The black peril and miscegenation: the regulation of inter-racial sexual relations in Southern Rhodesia, 1890 - 1933.

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ABSTRACT

For over forty years, at the turn of this century, the white settlers of Southern Rhodesia devoted considerable energy to the discussion and the regulation of inter-racial sexual relations. The settlers' worries about maintaining their position in power were expressed, in part, in the periodic outbreaks of 'black peril' hysteria, a term which well-captures white fears about the threat that African men were thought to represent to white women. Although voluntary sexual encounters between white women and black men were prohibited from 1903 onwards, no such prohibition existed for white men in their relations with black women. The white women made several attempts to have legislation passed prohibiting such liasons, and failed largely because in doing so they were perceived to be challenging the authority of the white men. The regulation of inter-racial sexual intercourse thus served to reinforce the white male domination of Rhodesian society.

RESUME

Pendant plus de quarante ans autour du début de ce siècle, les colons blancs de la Rhodésie ont investi beaucoup d'énergie sur la réglementation des relations sexuelles entre noirs et blancs. La peur des colons de perdre leur position de pouvoir s'exprimait, en partie, à travers les éruptions hystériques périodiques du «peril noir», un terme qui exprime bien la perception des blancs pour qui les hommes africains représentaient une menace pour les femmes blanches. Malgré la prohibition des relations sexuelles entre femmes blanches et hommes noirs qui existait à partir de 1903, aucune interdiction semblable existait pour les hommes blancs avec les femmes noires. Les femmes blanches ont essayé, à plusieurs reprises, et sans succès, de faire passer une loi pour interdire les relations sexuelles entre hommes blancs et femmes noires. Leur échec est dû, en grande partie, au fait que leurs tentatives étaient perçues comme un défi à l'autorité des hommes blancs. La réglementation des relations sexuelles entre noirs et blancs a ainsi contribué à renforcer le contrôle de la société rhodésienne par les hommes blancs.

This has been a long and difficult process for me, and there are a lot of people that I would like to thank for their help along the way. I would like to thank my supervisor, Prof. Myron Echenberg for his patience, as well as for his quick response as this project was nearing its end. I would also like to thank Mrs. Napier and the office staff of the History Department, as well as the staff of the Inter-Library Loan section of McLennan Library.

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INTRODUCTION

The white settlers of Southern Rhodesia devoted considerable time to discussing, and attempting to control, inter-racial sexual contact for a period of over forty years at the turn of this century. Indeed, the prohibition of such relations appears to have been one of the fundamental tenets of settler society. An investigation into the public debates about inter-racial sexual contact provides a means of exploring the tensions and insecurities which beset settler society during the period until the mid-1930s. Furthermore, an examination of the legal regulation of such relations demonstrates how white male settlers were able to use this as one more tool to assert their control over Rhodesian society. For these reasons it is worth looking more closely at this subject.

The 'Black Peril', an emotive phrase used to describe a wide range of sexual offences allegedly committed by black men against white women, provoked settler reactions of uncontainable rage and horror, likened by one writer to, "...periodic waves of collective sexual hysteria."[1] Illicit sexual intercourse between white women and black men was prohibited from 1903 onwards, and was supplemented by

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[1] Charles van Onselen, 'The Witches of Suburbia: domestic service on the Witwatersrand, 1890-1914,' Studies in the Social and Economic History of the Witwatersrand, 1886-1914, Vol. 2, New Nineveh. (Harlow, Essex: Longman, 1982), 45.

further legislation in 1916, which prevented white women and black men from engaging in unspecified "indecent acts".

Concubinage, or 'miscegenation', as the relationships between European men and African women were usually termed, provoked a far more limited public outcry. In the years between 1916 and 1930 the subject was brought before the Legislative Council on no less than five separate occasions, always at the instigation of groups of white women, prompting lengthy and often vituperative debates. None of these attempts to have legislation passed prohibiting sexual relations between white men and black women was ever effective.

Given the race prejudices and the preconceptions about appropriate gender roles held by the majority of the white settlers, it is neither surprising that they reacted to such relations with disapprobation, nor that the intensity of their reaction varied considerably depending upon the particular combination of race and sex that was involved. Yet, an investigation of contemporary sources makes it clear that the settlers' reactions were disproportionate to the scale of the problem.

Intent on creating a society where they would dominate both economically and politically, the settlers had little tolerance for any behaviour which threatened to bridge the gap between the two races. The physical intimacy of sexual intercourse was deemed likely to engender a loss of respect

of the Africans for the Europeans, and hence to endanger white rule.

Chapter One, which deals with the years between 1890 and 1903, examines the way in which the settlers' preconceptions about appropriate race relations and gender roles influenced their behaviour. It also shows how the 'Rebellion' of 1896-7 combined with the economic difficulties of the first decade of white occupation to foster in the settlers a clear sense of their own vulnerability.

Chapter Two, which covers the period between 1903 and 1916, investigates the settler reactions to sexual relations between white women and black men. I argue that the prohibition of voluntary sexual relations, and the periodic uproars about the apparently involuntary ones, were based on preconceptions about white women's role in society and can best be understood as expressions of white insecurity. Public discussions about the black peril also provided the settlers with a medium in which to express their anger about their lack of political control.

Chapter Three focuses on the period from 1916 to 1930, and on the white women's repeated attempts during these years to have legislation passed prohibiting sexual relations between white men and black women. By agitating for the legal restriction of such relations, women were overstepping the boundaries of their assigned role in

maintaining white prestige, and challenging not only male sexual freedom, but also the accepted gender roles of white Rhodesian society.

