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Podcast transcript:

Kyra: Hi everyone, welcome back to the podcast. For this episode, we are in conversation with psychotherapist and PhD researcher, Delso Batista. Delso's PhD at Nottingham Trent University is focused on the lived experiences of black, brown and immigrant Psychology students in Portugal, specifically looking at the violence that is generated in higher education. From experiences of racism to the act of denying racism as a systemic problem, Delso's study draws from the work of indigenous and black scholars, as well as ancestral knowledges to understand how the higher education system perpetuates coloniality in various forms. Towards the end of the episode, we also consider what it means to decolonise Psychotherapy as a practice, as well as the role of storytelling.

So, I like to start things off with our guest just telling us a little bit about themselves, in their own words – so, where did you grow up and where are you currently?

Delso: I'm originally from Brazil. I come from a very small city called [?] in the countryside of one of the biggest states of Brazil, which is [?]. And right now, I'm living in the UK, the past one year and a half, I've been living here in London, but I've been living abroad in the past 12 to 13 years, as I moved to Portugal in 2010, right after finishing my Bachelor in Psychology. So, I've been in different countries, different places, but now I'm based in the UK, mostly because of my PhD studies.

Kyra: And how would you describe your upbringing in terms of how race was kind of seen and felt in your household in Brazil?

Delso: Yeah. That's a very interesting question that makes me think...about that. I mean, I can say to you that I describe being nurtured in an atmosphere of love and affection, and I feel like this type of care really...really shaped who I am, and that was only possible because I was raised by, exclusively, by black woman. So, for me, [it's a part of it] to share that and to have cautiousness about the experiences. Til today, I'm taking this in consideration, and apply that to my steps to where I am right now, my goals, purposes, everything that I'm doing, I feel like those things are highly influenced by the things that I learned from my mum, from my grandmother, from my aunties, from my godmothers, everyone that has been, you know, dedicated themselves in taking care of me since I was little. However, I say



that, that was not always, you know, was not only about flowers and good moments; I did have some challenges and I faced moments of difficulty within my family. I mean, we struggled with lack of resources in terms of housing, issues with access to opportunities, but one thing that always kept us together as a family was, you know, our passion for food. So, I come from this family of chefs, people that always dedicated themselves to the kitchen, to the art of cooking, and I learned a lot from it but I also learned how love was shared and served through...through that. So, for me, my upbringing was, in terms of race, was related to these experiences of love, affection, that I...I mean, I was able to experience with...the women that raised me. But I also know that that by itself was a way for them to resist how the system is built in Brazil, which is quite challenging, especially for the black women, to succeed, to achieve, to overcome. So, I was in the middle of all those things, but I do have like plenty of very good memories, and that really, really shaped who I am.

Kyra: So, I guess, when did you start to really look at your environment and the systems that you grew up in through a critical lens, - like I guess was it something that you learned off of, you know, watching the black women that you grew up with or was it something that you came to kind of realise in your adulthood?

Delso: Well, definitely it started in my household, right? The care that I experienced, coming from my mum, my grandma, it always came with, you know, a bittersweet taste because they are trying to protect me, as they are also trying to discipline me, right? But looking back now, I understand that all of this comes from a place of protection, trying to protect myself from what it means to be in the world, what it means to be in this white world specifically. So, I grew up listening to many different anecdotes, stories, from my grandma, in which she would refer to how it was to be a black woman back in the '60s in Brazil, in an environment of dictatorship, in which spaces have been divided racially in many different ways. So, some spaces, black people were not expected to be navigating or occupying. So, very early, I started to have experiences with these stories, and I think that, as a teenager, I started to view or have an understanding that inequality was something crossing our experiences, other people's experiences, especially in the community I come from. So, I can tell you I... And then, when I moved to Portugal, 13 years ago, mostly, I can say that I become an immigrant, right, in Europe, which has intricacies, you know, and complexities, and I needed to... You know, I found that I had the need to understand and realise what it means to be an immigrant in this environment. I felt that I needed to fight, my everyday life, to exist in certain spaces, and I probably become observer of certain social dynamics, especially because, I mean, at that point, I already had like a degree in Psychology, so I've always been very attentive, very...taking...I mean, trying to understand my surroundings, but I didn't have this critical view. And I remember, for example, instances in which I would see like other people like me, other immigrants, from different origins, being treated differently in what we could call the Portuguese Home Office, in terms to allow people to be in the country, and those things, those experiences, started to shape somehow my view on this...critical



