection about one’s prejudices, therapy or shadow-work practices, and seeking experiences that challenge one’s comfort zone (since the Shadow “gets tickled” when we encounter the unfamiliar ²⁴). Jungians emphasize that integrating the Shadow leads to a person becoming more balanced and less defensive. For example, someone who accepts their capacity for anger or dominance is less likely to *need* an enemy onto whom to dump those feelings. They can recognize those qualities and channel them positively (or at least harmlessly) rather than manifesting as racial hatred. The Lovers archetype can be a guide here – symbolically, one’s conscious ego (masculine) must embrace one’s unconscious/shadow (feminine) to create an inner union. This internal “marriage” dissolves the urgency to define some external group as wholly bad in order to preserve one’s own self-image of being wholly good ²⁵ ⁸.
- **In Relationship to Others:** With an integrated psyche, the individual can approach other people with **compassion and openness** instead of prejudice. Compassion literally meaning “to suffer with,” implies the ability to empathize with the experiences of another person ¹⁹. Cultivating compassion involves actively imagining oneself in the other’s position, listening to their stories, and allowing oneself to feel along with them. Joseph Campbell noted that the “**awakening of the heart**” to share another’s sorrow is the *beginning of true humanity* ¹⁹. In practice, this might mean engaging in genuine dialogue across racial or cultural lines, educating oneself about other groups’ histories and struggles, and practicing kindness in everyday interactions. A *conscious relationship* to the Other – whether that other is a person of a different race, a foreign community, or any marginalized group – requires setting aside prejudgments and seeing the other as *Thou* rather than *It*, to borrow Martin Buber’s terms. Campbell often spoke of the need to see the world and all beings as “*Thou*”, a divine “you” deserving of respect, rather than an objectified “it.” This aligns with the Yin-Yang perspective: seeing the supposed “opposite” as fundamentally connected to oneself. If one deeply understands the yin-yang, one cannot maintain a belief in a wholly separate or inferior Other – each person carries a spark of the same essence. In Christian mythic terms (which Campbell also interpreted), one might recall the teaching that “*Love thy neighbor as thyself*” – because, at the mythic level, the neighbor **is** yourself. All spiritual traditions in their mystical core urge recognition of unity beneath diversity, which directly contradicts racist ideologies.

It’s important to note that inner integration and compassion do not replace the need for external action (legal protections, education, social justice reforms) but they profoundly **support and enable** those efforts. Without addressing the psychological and spiritual dimension, efforts to eliminate racism can falter – laws can change, but hearts may remain hardened. By transforming attitudes and consciousness, individuals become less susceptible to rhetoric of hate and less complicit in systemic discrimination. In Jung’s view, world peace grows one person at a time: “*People will do anything, no matter how absurd, to avoid facing their own souls,*” he observed ²⁶ – implying that facing our souls is precisely what we *must* do to change the world. As more individuals do this inner work, the collective atmosphere shifts. We begin to see examples of reconciliation and bridge-building: dialogues between

former enemies, communities embracing multicultural initiatives, youth who transcend the prejudices of their forebears. These are the fruits of integration. They reflect a state in which **differences are valued** rather than feared, and where people have the emotional security to interact with those unlike themselves without hostility.

Racial Discrimination Trends: Global and UK Perspectives (2015–2025)

Understanding the **current state of racism and discrimination** provides context for why the above inner work is so urgently needed. Over the past decade, data indicate that racial biases and hate incidents remain a serious global problem, even amid growing awareness. Below is an overview of key trends and statistics worldwide and in the UK:

- **Global Trends:** International studies suggest a **worsening** of discrimination in recent years. According to the World Justice Project's Rule of Law Index, 70% of countries saw discrimination increase between 2021 and 2022, and since 2015 fully three-quarters of surveyed countries have become *more* discriminatory (on grounds including race, ethnicity, etc.) ²⁷. In other words, bias and unequal treatment have deepened in most places over the last decade. United Nations data likewise show that racial bias is widespread: about **one in six people globally** report experiencing discrimination on some basis, and racial discrimination (due to ethnicity, skin color, language) is among the *most common* forms reported ²⁸. High-profile events have highlighted this reality – from the resurgence of ethno-nationalism in parts of Europe, to racialized violence and hate speech accompanying the refugee crises and the COVID-19 pandemic. Even in legal terms, progress has been mixed. Many countries have anti-discrimination laws on the books, yet a member of the UN Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination observed in 2023 that *“racial discrimination continues to be pervasive”* in society and *“legal solutions alone cannot eradicate it...it exists, unfortunately, in the mindset of people”* ²⁹. This underscores the central argument of this report: that deeper psychological and cultural work is needed alongside laws.
- **United Kingdom Trends:** In the UK, racism and racial disparities continue to be a major concern, with data showing both long-term increases in reported incidents and notable spikes tied to social catalysts. Police records for England and Wales reveal a steady rise in hate crimes from 2013 up to about 2020/21. In the year 2012/13, roughly **42,000** hate crimes were recorded; by 2021/22 this figure had exploded to over **155,000** – a near fourfold increase ³⁰. The majority of these offenses have been **racially motivated**, consistently accounting for about 70–85% of all hate crime each year ³¹ ³². For example, in 2013/14 there were about **37,500 race-based hate crimes** recorded by police ³³. Fast-forward to recent years: racially motivated incidents peaked at **109,843 offenses in 2021/22**, before slightly declining to ~98,800 in 2023/24 (a drop attributed in part to changes in recording rules) ³². These numbers suggest not only improved reporting, but also that many more people in minority groups have been victimized or felt empowered to come forward. Survey data consistently indicate that actual experiences of racial hate crime are higher than reported – for instance, earlier in the decade an estimated **100,000+** racially motivated incidents were occurring annually (Crime Survey averages) even when police figures were much lower ³⁴.
- **Contextual spikes:** Certain events have clearly corresponded with **surges in racial hostility** in the UK. During the month of the June 2016 EU *“Brexit”* referendum, there was a well-documented spike in xenophobic and racist incidents, as the public debate over immigration and national identity inflamed tensions ³⁵. In 2017, a series of terrorist attacks (and retaliatory anti-Muslim sentiments) likewise drove up hate crime statistics – that year saw significant jumps in offenses