It was thus in a climate of uncertainty and conflict that settler concerns about inter-racial sex flourished. The preservation of a sexual distance between black and white took on enormous symbolic value for the settlers, and was, throughout this period, intimately connected in their minds with the preservation of their position in power. The regulation of inter-racial sexual intercourse served to reinforce the double dominance of white over black and male over female, and to shape the character of Rhodesian society.

The research for this thesis was based both on secondary material available in North America, and on a variety of primary sources available in the archives in Zimbabwe and the United Kingdom. A survey of the Rhodesia Herald for selected years during this period provided me with the general flavour of white society in Harare as well as with specific information about black peril attacks throughout this period, and about settler attitudes towards such assaults.

The records of the British South Africa Police and of the Law Department of Southern Rhodesia which are found in the National Archives of Zimbabwe in Harare, were helpful in providing information about official attitudes towards the

black peril as well as some rather questionable statistical information about the extent of the crime. The Colonial Office correspondence, which is housed at the Public Record Office in London, filled out the picture of the conflict between the Rhodesian settlers and the British High Commissioner in South Africa over a number of specific black peril cases, and at the same time provided details about these cases that were not available elsewhere.

The material for the chapter on miscegenation is drawn mainly from two different sets of records available in the National Archives of Zimbabwe. The debates of the Legislative Council of Southern Rhodesia provide information about the attitudes of male legislators to white women's demands for legislation prohibiting liasons between white men and black women. The records of the Federation of Women's Institutes of Southern Rhodesia, as well as of a number of other women's groups, helped me to understand the range of opinion among white women about the proposed miscegenation legislation, and to grasp the complexity of the political debate on this issue.

There are, however, some difficulties with the sources which mean that thesis is less well-rounded than I would have liked it to be. In the time available to me to do research in Zimbabwe, I was not able to learn much about the white women who participated in the various women's organizations that were involved in calling for legislation

to combat miscegenation. The statistical information available about both black peril attacks and miscegenation is unsatisfactory. The material which I have been able to survey tells the reader more about what was thought to happen than about what actually went on. As will be seen shortly, contemporary perceptions of increases in the frequency of black peril attacks or concubinage may very well have been a reflection of rather different concerns.

However, the most significant problem which I encountered was that the information which I was able to gather was decidedly lopsided in terms of its representation of the views of both sexes and both races. The public debates on this subject, both in the Legislature and in the Rhodesian press, were dominated by the voices of white men. While it was possible for me to gain some idea of the opinions of European women and African men on these matters, I was not able to find any information about African women's experience of, and attitudes towards, inter-racial sexual relations. It is to be hoped that further research will be done into the African women's experience of the white settler regime.

CHAPTER 1

SETTING THE SCENE

THE WHITE SETTLEMENT OF SOUTHERN RHODESIA, 1890-1903.

The white settlers who came to 'occupy' Southern Rhodesia in the 1890s were predisposed to react strongly and negatively to the possibility of inter-racial sexual intercourse. The preservation of sexual distance between white and black took on enormous symbolic value for the settlers, and, for over thirty years, was intimately connected in their minds with the preservation of their position in power.

In order to understand how this link came to be made, and how inter-racial sexual relations came to be invested with such a weight of symbolic meaning, it is necessary to examine the prejudices about appropriate race relations and gender roles with which the settlers arrived in the territory, as well as their preconceptions about their role in Africa. It is also essential to investigate the way in which the events of the first decade of white settlement, and particularly the 'Rebellion' of 1896-7, threatened the social order which the settlers sought to create, and contributed to their sense of insecurity.

While the men of the 'Pioneer Column' and of the

British South Africa Police who marched into Mashonaland in 1890 were, no doubt, more intent on having an adventure and making a quick fortune and then clearing out than on establishing a new society, they nevertheless held firm beliefs about the kind of relationships that would prevail between blacks and whites. When a more permanent, and stable white population began to enter the territory in the mid-1890s they set about establishing a society where the whites would dominate both economically and politically, and where the visible differences in skin colour between black and white would reflect far more fundamental social and economic differences.

For the vast majority of the early settlers of Southern Rhodesia, the difference between themselves and the Africans was a difference in kind, and not simply in degree. Settler beliefs about appropriate race relations were strongly influenced both by the existing South African pattern, and by prejudices about Africa and Africans imported directly from Britain, the country to which the majority of the early settlers felt the strongest ties.[1]

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[1] Undoubtedly, strong links existed between the two white communities in Southern Africa, links forged by commonality of interest, shared blood, and the similarity of situation where the younger society looked south toward the older one for a model which could be followed in similar circumstances. The simple fact that for many years the most common route into the territory was from the south, and that many of the early settlers had already spent some time in the Cape Colony before moving northward, meant that South African ideas about appropriate race relations were necessarily reflected by the settlers of Southern Rhodesia. See Dane Kennedy, Islands of

Southern Rhodesia has been described as a society which was more English than the English, where all other white cultures became absorbed by this 'Englishness' for over sixty years.[2] The two main newspapers, The Rhodesia Herald and The Bulawayo Chronicle, both contained a significant proportion of 'home' news throughout the period, with articles of general interest on theatre, gardening, fashion and cookery, all displaying a real nostalgia for life in the metropole.[3]

White. Settler Society and Culture in Kenya and Southern Rhodesia, 1890 - 1939 (Durham: Duke University Press, 1987), 7,11 for a discussion on the South African influence in Rhodesia.