understanding of my environment. In Portugal, I felt that I learned that I was black before being anything else. So, I was always informed that my colour of skin was something that I have to take in mind in certain places or relationships. I learned that I was black and Brazilian and that's another configuration that I need to pay attention to it. And I learned that I was black, Brazilian and queer. So, all of those things overlapped. And I learned these first from my own experience and I was getting to know, for example, about the intersectionality, many years later, in terms of theoretical approach, framework that explains exactly what it means, and we have all those intersections in terms of identity, and it's overlapping also on oppression in the experiences of one person and of a group.

So, before all of those things, I was like navigating in this space in which my identity was perceived as a key for some things, but also sometimes as a lock that would prevent me to access opportunities, experiences, and even relationships. So, I think all of those things somehow...made me expand my criticality concerning my environment, my experience, but also my relationship with others and how policies have been shaped to people like me, for example.

Kyra: And, I guess, who or what would you say were some of your kind of major influences as you were kind of entering this...what feels kind of like a period of just awakening for you, coming to realise kind of your identities and, you know, thinking about them through an intersectional kind of lens?

Delso: Definitely. And I think that you used the right word: awaken. I think – and I'm still in this process – I'm also going to use the word "blossoming" as a way to describe this experience. But, definitely, in terms of influences, I rely on the ones that comes before me, you know. The first one, I definitely will say, my grandmother, for all the things that I learned with her, because she...she is a storyteller, and, as I told you, she was a chef and she, [finally...], she worked for 40 years in a hotel cooking every day, but then, em, she was also someone that always, you know...capturing the human experience, and always sharing her own views through the stories that she would tell to people, and I was like always fascinated by listening to it. I learned a lot about racial relationships, with the things that she was teaching, and the thing that – she's not an academic. She was not teaching me about race in a theoretical way. But the stories come from the experiences of her own upbringing and the challenges, for example, on achieving simple things that, I don't know, any neoliberal discourse in Europe would say that that's a right, but, in Brazil, you haven't access to health, to a job, to a house. It's not a right, not something that you can easily achieve. So, my grandma, she doesn't have like formal education, and all of those struggles, you know, come mostly because of these...hierarchies that we still have in our society back in Brazil. So, I mean, I would start with that in terms of my influences, but definitely black women in general, that always – I mean, I was...I stopped for a reflection two weeks ago or something,



and I realised that most of the jobs or places that I was working in projects and stuff like that, I was always in exchange with black women, in the majority of the cases, or would, you know, work with them. So, for me, I need to pay respect and to show gratitude because my understanding is, every time a black woman touched something, it's most likely that will blossom, that will grow. And I...as a person, I was shaped by being in these experiences. So, it really influences my way of thinking, my way of being, in many different ways.

And there's, I mean, in terms of, you know, theoretical [space] or academia, there's people that I really, really feel that really influences my thinking right now. So, I can mention the artist, interdisciplinary artist, and psychologist, Grada Kilomba – she's a Portuguese author that wrote about the experiences of black women back in Germany, and her PhD became a book and she uses concepts of psychoanalysis to, you know, describe experiences of race and racism. That was somehow an awakening when I'm having contact with her work, and that happened like maybe two or three years ago. I know also can cite Bell Hooks on how she writes. Another influence for me is, more recently, the writer [?], which beautifully teaches us about possibilities of writing from a place of existence and from a place of leaving, and this is something that really touches me and also really connects with the possibilities of dreaming as a way for us to liberate ourselves. So, I would say my influences go in this realm of the work and the [reasons] and the existence of black women in many different areas, not only the academia but also in my personal life and also other aspects of life as well.