against Muslim and other minority communities ³⁵ . More recently, the 2020 *Black Lives Matter* protests and counter-reactions led to another increase in reported hate crimes ³⁵ . Each of these cases illustrates how social stressors and “us vs. them” narratives translate into real-world harm. For example, after Brexit, police recorded a sharp rise in harassment and abuse directed at Eastern European immigrants and others perceived as not “truly British.” After Islamist extremist attacks in 2017, British Muslims and even people mistaken to be Muslim faced greater abuse. And the polarizing conversations on race in 2020 saw some individuals lash out with racist language or violence even as others marched for equality. Beyond hate crime, structural indicators show persistent racial inequality in the UK – from employment and wage gaps to disproportionate stop-and-search or arrest rates for Black Britons – suggesting that systemic biases remain deeply ingrained (these are documented in various government reports and the **Race Disparity Audit** of 2017–2018, although not detailed here).

In summary, the data from the past decade paint a complex picture: there have been **increases in awareness and reporting** of racism, yet also **rising incidents in many areas**, and global events have at times exacerbated racial tensions. The UK’s experience of oscillating spikes around divisive events mirrors a broader global trend where periods of social or economic anxiety often coincide with scapegoating of ethnic “others.” This context underscores why tackling the *mindset* behind racism is so important. Laws can penalize hate crimes, and public condemnations can be issued, but the statistics suggest the *root prejudices* and fears are still actively present across societies. It is here that the Jungian and Campbellian insights – and the wisdom of symbols like Yin-Yang and The Lovers – become practically relevant. They address the **internal conditions** that give rise to the external behaviors measured in these reports.

Conclusion: Toward Wholeness and Healing

Racism, at its core, is a failure of integration – psychologically within the individual, and socially within the collective. The Jungian perspective compels each person to ask: *What part of my own shadow am I projecting onto this “other”?* Consciously grappling with that question can diminish the irrational hatred that fuels racism, as one realizes the disliked qualities attributed to another group are part of the human condition shared by oneself. Joseph Campbell’s teachings add a complementary challenge: to recognize the *other’s story as our story*. Myths and archetypes show that beneath surface differences, all humans know love, fear, struggle, and transcendence. When we see someone of a different race through the mythic lens – as a fellow hero or a reflection of some aspect of our own nature – it becomes harder to dehumanize them.

Symbolic guides like The Lovers and the Yin-Yang provide imaginative roadmaps for this transformation. They remind us that **unity is born from duality**: the two can join into one without losing their uniqueness. In societal terms, this means we can celebrate cultural differences while affirming that we all belong to one human family. The Lovers’ “*union of opposites*” and the Taoist “*dance of yin and yang*” both exemplify how contrast can be orchestrated into harmony rather than conflict ²⁰ ²² . There is strength and creativity in a union of diverse parts – whether in a balanced psyche or a multicultural society.

Moving forward, efforts to counteract racism benefit from integrating these psychological and spiritual insights with practical action. Education can include not just historical facts about race, but also lessons in empathy, emotional intelligence, and critical self-reflection, teaching young people how projection and prejudice work. Interfaith and intercultural dialogues can incorporate mythological comparisons to find common ground. Workplaces and community programs can use symbolism and storytelling (for example, group discussions of shared folk tales or collective art projects like making a yin-yang mural)

to illustrate unity in diversity. On an individual level, practices such as mindfulness and compassion meditation can help individuals notice bias arising in their minds and gently reframe their thoughts towards inclusion. Such techniques echo Campbell's notion of finding the "center of quietness within" oneself from which compassionate action naturally flows ³⁶ ³⁷ .

The data trends from the past ten years serve as a sober reminder that racism will not simply fade with time; there have been periods of regression and resurgence. Yet, they also highlight where progress is being made (greater reporting and awareness) and where it needs to be made (in the "mindset," as the UN expert said ²⁹). By addressing the **psyche** – our fears, our perceptions of the other, our capacity for compassion – we address racism at its source. As more individuals undertake this inner work, the collective shadow of racism begins to shrink.

In conclusion, the journey to overcome racism is akin to the hero's journey Campbell described: it is a quest that leads *inward* to confront inner demons and *outward* to bring back a boon to the community. The boon in this case is a heart that can hold differences without hatred – a state of integrated being that recognizes "*the other is also me.*" Achieving this requires courage and choice: the courage to face one's own darkness, and the conscious choice to love and not fear the Other. It is a journey of integrating the many into one. And as all great myths and symbols assure us, that **unity** – though hard-won – is the destiny of healing and wholeness that awaits on the other side of the trials.

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