However, the vast majority of the early settlers identified themselves as being of British origin, and, according to one writer, composed 95% of the white Rhodesian population throughout the period between 1890 and 1939. See Enetia Vassilatos, 'Race and Class: The Development and Influence of White Images of Blacks in Southern Rhodesia, 1890-1939,' (Ph. D. diss., University of Rhodesia, 1977), ix.

This percentage also included those who, though they were South African born, nevertheless felt that their primary links of affiliation were with great Britain. Thus, during the first decade of white settlement between 20-25% of those who identified themselves as being of British origin were in fact South African born. See B.A. Kosmin, 'On the Imperial Frontier: The Pioneer Community of Salisbury in November 1897,' Rhodesian History, 2 (1971): 29-31.

The Dutch South African population in Rhodesia remained small, composing only 8% of the white population during the 1890s and living mainly on farms around Melsetter. Arthur Keppel-Jones, Rhodes and Rhodesia (Kingston & Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1983), 376.

For an account of the Dutch South African settlement of this area, see Jeannie M. Boggie, Experiences of Rhodesia's Pioneer Women (Bulawayo: Philpott and Collins, 1938), 133-170.

[2] John Parker, Rhodesia: Little White Island (London: Pitman Publishing, 1972), 31.

[3] Vassilatos, 'Race and Class', 61.

From 1890, when the territory was first settled, the white population was, and continued to be, predominantly of British origin. Census reports for Bulawayo from March of 1895 and for Salisbury from November of 1897, show that in these two main towns of the territory, approximately 80% of the European population of the former town, and 60% of those in the latter, described their primary links of affiliation as being with Britain.[4] Certainly, in times of crisis, such as war, the settlers were quick to display their loyalty to Britain, and equally quick to look to Great Britain for help when they were themselves in trouble, such as during 'The Rebellion'.[5]

The image of Africa loomed large, indeed, in the popular culture of late Victorian Britain. According to one writer, books about Africa were the escapist literature of the Victorians, who found respite from the moral tales about the evils of their own society in a new world of mystery,

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[4] Keppel-Jones, Rhodes, 379; Kosmin, 'Imperial Frontier', 29-30.

[5] L.H. Gann & Peter Duignan. The Rulers of British Africa, 1870 - 1914 (London: Croom Helm, 1978) 128. During the Boer War, Rhodesia sent both men and horses. A total of 1,700 men, or 15% of the country's white population was engaged in the conflict.The First World War drew an even greater participation of Southern Rhodesian men. 6,000 men joined the British forces out of a total white population of approximately 25,000 and "...performed prodigies of valour in Flanders and Gallipoli..." Parker, Rhodesia, 25. See also Crosbie Garstin, The Sunshine Settlers (Bulawayo: Books of Rhodesia, 1971) for the final chapters where the Rhodesian men unquestioningly set aside their own affairs to depart for Europe at the outbreak of World War I.

barbarism, dark adventure and romance, where hunters and settlers performed deeds of daring in the cause of the Empire, and generally lived lives free from the constraints and hardships of lives in the Metropole.[6]

Music hall skits, popular melodramas, history and geography books, children's adventure stories, along with newspaper articles and travel diaries, further served to provide the English of all social strata with a set of preconceptions about Africa and Africans.[7] And, at the Great Exhibition in London in 1899, there was a 'Kaffir Kraal', which drew thousands of visitors twice a day and which focussed British public attention more particularly on Southern Africa. Here, along with 174 Africans of Zulu, Basuto, Ndebele and Swazi origin, strutting cranes and giant tortoises were also to be found, and people could line up to see a show where there were re-enactments of the 1893 Matabele War, and of the 1896-7 Rhodesian 'Rebellion'.[8]

The show was apparently especially popular among British women, and a number of articles were published in contemporary newspapers where the writers expressed their

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[6] Vassilatos, 'Race and Class', 23-4, 30.

[7] See John M. MacKenzie, ed., Imperialism and Popular Culture (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1986); and John M. MacKenzie, Propaganda and Empire (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1984).

[8] MacKenzie, Propaganda, 104-5; and Ben Shephard, 'Showbiz Imperialism, The Case of Peter Lobengula,' in Imperialism and Popular Culture, edited by John M. MacKenzie, (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1986), 99.

disgust at the uninhibited way in which young women caressed the limbs of these "...untamed man-animals".[9] The Daily Mail conducted an almost daily campaign to close the kraal, and in August 1899, the management of Earl's Court succumbed to public pressure and barred women from the kraal. Six hundred were turned away in a single day.[10]

Certainly, there was a deep-seated British perception of Africans as being uncontrollably sexual. The nakedness of African women seemed, to travellers and missionaries, to indicate a lack of modesty, and African women gained the reputation for being more lustful even than their men. To late-Victorian Britons, who had grown up in a society where sexual self-repression was a primary social value, the African polygamous marriage system seemed to indicate societal approval for a sexual free-for-all, and provided an added reason for colonial rule.[11]

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[9] Fernando Henriques, Children of Caliban (London: Secker & Warburg, 1974), 140. See also Henriques, Children, 141-3.

[10] Ben Shephard, 'Showbiz Imperialism', 103. One of these English women, Miss Florence 'Kitty' Jewell, became engaged to one of the men from the show who went by the name of Prince Peter Lobengula and who claimed to be the oldest son of King Lobengula of Matabeleland. So intense was the reaction to their engagement that they were never successful in finding either a church or a court to marry them and though it is unclear what eventually happened between them, Kitty Jewell committed suicide. Peter Lobengula died destitute in Salford in 1913, having by then married an Irish woman by whom he had five children.