Kyra: So, I wanted to dedicate some time to really thinking about your academic background and I guess your journey into Psychology and obviously where you are now, but what is your role in academia today and, yeah, what was your journey into higher education?

Delso: Ah well [sighing], that's an interesting question [laughing]. So, at this moment, I am a PhD candidate in Psychology at Nottingham Trent University here in the UK, but my journey with higher education was quite long. I graduated in Psychology in 2009, back in Brazil. Then I moved to Portugal, in which I worked as a psychologist for many years, but also I completed my Master's in Psychotherapy & Counselling back in 2015, and I had, back in Portugal, a first attempt for a PhD, which probably was a turning point concerning my understanding of the dynamics of power, exclusion, marginalisation, and what it is to be called and defined as a non-traditional student in these spaces, especially universities in Portugal. So, at this moment, right now, I am in the second year of my PhD here in the UK, and I can tell you that my journey has been unique. It's been personal, but it's been, I mean, eye-opening and transformative, in many, many ways. So, I've been learning; at the same time, I've been unlearning as I am immersed in the colonial theory and praxis. Definitely, it's been like opening...a liberating experience for me.



Kyra: And I guess just thinking about the very beginning, why Psychology? What is it about Psychology as a discipline that really kind of captivated you and wanted you to explore into it further?

Delso: Yeah. That's a question that makes me, you know, think about early days of my life... because, at first, I didn't want to be a psychologist. I wanted to become a doctor or either a judge, so I had one of those, you know, paths I would try to follow, but then... Let me give it a try on how Psychology... For me, I mean, at this point, Psychology means healing, you know, and it's a craft that, I mean, allows care, allows dialogue, allows hope, to be, you know, intertwined and combined with a purpose, [in/and] Psychology and this goes alongside the tradition of Paulo Freire in terms of womanisation. It's the possibility of using methods, techniques, [...] is a possibility for an exchange [in the name of] humanity or a bridge that allows other people to be humanised. So, this is how I've been, you know, conceptualising in Psychology, and practising it in what I do, not only research. So, as I told you, it was not my first choice, but definitely now it's something that I don't see doing anything different. And, I mean, I see myself like working, teaching, providing care as a psychologist. I would not change that at all for the things I was able to achieve and see and understand because of that. I mean, it's a beautiful profession and I feel like we, psychologists, we [are lucky] that AI will not be able to, you know, substitute us – it cannot be done by a computer, you need to be a person. But the thing is I think this profession allows ethics and care to come side by side and to be used for a better future, so not only for an individual that seeks for psychological help but for a society, for a community, for a group of people. So, this is how I probably would define Psychology and why I am in there.

Kyra: You also mentioned that you qualified as a psychotherapist in 2015, I believe you said...?

Delso: Yes.

Kyra: And then you were practising that for some time. What made you want to come back into academia to complete a PhD?

Delso: Well, that's, I mean [laughing], a question [I do] myself, like [...] so why I'm here, I'm sure of that. So, I mean, again, it is a quest – for me right now at this point, being academia, doing a PhD, is above all a quest for healing, actually, because I was...I faced institutional racism in Portuguese higher education. So, long story short, my first attempt to do a PhD back in Portugal, I was at a Portuguese university, and that was challenging enough because it was a PhD, but because I was facing some discourses and some experiences that really,



really put myself in a very complex positions. So, I had some instances in which I have been, you know, racialised in these spaces, and I can share with you a particular event in which I heard officially from the ones, you know, who [review] my work that, if I want to study to racism, I should go back to Brazil because racism is a problem there but not in Portugal because there's no such thing as racism in Portugal, or even there's no such thing as black people living in the country, you know. And my PhD right now is for me not only investigating something that is, you know, dear for me in terms of healing but also is...a process for me to, you know, review and talk about the ongoing state of racial relationships in Portuguese higher education as I feel that it is necessary for this to be, you know, discussed openly, you know, as... I mean, it's being discussed, but how it's discussed is [often asking] ourselves a very different or complex situations but I think that this is the main reason of why I'm doing a PhD right now, and because I also want to become a lecturer. I want to become a professor one day, teach in higher education, and I know that having a PhD is like one of the expected...resource that you have to, you know, you might need to do... I mean, not all the universities would require that, but I know that that gives somehow...extended possibilities, you know? So, that's probably where I feel motivated to complete a PhD.

