

Correspondence

Mind fixers should join forces

In her review of my book *Mind Fixers*, Alison Abbott chides me for being “pessimistic” about biological psychiatry’s prospects and failing to call attention to “new insights about brain circuitry as a potential target for treatment” (*Nature* 568, 314–315, 2019). Her criticism misses my historical point.

The research to which Abbott refers might or might not have a transformative effect on the care of the mentally ill. Either way, we have other work to do. The ‘old’ biological psychiatry launched in the 1980s — the one under which so many of us have conducted our business for the past 40 years — is running into the sands. The confusion and distrust it has engendered is entrenched in the public sphere.

We are at an inflection point. Either we can double down or we can call for a stocktaking. What do we want — and what do patients want — from a future biological psychiatry? We need to know how to engage constructively with the distrust, and how to balance the relationship between immediate patient needs and long-term scientific insights.

I am not pessimistic at all. I am energized: crises are times of opportunity. I am hoping that *Mind Fixers* will encourage more people to discuss the choices and challenges.

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University racism: report too gloomy

I take issue with the implication in the Institutional Reconciliation and Transformation Commission report that nothing significant has been done about racism at the University of Cape Town (UCT) since the end of apartheid in 1994 (see

Nature 568, 151–152; 2019). As a member of the executive team during 2015–16, I can attest to the tireless efforts of management, teaching staff and students, black and white, to create conditions in which all students feel welcome and can flourish.

The student profile at UCT is beginning to reflect the demographics of the country (white students now constitute a minority). For many of us black South Africans whose first undergraduate experience was at institutions for separate races, the opportunities, support and efforts at redress are a far cry from what we had known before.

However, it cannot be said that UCT, or any other previously white tertiary institution, is free of racism. The transformation of UCT’s staff is still too slow and is becoming a matter of urgency.

‘Decolonizing’ curricula is perhaps the most complex and contested of the tasks ahead.
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University racism: academics reply

We wish to point out that there are crucial omissions from the report by the Institutional Reconciliation and Transformation Commission (IRTC) that challenge its findings of “rife” racism at the University of Cape Town. These were not picked up in your overall assessment of the situation (see *Nature* 568, 151–152; 2019).

For example, there is evidence that bias in the university’s promotion systems has been disappearing over the past 11 years (see H. Sadiq *et al.* *High. Educ.* <http://doi.org/c65d>; 2018). The profiles of academic staff and of researchers (see, for example, G. D. Breetzke and D. W. Hedding *Stud. High. Educ.* <http://doi.org/gfzdbg>; 2019)

are changing at South African universities. We also understand that one of the five members of the commission disagreed with the theoretical approach and the factual conclusions in the section of the report dealing with racism.

The commission was established as part of an agreement aimed at ending campus disruption and violence (go.nature.com/2kjzdbl). It was independent of the university, but not of South African politics (go.nature.com/2kksqge). We find it unfortunate that sections of the IRTC report took a contentious approach to racism that reflected the concerns of particular political groups.

The University of Cape Town remains strongly committed to transforming its racist legacy in academic appointments and promotions (see go.nature.com/2kkdjej).

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*On behalf of 16 co-signatories (see go.nature.com/2lav7i7 for full list).
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Forests: economic perks of plantations

Strategies for global forest restoration must be framed in the context of the growing worldwide demand for fuel, food and incomes (see S. Lewis *et al.* *Nature* 568, 25–28; 2019). In our view, plantations are, alongside natural and regenerating forests, a legitimate and valuable component of the global restoration strategy to directly and indirectly contribute to climate-change mitigation.

The demand for forest products is projected to increase by around 50% by 2030. Plantations are highly efficient wood-production systems and can alleviate pressures on natural forests. Along with agroforests, they also support livelihoods. The

regeneration of secondary forests, by contrast, has high ‘opportunity costs’ because the land is no longer available for more economically rewarding purposes. A fair analysis of carbon must consider continued forest degradation in restoration scenarios that exclude plantations, as well as the role of plantations in replacing steel and concrete with timber.

Plantation companies can be important investors in natural-forest restoration. New plantation models favour landscape mosaics of different species, interspersed with natural forests and agricultural lands that provide raw materials and social and environmental benefits (C. L. C. Liu *et al.* *Global Ecol. Conserv.* 15, e00419; 2018).

In Brazil, for example, companies must allocate 50–80% of their lands to natural-forest restoration or protection. Members of the conservation group WWF’s New Generation Plantations collectively manage 11 million hectares, more than half of which is dedicated to conserving and restoring forests and other ecosystems, and to supporting small-scale farming (L. N. Silva *et al.* *New Forests* 50, 153–168; 2019).

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