[11] Philip Mason, The Birth of a Dilemma: The Conquest and Settlement of Rhodesia (London: Oxford University Press, 1958),91-3; Vassilatos,'Race and Class', 55-57; Kenneth Ballhatchet, Race, Sex and Class under the Raj (London:

The excessive sexuality of Africans was only one small part of a larger image of Africans as animal-like, lulled by a beneficent climate which provided them with the means of survival with little effort.[12] Africans were commonly portrayed as being barbaric, dirty, devious, untruthful, childlike and lazy.[13] The men were thought to live lives of ease, content to rest in the shade while their women went out and did the work, emerging only occasionally from this somnolent state to engage in wild bouts of eating, drinking, dancing, love-making, and rampaging.[14]

The British reacted with horror to the reputed tyranny

Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1980), 5 & 7, for Indian material for comparison; Ronald Hyam, 'Empire and Sexual Opportunity,' The Journal of Imperial and Commonwealth History, 14 (Jan. 1986): 34-89, on the role of sex in imperial expansion.

[12] It was assumed the African failure to develop social and economic systems similar to those of Northern Europe was due, in part, to the climate. In school, geography textbooks perpetuated the image of the indolent African, living a life of tropical ease, and contrasted their behaviour with that of people from more northern climes. In Nelson's The World and its People (c. 1907), the African was described as "...an overgrown child, vain, self-indulgent, and fond of idleness. Life is so easy to time in his native land that he has never developed the qualities of industry, self-denial and forethought." Nelson, quoted in MacKenzie, Propaganda, 184. For an examination of settler reactions to the African climate, see Kennedy, Islands, 109-127.

[13] For a detailed study on the subject of Victorian attitudes to race, see Christine Bolt, Victorian Attitudes to Race (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1971).

[14]. The settlers viewed the African woman as virtual slaves to their husbands, a situation which they quickly sought to correct. In 1902, the editor of the Rhodesia Herald wrote that Africans had to learn that men and not women were designed to go out and work, and they had to stop living off colonial slaves. Vassilatos, 'Race and Class', 75.

of African social systems such as that of the Ndebele, and various travellers described in gory detail the arbitrary punishments, mutilation and mass murder which appear to have been a commonplace fact of life. Yet, there was a certain amount of ambivalence in the British reaction to African 'savagery'. For, while condemning the barbarity of daily life among the Africans, the British nevertheless expressed great admiration for the bravery and skill in battle of such 'martial tribes' as the Ndebele, which was matched only by their contempt for groups such as the Shona, who, through weakness, allowed themselves to become the victims of the stronger and more military ethnic groups.[15]

One of the justifications given for settler rule in Southern Rhodesia was that it would serve to protect the weak Mashona from the dangerous and marauding Matabele. Seeing the Africans as dangerous children provided the necessary excuse for some one to step in and play the parental role. As one writer expresses it,

> the 'Myth of African as Child'... provided an attractive excuse for intervention and control in Africa. As Charles Lyon has observed, 'as it was the moral right and obligation of adults to discipline, guide and protect children, so the more 'mature' races had a similar right and obligation to 'child races'.[16]

The British felt themselves to be well-equipped to take on

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[15] Vassilatos, 'Race and Class', 38-42.

[16] J.A. Mangan, The Games Ethic and Imperialism, Aspects of the Diffusion of an Ideal (Middlesex: Viking, 1986), 112.

this guiding role.

It is interesting to note, in passing, that the characteristics so commonly attributed to Africans, such as childishness, laziness, and dishonesty, had in an earlier generation, been attributed to the working classes in Britain, particularly to those who were of Irish origin. Thus, the language which appeared to have come into being specifically to describe settler relations with 'the natives', had its origins in describing class relationships between superior and subordinate in British society. Class attitudes thus became transformed into racial attitudes in an imperial setting.[17]

Convinced of their racial superiority, the British found themselves faced with the rather convenient duty, forced upon them by their Christian beliefs, of 'civilising' the more 'backward' nations of the world. Contemporary scientific theory, in the form of eugenics and social Darwinism, confirmed the right of the fittest to rule, while imperial propaganda, "...contributed to the complacent habit of superiority which created what might be called 'protected markets of the mind' in Britain...."[18]

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[17] On this subject see MacKenzie, Propaganda, 176; Greta Jones, Social Darwinism and English Thought (Brighton: Harvester Press, 1980), 144, 145 & 158; and Ballhatchet, Raj, 121-2.

[18] MacKenzie, Propaganda, 257. See also Vassilatos, 'Race and Class', 49 & 62; Bernard Porter, The Lion's Share (London: Longman, 1975), 71; Frank Clements, Rhodesia, The Course to Collision (London: Pall Mall Press, 1969), 30. For

The white settlers who came to occupy Southern Rhodesia thus arrived certain of their moral superiority over the Africans, and with a well-defined sense of the role which they were to play as part of an international British civilising movement. Certainly, the settlers of Southern Rhodesia were to prove adept at using the rhetoric of imperial duty and self-sacrifice while at the same time vigorously pursuing the goals of personal material gain.

Britons emigrating to Africa assumed that they would occupy the dominant position in colonial society both economically and politically, and the character traits promoted as being appropriate to 'empire builders' were those which were associated with leadership.

From the pro-imperial literature of the latter part of the nineteenth century comes a delineation of the ideal type of male 'empire builder'.