Kyra: Yeah. I'm sorry that that was your experience.

Delso: Yeah.

Kyra: I admire like your resilience to continue and to really pursue this, despite kind of the difficulties that you've previously faced.

Delso: Yeah, thank you.

Kyra: Would you feel comfortable in sharing kind of...like what is the title of your thesis at the moment, and, I guess, how does it relate to your previous work and studies?

Delso: Definitely. So my work right now is concerning the lived experiences of black, brown, immigrant students in Portuguese higher education, Psychology, so I'm focusing on this environment, which is something that I've been part of it. So, it has the objectives to understand this, I mean, this global standard of violence that is still being created by the echoes of coloniality in these spaces, which is [enmattered] by racism but not only, em, in academia. And also, it's related to a second level of violence which is found in denial of racism as a problem, which is...currently state of discussion on race and racism in Portugal. Very often, you would find, in many different areas, in the media, even academics, these



discourses that try to, you know, put up the Portuguese identity and put down discourses or, you know, understandings of experiences that needs to understand about there's racism in these environments, spaces and policies. So, my study is primarily concerned about, you know, paying gratitude to the work of indigenous and black scholars. I mean, it considers ancestral knowledge as a way for us to be where we are, which paved the way for us to be able to resist and exist the [continuity] of violence that colonialism created, and that's still echoing through coloniality. And what I would like to do as a result of this work is be able to explore with other students [all this] and, you know, specificities. What are the possibilities we have to transform these higher education spaces? What are the dreams they have? What can we can imagine as possibility to change this [very] environment that keeps invisibilising us, marginalising us, excluding our voices and so on? So, this is, in a nutshell, what I'm trying to do in my research.

Kyra: Wow, yeah. I love how you kind of talk about how it's almost...it feels like two acts of violence being put upon somebody: you know, it's the fact that this person is experiencing racism, and that's already one form of violence, but then there's also the denial that that is an experience that they're facing, as a second form of violence.

Delso: Yes.

Kyra: And I mean, it's so true, and I think, in the UK especially, we have that fair share of kind of denial about, you know, coloniality, about institutional racism and-

Delso: Yes. Complicity.

Kyra: Exactly. Right. And I think to see that as an act of violence, and to call it an act of violence, is very much...it's needed.

Delso: Mm, that's where we are, right, with this research, yeah.

Kyra: Do you think it's because of like...the fact that we come from the UK, and I guess you're obviously studying Portugal...I mean, the Portuguese actually colonised my home country, the Philippines.

Delso: Oh yeah.



Kyra: Do you feel like there's this denial because it's...a country that was the coloniser? Is there that layer of like the role that location plays in it?

