

The Psychodynamics of Race

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Rae Sherwood was a South African social psychologist who did the research for her PhD dissertation on African civil servants. It led to results that the South African government did not want to be publicly known and there was a gap of 15 years between the research being completed and the PhD being awarded. Even then, it was awarded on condition that the dissertation be kept permanently sealed. In an interview that she gave to one of us in 1984, she said that she hated apartheid and could not bear to live under it. After spending some time in the United States, she took up residence in England where she became associated with the Columbus Centre at the University of Sussex. The centre sponsored research on racism of various kinds. In 1970 and 1971, Sherwood and her research assistant, another South African, Sylvia Hutchinson, conducted extensive interviews with three families in an area of London with a large immigrant population. One of the families was Afro-Caribbean, another was Indian and the third was a white British family whose members were openly racist. The research led to a book, *The Psychodynamics of Race* (1980) in which Sherwood offered psychoanalytic explanations of racism and suggestions on how it might be overcome. Quite apart from its merits as a piece of qualitative research, it is an interesting document of the time, coming as it did in the wake of Enoch Powell's "Rivers of Blood" speech and the rise of the National Front.