> He is, to begin with, more readily attracted by things practical than by things theoretical; he prefers a feat of arms to any intellectual achievement; he would rather hear of things done than things attempted; he worships success in everything...he is combative and aggressive...subject to restlessness...likes trade...profoundly religious but will not endure the domination of priests; he is tender and ever chivalrous towards women, he loves children, he

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information on the eugenics movement in Britain see G. R. Searle, Eugenics and Politics in Britain, 1900-1914 (London: Noordhoff International Publishing, 1976) and Lyndsay Andrew Farral, 'The Origins and Growth of the English Eugenics Movement, 1865 - 1925'(Ph. D. diss., Indiana University, 1970). For the connection between racist ideologies and social Darwinian thought, see Jones, Social Darwinism, 151 & 159; and Bolt, Victorian Attitudes.

> sits at home with his wife and children and desires no other society.[19]

These were men who were "...self-contained, self-controlled and self-reliant..."[20], in whom duty to an imperial mission and a willingness to sacrifice themselves to a greater cause was balanced by stoical good humour in the face of difficulty. They did not shy away from battle, but embraced it as an opportunity to display their bravery in the greater cause of bringing 'civilisation' to the morally and materially retarded natives, a chance to display their 'character'.[21]

Such men were called upon to behave with justice and generosity to the natives, even in the face of dire examples of their barbarism. As rulers, they were to act at all times in such a way as to display their integrity and moral probity, thus civilising the Africans "...by sheer force of moral example."[22] And, as this author has noted, while the ideal pattern of behaviour must be distinguished from

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[19] H. John Field, Toward a Programme of Imperial Life (Oxford: Clio Press, 1982), 99, citing Walter Besant, The Rise of Empire, London, 1897, 14-5.

[20] Field, Imperial Life, 165, citing Steevens, Egypt in 1898.

[21] See Field, Imperial Life, 84-5, 87-8; Vassilatos, 'Race and Class', 57-9; Roy Lewis and Yvonne Foy, The British in Africa (London: Weidenfeld & Nicolson, 1971), 27-8; Porter, Lion's Share, 44; and Mangan, Games Ethic, throughout on the role of public schools in Great Britain in building 'empire builders'.

[22] H. Alan C. Cairns, Prelude to Imperialism (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1965) 36.

what actually went on, "... it remains true that the image of the gentleman and the general emphasis on a moral basis for race contact were powerful conditioning factors in dictating norms of conduct towards Africans."[23]

White women also had a role to play in the colonies. The imperial and patriotic propaganda of the 1880's and 1890's embraced a stereotype of female behaviour which emphasized the importance of women's role in the home, and which promoted an ideal of submissive domesticity. Devoting her days to the care of her husband and children, the colonial woman, at the same time, was to exert a refining moral influence upon the men in her home and in her community.[24] Her influence on public life and private morals was thought to be even greater in the colonies than it was in Britain.[25]

One writer, itemizing the necessary components of colonial society, included, along with gentlemen, small farmers and tradesmen of all sorts,

> women of education and refinement to keep up the tone, which is apt, in the absence of good female influence, to degenerate into a coarse animalism. Their presence would conduce to cleanliness,

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[23] Ibid, 36.

[24] For a fairly discouraging picture of the task that awaited women emigrating to the colonies, see Mrs. Archibald Colquhoun, 'Women and the Empire', Chapter XII in The Vocation of Women (London: MacMillan & Co. Ltd), 1913, 311-12.

[25] S. Staples,'The Emigration of Gentlewomen - A Woman's Word from Natal', Nineteenth Century, August 1901, 219.

> tidiness, comfort at home, to a due regard to decency and sanitation out of doors, and to the encouragement and maintenance of a proper attention to religious and educational matters.[26]

This image, drawn from an ealier ideal, gained renewed life and vigour in the hands of emigration propagandists, politicians and publishers at a time when women's demands for change in various spheres were causing some discomfort to British men.[27] One writer spoke with approbation of the old-fashionedness and moral rectitude of women in the colonies. "They influence; they do not potter, and theorise, and play at being a man. For real womanliness - primitive womanliness...- there is still 'The Colonial' left." [28]

The Boer War of 1899-1901 brought to the fore of British consciousness the importance of breeding a strong imperial race, a race which was both physically sound and whose loyalties were undivided. The quality of the recruits in Britain had raised doubts about 'National Efficiency' and some effort was devoted to teaching women how to rear their children. The home came to be seen, at the turn of the century, as 'the cradle of the race' - the first line of

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[26] William Fielding, 'Imperial Migration and Settlement', The National Review, No. 48 (Feb. 1887): 781.

[27] See MacKenzie, Propaganda , 202-3 on sexual stereotyping in children's literature on empire.

[28] Sir Gilbert Parker, 'Women in the Colonies' in New Review, XI, July-Dec 1894, 412.

Imperial defence.[29] One writer suggested having a Union Jack in every nursery so that the 'little ones' could be taught to reverence it from the time they toddled.[30]

Women were deemed to be important to the imperial effort not only in their role as mothers, but also in their roles as wives. Dark references were made to those Britishers, married to Dutch wives, who had proved disloyal to their flag during the war.[31] Advocates of female emigration presented a sad picture of young men 'batching it', who, without knowing how to make a comfortable home for themselves, become overcome by the depression of solitary life and effort, and end up by drifting from bad to worse, eventually joining the unemployed flotsam and jetsam of the colonial towns.[32]

White women's presence in colonial homes, as wives or housekeepers, was thus seen as essential to the success of Britain's colonisation of its empire. One enthusiastic advocate of women's emigration proclaimed that, "...women's mission to the Colonies is of truly vital importance. Upon them in fact depends, in no small measure, the future of the

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[29] See Anna Davin, 'Imperialism and Motherhood', History Workshop Journal, 5 (Spring 1978): 9-65; Porter, Lion's Share, 130; and MacKenzie, Propaganda, 158-9.