Delso: There is. I mean, it might be different from country to country. So, probably, in the UK, you hear a lot about these colour-blindness policies – we don't see colour, everyone is equal, you have an equal act that is defined by law - but all of these discourses are policies that are embedded with dynamic...or...infused with ideas based on interculturalism and multiculturalism, and that is a form [too] of denial that continues because if we create this idea, no, but we have different cultures, everyone is open, accepted in any space, but we still see structural racism, xenophobia, happening, and being written in policies, and I think we saw that recently happen in the UK with the Home Office in terms of policies related to asylum seekers, we see that...this dynamic is far from ending, and what we are seeing is definitely forms to deny that racism, xenophobia, and all those forms of oppression and violence are an ongoing...continuous form of perpetuate coloniality. In the Portuguese context – and this is where my research is focused – we do have this idea of [?], which is basically, in a nutshell, is that the colonialism imposed by the Portuguese was different from the British, was different from the Spanish, because they have been violent, they have been...you know, they decimated, they committed genocide, they, you know, imposed their views on the colonies. The Portuguese, on the other hand, they mixed with the colonised. They had sexual intercourse. They didn't have any problems to, you know, share the same space, have the same food, and stuff like that. They have like...their bodies were prepared to be in hot temperatures, for example, [where the] climate was different from Europe. And, because of that, they created what some authors, [? Fredy], would call a racial democracy in Brazil, right? And these discourses, they, firstly, have been denied by the Portuguese in the '40s and '50s, so people would say, "No, of course not, we don't mix with [indigenous or the] black – that's not a thing", but then it is [slowly] becoming incorporated in the discourse, and the political discourse, by [the dictatorship] as a means to continue the continuity of sovereignty of Portugal in the lands they still colonised until '75. So, with that, what was infused was the idea that the Portuguese identity, the national identity in Portugal, is immune to any discourse or anything related to race and racism because it is by, you know, inherently, is, you know, devoted or focused on this exchange with the indigenous, with the black, and, because of that, we cannot talk about race and racism in this context as we, as an identity, as a Portuguese identity, we don't have that in ourselves, you know? So, it makes very difficult the conversation about race and racism because that was infused in higher...in schools. That was infused by studies, you know, in academia, that wanted to prove those things – papers being written to, you know, defend these theories, this thesis, on this [?] view of the Portuguese identity. So, how can you discuss this problem, this structural problem, in an environment like that?



Kyra: Yeah. And I guess have you found it to be a particular challenge to kind of...expose that to the students that you've been kind of in conversation with?

Delso: Oh, well, I mean, I think, with the students, it's not a problem because they see it, they know it. They might find it hard to find the vocabulary to define, they might find it hard to connect the dots that that experience was racism, but they know, or they have a sense there's something odd here, or they...get used to be in a situation of [submission], of, you know, being treated less in the hierarchy of power and many other things. What is difficult is to talk about that with academics in these spaces because, in the majority, they are white people, and they have challenges or fragilities when they are confronted with this problem. It's hard to talk about that with the media. It's hard to talk about that with a regular Portuguese person...because they have been...I mean, their upbringing keeps repeating that message: there's no such thing as racist, we are not racist. So, when they grow up, how can you discuss a structural, visible problem as they learn very early that there's no such thing?

Kyra: And I guess in what ways do you think your positionality has kind of aided you in the research process?

Delso: Well, that's central. I mean, I cannot do what I do without considering my positionality because, first, I'm an insider in my problem, in my area of research. I'm part of this group. I'm working with people that are quite similar to me, in many different ways, right, even though they might have multiple identities, experiences than me, but we connect in many different ways, especially from these places of pain, of anger, of struggle, dealing with the same thing, right? So, as a black, queer immigrant man studying the experiences of people facing struggles related to racism, xenophobia, eligibility phobia in academia, my positionality is like a compass, you know, that gives me directions in terms of things that I have to be considering. And also, my positionality comes alongside intersectionality to inform the reflectivity, reflexivity process that I have to take into consideration to do the research that I'm doing, that will inform my choices in terms of citations, methods, and most...most...about ethical methodologies, ethical standards, that are [influenced] my research. So, positionality is something that, I mean, cannot be out of this equation, and I add intersectionality to it, and, as a result, it allows me to be reflexive about the work that I'm doing. So, this is how I approach things.

Kyra: Thank you. I love this analogy of, you know, looking at your positionality is kind of like a compass that guides you in this path. I really love that.

Delso: Yes.



Kyra: And I guess you've kind of spoken about this idea of like, you know, the reframing of colonial histories. What has your PhD research revealed to you about the coloniality of knowledge more generally?

Delso: Oh many things, oh my god, but I mean I think, every time that I go back to the texts and the work and everything, I see something new but... So, first, in terms of publications, papers that have been talking about these experiences of black people, brown people, immigrants, in Portuguese higher education, [it is often] these people is like portrayed in a homogenised group. It's like every black person comes from the same environments, contexts, or have the same experiences, just because of their colour of skin. So, that's probably a way for us to start to see how this coloniality of knowledge is still creating these hierarchies, right, and these groups and binaries. And...and the idea is like every black person in these spaces of higher education face the same challenges and behave in the same ways, act in the same ways. So, that's, you know, a way that we can see that. Also...it also revealed that the word "discrimination" is often a codeword used to talk about interpersonal racism, as a way to avoid using [races/racist] to discuss this problem because it would relate to open to a more broad conversation, but, also, to put things in the perspective of specificity. It's like...these problems, they are between one or two people; they are not part of a problem...a structural problem. So, it shows this continued challenge to name things as it is, and also the challenge of acknowledging that what you're talking about is structural, is systemic, and not only individual, right? And this thing about, you know, treating racism is a very individual incident avoids discussions that there is a historical, contextual, structural dynamic of power that Portugal has been, you know, trying to keep hands over, you know?

So, another important thing that I've found is, in terms of language, most of studies in this area, they consider that black immigrant, brown students, navigating Portuguese higher education, they are deficient in terms of language. They're lacking the fluency in European Portuguese, and therefore it justifies some violence they experience in these environments because they are the ones that doesn't know how to communicate or use the language properly. So, it suggest that continuously, that the Portuguese European variant is...is the superior one. Again, [you observe] these hierarchies, you know, in comparison to the Portuguese that has been forcibly imposed in the colonies and [has been spoken with] a mix of many other languages, like indigenous languages, Yoruba and many others that merged with Portuguese in these environments.

So, what I see in this coloniality of knowledge is like there's [continuity] of erasure of other ways of thinking, [enunciating], existing, and there's a continuity of this process of eradicating and expelling, excluding, the experiences of black people from academia



because it's [often], you know, white scholars writing down about these experiences. So, it's very few, the number of papers being, you know, published, written by racialised folks talking about those things, and this is where I see this coloniality of...knowledge.

Kyra: And I guess, just reflecting on, you know, where you're at in the PhD right now, what do you think you are still learning?

Delso: Oh, I mean, it's...a non-stop learning process, I think, [I'm learning] as well, but what for me has become more and more, you know...evident in my work and the things that I'm drawn to and the things I'm learning, it's about humanisation, you know? And being in the field of Decolonial Studies, I started this journey to unlearn ways that have been, you know, perpetuating continuously [dehumanisation] in terms of how relate to each other. So, for me, it's been like...an invitation, a process of expanding my views, related to self-determination, who is allowed to speak, who is allowed to think, and therefore to exist in different spaces, and, more specifically in my case, higher education, in academia. I've been learning about ethics, you know, and how can we apply ethics in a decolonial fashion, in methodologies, in research, and how these inform us that, historically, subjects, people, have been, you know, othered in the process of participation of what we can call scientific endeavours. So, I've been learning how epistemological violence...it's been like a language inside academia, and how important it is for us to consider [reflecting] our own positions, identities, intersectionalities, as a tool to be able to reclaim justice in this context of research, as an example.

Kyra: So, I wanted to kind of dedicate this next segment to talking about what it means to decolonise psychotherapy specifically, and, obviously, as a licensed psychotherapist already concerned with this issue, I think our audience would really benefit from hearing your thoughts on this. In what ways is psychotherapy still a very kind of colonial practice?

Delso: Yeah. I was thinking on this question because that's a very interesting question and it's not often on the table to be discussed. So, I was discussing this matter with a dear friend of mine which is also a psychologist and...that we sometimes see colleagues, you know, selling their services, like for example, "I will cure your anxiety and depression with 10 sessions – please send me a DM for more information", right, adapting [these discourses] for social media and stuff like that, which, I mean, we have to live, people need to pay, so they are doing what they can. But I think that...what makes me think is, if we think about decolonising psychotherapy, it's important to understand that it cannot be used as a commodity, as a product that you offer, and that it's up for the client to figure out the best way to use it, you know, if they can benefit from it, because you do what you can – if they are better or not, that's not about me, it's about them and how they, you know, see the