[30] Miss Chitty, 'Imperial Patriotism', The Imperial Colonist, III (Feb. 1904): 15.

[31] Staples, 'Gentlewomen', 217.

[32] Arthur M. Brice, 'Emigration for Gentlewomen', Nineteenth Century, April 1901, 608.

Empire."[33]

There were thus well-established images of the roles which both male and female settlers were to play in the colonies: the men were expected to be daring in battle but just in victory and ready for lives of ennobling hard work; while the women were to devote themselves to making comfortable homes and watching over the moral welfare of their husbands and sons. Once the ideal had been invented, people modelled themselves upon it, but the earliest white immigrants to Southern Rhodesia had far more pressing concerns.

Interest in Mashonaland and Matabeleland was aroused in the 1860s when Carl Mauch described the vast mineral deposits to be found in the territory, a description, it later appeared, which was based more on wishful thinking than on reality. Prospectors in increasing numbers began to make their way into the territory in search of gold, deterred only by the fear of the Matabele. For a time, Lobengula successfully played off one group of concession seekers against another, but by the 1880's it became clear that he would have to come to an agreement with one group or

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[33] Chitty, 'Patriotism', 15. For general information on women's emigration see Una Monk, New Horizons: A Hundred Years of Women's Migration, (London: HMSO, 1963) and A. James Hammerton, Emigrant Gentlewomen - Genteel Poverty and Female Emigration, 1830-1914 (London: Croom Helm, 1979). For a survey of the role of British women in Empire see Joanna Trollope, Britannia's Daughters: Women of the British Empire (London: Hutchinson & Co. Ltd., 1983).

another.[34]

It was Cecil Rhodes who was the driving force behind the British South Africa Company (hereafter BSAC), the company to which Lobengula granted the concession for the mineral rights in Mashonaland. There is some debate as to the motives for his involvement in the creation of Rhodesia, and, while he was alive, depending on their economic situation at the time, the settlers cursed or praised him. Following his death, much was made of his wish to create a broad band of red from the Cape to Cairo on the maps of Africa. However, in one writer's estimation,

> Rhodes did not live for ideals. He lived for the exercise of power, the excitement of industrial diplomacy and the satisfaction of outwitting or 'squaring' his rivals in contest. He was the 'great amalgamator'; he succeeded in deluding himself as he convinced others, that his cause was Britain; in fact his cause was Rhodes.[35]

In 1889, the British Government granted the BSAC a charter to develop the territory, in pursuance of its policy of 'imperialism on the cheap'. By leaving the development of the territory in the hands of a private company, the British Government was able to rid itself of the cost of administering the territory while at the same time adding

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[34] For an account of the machinations of the various concession seekers and of Lobengula's attempts to maintain sovereignty over his territory see John S. Galbraith, 'Origins of the British South Africa Company', in Perspectives of Empire edited by J.E. Flint and G. Williams, (London: Longman Group Ltd., 1973), 148-171.

[35] Galbraith, 'Origins', 150.

another colony to its empire. As one writer eloquently put it, " the amalgamation which produced the charter was an alliance of avarice and megalomania."[36]

In political terms, it was hoped that the territory would act as a counterbalance to the threat of Boer expansion in the area. If the hopes for the discovery of vast mineral deposits had been realised it would have given the British both financial and numerical power in the region. It was expected that Charterland, as the territory was initially known, acting in concert with the Cape, would be able to dictate the terms of a southern African economic federation.[37]

When Cecil Rhodes put out the call for volunteers to join the Pioneer Column that was to march in to Mashonaland in 1890, there was an enthusiastic response. Less than 200 volunteers were eventually chosen from over 2,000 applicants. The terms of service were good. A horse, uniform and arms were provided, along with pay of 7s 6d a day, more than seven times that of a British private at the

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[36] Galbraith, 'Origins', 148.

[37] James A. Chamunorwa Mutambirwa, The Rise of Settler Power in Southern Rhodesia (Zimbabwe), 1898 - 1923 (London & Toronto: Associated University Press, 1980), 23. When this hope for a British-dominated southern African federation later came to be put to the test, however, in the 1923 vote on 'responsible government' the Rhodesians showed themselves to be substantially in favour of going it alone. The white community showed itself in favour of self-government with a vote of 8,774 to 5,989. Parker, Rhodesia, 22.

time.[38] Moreover, on reaching Mashonaland, each man was to receive 15 free mining claims, as well as large land grants of 1,500 morgen or over 3,000 acres.[39] Though the land was to prove the basis upon which the real fortunes were made, it was initially the mining claims that had the greatest drawing appeal.

The recent discovery of Witwatersrand had proved just how quickly fortunes could be made, and lost, while the diamonds of Griqualand West confirmed that there were indeed parts of the world where a fortune could be had for the picking. Given the publicity which surrounded the venture, as well as the tales of fantastic wealth to be found in the territory, which had found expression in both 'factual' and fictional works such as that of H. Rider Haggard, it is not surprising that adventurers and fortune hunters of all sorts were interested in the area.[40] Like those who were to

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[38] Clements, Collision, 18.

[39] Rhodes had no right to promise the Pioneers land, since in the treaty that Lobengula signed with the representative of the BSAC, only the mineral rights to Mashonaland were granted. For details about this period in Rhodesian history see Stanlake Samkange, Origins of Rhodesia (London, Nairobi, Ibadan: Heinemann Educational Books Ltd., 1968).