thing. I think we decolonise psychotherapy when we establish a horizontal and ethical concerned praxis that is not only what we see – because we have a code of conduct that informs us about ethics, but also use that to understand our own position in this space of the psychotherapy setting, and this is not often a praxis of reflecting on your own self in these spaces that other fellow psychotherapists do. So, I think we need to focus on acknowledging the power dynamics that are implied in the relationship of client and psychotherapist. So, historically, psychotherapy, psychopathology, have been focusing on the individual and creating classifications, which is a very colonial way of defining human experience, and we are way more than that. So, I think we must address the social, the political instances that cross mental health. It is not only about the individual but the society and the policies that we are, you know, allowing to happen, and they are influencing our own experiences. To decolonise psychotherapy, I think we have...we must understand that race, gender, sexual orientation, identity, and many other intersectionalities, are intertwined, and they are intertwined with the position that we occupy in society, for us, as psychotherapists, but also for our clients. Those things, they cannot be, you know, removed as layers from the spaces that we work with. We cannot say that...I mean, as a psychotherapist, I'm colour-blind, because race is a thing, not only for black people, immigrant people, asylum seekers – race is also a thing for white people. White people is also racialised in the Western world as we live. So, those things has to be discussed. We must continuously learn and unlearn about how we've been [?] people and how these books and manuals are defining normality, you know, and there's like a huge discussion on trans rights right now going on in the UK, and I would say in the Global North. Those are heavily influenced by, you know, these documents that try to base on science what it means to be a trans person and to define these experiences, but are we allowing self-determination of these very subjects to be taken into consideration in these discussions? Are we inviting these people to be, you know, sharing their views on what it means to be a trans person in the context they are? So, I think we need to address how historically the Psy Sciences – and here, I'm talking about psychotherapy, psychology, psychoanalysis and many others – have been, you know...see themselves as authority to define human experience, and have been connected, in many ways, with systems of oppression and policies of exclusion and marginalisation. We need to be culturally sensitive, right? So, our training does not give us everything we need in terms of tools to understand all the experiences in the world, so we need to be aware of that. So, I think this is probably...I would finish saying that we need to open invitations to dialogues about our practice, you know, and how can we work collectively to not perpetuate oppression, invisibility, disenfranchisement, in our psychological settings, how we can ensure that our [practices grow] to an extent that we are not repeating violence in these spaces, because I've been there, I've been in situations in which I experienced violence as a client working with a psychotherapists, and many other people have probably been in the same place. So, this is not a thing that comes from an individual perspective; this is something [has been emerging] and keeps repeating itself. So, that's probably what are my thoughts on that, but I really would like to continue thinking about that because I don't think that is a closed, you know, subject.



Kyra: Absolutely. Thank you. And I guess that kind of leads quite nicely into my next question of, you know, what is the role of storytelling in psychotherapy, because I do feel like there's kind of space for it in there, especially if we think about stories from like a kind of indigenous perspective, stories as healing and being able to kind of reclaim space and history and culture...?

Delso: Yes. In my view, it's at the heart of what I do, and I see an increased number of people considering that as well, in terms of how important it is for us to use storytelling or having storytelling as a tool for psychotherapy, but not only. For me, it's about, you know... [the historical thing] is about opening opportunities to counteract experiences most related to, you know, to trauma, violence, injustice, and pain, at many levels. So, it allows one, you know, to express, process their feelings, their experiences as... It's definitely a way for reclaiming someone's identity and their relationship with their contexts and their origins. It allows the dialogue to, you know, flourish, to happen, and to be a way to, you know, allow healing through these stories people are able to tell. For me, storytelling comes from the most ancestral activity in many, many indigenous communities, black communities. So, by telling their stories in these spaces, like this psychotherapeutic setting, people can assess, you know, their past, but also do it in the present and feel allowed to reimagine and dream the future for themselves. So, all of those things can be intertwined. And I would say that, I mean, the stories that we tell ourselves, or we don't tell ourselves, they have that direct impact on our emotions and states that we have or our choices, relationships. So, I think being able to communicate that in a collaborative way, to exercise that to storytelling, allows us to resist, allows us to exist, and to gradually, continuously, reclaim control of our own narratives and the connection that we have with our lands, contexts and communities.

Kyra: I was thinking maybe I could ask you, thinking about people who teach Psychotherapy, so coming from a kind of pedagogical perspective, how can they decolonise their practice?

Delso: Allowing ourselves to undo and to unlearn is definitely a way for us to start decolonising our practices. And what I mean by that is...it's important for us to acknowledge, undeniably, the colonial influence in the fields of knowledge production, of action, of relationship and so on, right? And we have to...ways to do that, as we start, for example, to work collectively for the change, so...and, for me, that means that, as we start to get into this project of decolonisation, in many different instances, disciplines, areas, we are changing ways that humans have been humanised, [or re-humanised], right? So, I think that a way for us to decolonise practices, for practitioners, for people teaching [Psychology], but also in other professions, is to be aware of hierarchies of relationships and address how can we be more horizontal in these places and in relationships. How can we consider liberation at the centre of what we do and freedom as a thing to be shared by everybody, for all, you know? So, we can, you know, look back. We can start looking to indigenous people's



ancestry, sovereignty, and self-determination over their own experiences and bodies, languages and knowledge, culture, as a way to start looking to our future. So, I like this framework of decolonisation that we start...[recovering] the knowledge, experiences that have been destroyed by colonisation, so we then move to a next step of mourning the loss of these destroyed...of these experiences, of these people that have been victimised in this process, and, after that, we create space, we hold space, and possibilities for us to dream a [new social order]. As we do that, we start to draw commitments, em, plans for transformation, to finally start acting towards change. So, I think there's many steps we can do to do that. It's not just like... I like to say like...I mean, it's not EDI that's going to solve the problem that we have...[basing/facing] for many, many, you know, centuries that results from the [continuity] of this aftermath of colonialism that we see in coloniality, but it's definitely how can we ensure, you know, that these steps can be followed as a way for us to be committed to change, to transform, you know, to acknowledge the past, [about having] lost, and allow imagination, creating, dreaming, as possibilities for us to change.

Kyra: I mean, unfortunately, we're coming to the end of our talk, but I guess you've just kind of...you've just spoken about dreaming, which I think is actually the perfect way to kind of smoothly come to an end. What is something you'd like to see happen or see develop within higher education in, let's say, the next 10 years?

Delso: Yes. Oh, so many things! I want to see academia as a pluriversal space, right, not only the people that goes to these spaces but the type of knowledge that it produces and how knowledge can be produced, you know. I want to see these...walls...not only being diverse but also being multiple and...em...we start to see our own, you know, experiences being acknowledged, respected and, you know, seen as the centre of possibility for changes, and not only in marginalised methodologies, work and so on. I want [a safe/to see] space that is inviting for everybody else, that not only, you know, replicates this [destructivist] neoliberal mentality that we see in terms of selling a product, in terms of, you know, you are buying a course, and, with that, we have a promise of something that you achieve afterwards. I want to see this space as a place of encounters, encounters that are meaningful, that are humanised, and that hierarchy is not a commodity or a possibility of, you know, the continuity of violence that we still see in terms of how people still continuously, you know, are experiencing harassment, sexual assault, racism, xenophobia, queerphobia, and many other forms of violences in these spaces, as they are not complying with what is defined as normal for these places. So, I want to see the university being universal but not in the way that has been historically shaped as universal, you know, as meaning for whiteness, em, meaning for, you know, a place of power, for the patriarchy to have a guaranteed place of voice, but universal as a constellation of knowledges that integrate the co-existence of indigenous, black, and many other communities in this space, openly and freely, and that's, for me, probably the...would be what we could see as liberation.



Kyra: Thank you so much, Delso.

Delso: Thank you.

Kyra: Well, honestly, I just want to give you a big thank you for just joining us on the podcast. It's been so nice to hear about yourself and your journey, but also your thoughts on kind of what needs to happen within this discipline and its practice, and, yeah, everything you've said has just been so thoughtful and just, yeah, so informative. So, thank you so much again.

Delso: I appreciate that invitation – thank you.

Kyra: To find out more information, access our tools, or get in touch, visit us at blog.westminster.ac.uk/psj.