[40] King Solomon's Mines, published in 1885 and an immediate success, tells the story of a group of men who, equipped with an old map, set off in search of diamond mines, and a lost brother of one of the group who had set off on this same quest a number of years before. After various adventures, they came upon a treasure trove, where gold and precious stones lay piled deep under the surface of the earth in a cave. This cave lay in a territory ruled by a fiercely militarist tribe who were not dissimilar to what was then

follow very soon in their footsteps, the Pioneers believed that "...they were destined to make fortunes in return for a slightly risky few months' ride."[41]

The Pioneers were a very motley crew, as mixed in nationality and class background as they were in occupation.

> British artisan and ex-private soldier alongside peer's younger son and Oxford graduate, Texan cowpuncher beside Canadian Mountie and Afrikaner transport-rider.'Such a mixed lot I never saw in my life, all sorts and conditions, from the aristocratic down to the street arab, peers and waifs of humanity mingling together like the ingredients of a hotchpotch', wrote Arthur Leonard.[42]

The Pioneer Column had been conceived of as a group which could potentially form the basis of a self-sustaining settler community. It included bakers, carpenters, printers and all manner of different artisans, as well as farmers and miners, lawyers and accountants. There were also a fair number of sons of wealthy Cape business men, a deliberate ploy on the part of Cecil Rhodes in order to ensure that if the Pioneer Column ran into trouble there would be rich and influential people in South Africa who would be eager to help rescue them.[43]

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known of the Ndebele.

[41] Parker, Rhodesia, 16-7.

[42] Mason, Dilemma, 147.

[43] Gann & Duignan, Rulers, 123. Dane Kennedy expresses some doubts about the accuracy of this story since it is said to have originated with Frank Johnson, who is reputed to have

Accompanying the Pioneer Column was an escort of 500 men of the British South Africa Police force (hereafter BSAP), some of whom had formerly served with the Bechuanaland Border police. Like the Pioneers, the members of the BSAP were also of very mixed origins and abilities, though not as well paid. They made up a group "...who would today be described as mercenaries. Organised under military officers and on military lines, the Escort contained as extra- ordinary a mixture of adventurers as ever got together under a pirate's flag."[44]

There has been some debate about the motives of the Pioneers.[45] It was the hope of finding gold which drew the majority of the Pioneers and early settlers. According

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been a chronic liar. Kennedy, Islands, 13.

[44] Parker, Rhodesia, 17-8.; Gann & Duignan, Rulers, 123.

[45] The debate about the motives of the settlers dates back to the very earliest days of the white presence in the territory. For an interesting account of the debates about Southern Rhodesia in the London Press in the early 1890's, see James Edwards, 'Southern Rhodesia and the London Press', Occasional Papers, published by the National Archives of Rhodesia and Nyasaland, 1 (June 1963): 58-70. He claims that, depending on the political stripe of the paper, the settler was either portrayed as the sunburnt hero and standard-bearer of civilisation, or as a moneyed adventurer, consumed by money-lust.

This contrast between those who emphasize the importance of the settlers' ideals and those who argue for the primacy of economic motives continues to divide the historical work on Southern Rhodesia. See L.H. Gann, A History of Southern Rhodesia: Early Days to 1934 (London: Chatto and Windus, 1965) as an example of the former, and Martin Loney, Rhodesia: White Racism and Imperial Response (Harmondsworth: Penguin Books, 1975), as an example of the latter.

to one author,

> Whatever their origins, all were motivated by the desire to make a fast profit and retire to civilised comfort. As Adrian Darter, a Corps member described it, 'Everybody was going to make money quickly and everybody meant to meet everybody else at Chicago. It was the Mashona adieu.' Archibald Colquhoun, Mashonaland's first administrator, confessed: 'My great idea was to earn enough money to retire and be independent.' Some of the gentlemen officers, including Sir John Willoughby, were reputed to have joined the Police to recoup on losses incurred at the gambling table.[46]

No doubt the lure of adventure in unknown lands and the camaraderie of a shared endeavour also played a role in attracting people to the territory, and for some, no doubt, there was the reward of adding another territory to the empire.[47] Certainly, it was the latter motive which came to be emphasized by white settlers.

The Pioneers, however, were more interested in improving their personal fortunes than in founding a new society. Any sense of duty which such migrants may have had to 'civilise'the Africans was quite secondary to their interest in them as labourers.[48] It was left to later arrivals to emphasize the sacrifices and the hardships which

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[46] Kennedy, Islands, 14, citing Adrian Darter, The Pioneers of Mashonaland, (London, 1914), 113 and A. Colquhoun, Down to Beersheba, (London, 1908), 260.

[47] For a particularly lyrical comment on this subject see Mason, Dilemma, 147-8; see also Robert Blake, A History of Rhodesia (London: Eyre Methuen, 1977), 68-9.

[48] See Vassilatos, 'Race and Class', x; and G.C. Bolton, Britain's Legacy Overseas (Oxford: Oxford University Press), 33, 62, 63.

the Pioneers had undergone in the cause of spreading civilisation.[49]

"There has been in Rhodesia and elsewhere a certain amount of hagiography about the Pioneers," observes one writer.[50] In fact, a cult of the Pioneers grew up in Rhodesia; Pioneer families were accorded special status in society, and the graves of those few who had died in the country were cared for lovingly by representatives from The Guild of Loyal Women.[51]

Few of the Pioneers stayed in the country for very long, yet they had a strong influence on white society. Apart from 55 who died in the fist dozen years after the invasion, only 26 (14%) settled permanently in Rhodesia. At least 91 men (51%) are known to have left the territory within the first ten years of white occupation.[52] Tales were told about the hardships and dangers of their trek into the country. Their bravery and self-reliance, along with their lack of concern about physical discomfort, were

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[49] There are very few accounts of the trek into Mashonaland written by the Pioneers themselves. These men seem to have been more intent on searching for gold than on leaving a record of their deeds for posterity. One work which does is exist is that of Adrian Darter, Pioneers of Mashonaland (Bulawayo: Books of Rhodesia, 1977. Fascimile reproduction of the 1914 edition).

[50] Blake, A History, 68.

[51] Martin Meredith, The Past is Another Country - Rhodesia, 1890-1979 (London: André Deutsch Ltd., 1979), 20.

[52] Kennedy, Islands, 18. See also Clements, Collision, 18.

celebrated. They were men who were said to have cheerfully abandoned the ease of a settled life in order to live in a 'rough and hand-to-mouth style', tempted by the freedom and adventure of the frontier.[53] The Pioneers and the fate of the Wilson Patrol provided white Rhodesians with the basis of a lasting national myth about the daring, devil-may-care spirit of those who had made the country.[54]

News of the safe arrival of the Pioneer Column brought waves of adventurers in their wake. In spite of the difficulty of reaching the territory, it nevertheless attracted a steady stream of white immigrants. By 1893 there were 1,122 Europeans in the territory, and within two years, in 1895, the white population numbered 4,863. In 1895, the Bulawayo Chamber of Commerce reported that 2,000 wagons had come to the city in a year, making the 525 mile journey from

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[53] Hugh Marshall Hole, Old Rhodesian Days (Bulawayo: Books of Rhodesia, 1976. Fascimile reproduction of 1928 edition, foreword by W.D. Gale), 122; Blake, A History, 68; Mason, Dilemma, 147-8; Clements, Collision, 18, 28.

[54] The fate of the Wilson Patrol is probably the most potent symbolic image in the iconography of the early settlers, and is celebrated in paintings, sculptures, friezes and tapestries. Allan Wilson led a patrol of 33 men in pursuit of Lobengula when he abandoned Bulawayo. They were all killed, and, according to one writer, "It is not too far from the truth to suggest that in white Rhodesia's hierarchy of religious idols, God came 35th..." Parker, Rhodesia, 20. This same author suggests that Wilson's main motive in pursuing Lobengula was that he was reputed to have taken the bulk of his treasure with him. I have found no other confirmation of this statement. Certainly, inspirational purposes apart, the deaths of the Wilson patrol were absolutely futile from a military standpoint. See Clements, Collision, 23; and Blake, A History, 109-110.

Mafeking in around 2 months.[55]

This enthusiastic settlement of the territory was born of the hopes for large scale gold finds, hopes which were very soon disappointed. When the Pioneers and early prospectors failed to find any sizeable gold reefs in Mashonaland, they moved eagerly on to Matabeleland once this territory had been occupied after the short and easily won war of 1893.

By March 1895, 15 months after Bulawayo had been captured and when there was still no railway into the territory, there was a white population in the town of 1,537, and by November 1897, when the election for the first Municipal Council was held, there were 2,220 names on the roll. Salisbury, on the other hand, over 7 years after it was first occupied, in November 1897, had a white population of only 719. The disproportion in the size of the white populations in Bulawayo and in Salisbury in the mid 1890s reflects the fact that, at this point, the white population was still very unsettled and still very much in the territory in search of gold.[56]

Those who entered the territory during the 1890s were a mixed crowd of traders, missionaries, speculators and

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[55] Anthony Lemon & Norman Pollock, Studies in Overseas Settlement and Population (London & N.Y.: Longman, 1980), 35-6.

[56] Kosmin, 'Imperial Frontier', 26.

company promoters, young men described disparagingly by one administrator as being "...filled with the jolly reckless spirit of adventure, which aimed at making a million in half an hour and then clearing home to Piccadilly".[57] It was a rough and tumble society, where alcohol and hunting seem to have formed the chief interests of the majority of the settlers.[58] One traveller, arriving in 1895, described a concert he attended in Umtali,

> These celebrations (or barmen's benefits, as they would more appropriately be called), are of common occurrence, and are invariably got up on any sort of excuse; they take the outward form of a few pieces of bunting, and result in every one but the licensed few finding themselves next morning considerably poorer, and in abnormal demand for Seidlitz powders. Society at Umtali groups itself into two classes, those who have liquor and those who have not, and each into three divisions: first, a small number who have killed lions and say very little about it; secondly, a large number of persons who have not killed lions, but tell you they have, and say much about it; and thirdly, a very large number who have not killed lions, but think it necessary to apologize for the fact by telling you that they have not lost any.[59]

The white Rhodesian society of the 1890's, and for several decades thereafter, was overwhelmingly male, a fact

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[57] Terence Ranger, Revolt in Southern Rhodesia 1896-7, A Study in African Resistance (London: Heinemann, 1967), 104. This statement was made by Lord Grey who was an early administrator of the territory.

[58] See H. N. Heman's, The Log of a Native Commissioner (Bulawayo: Books of Rhodesia, 1971 reprint of 1935 edition), which provides lengthy accounts of his hunting expeditions and little else.

[59] E. S. Grogan & A. H. Sharp, From the Cape to Cairo (London: Hurst & Blackett Ltd., 1900), 8.

commented upon by all of the travellers of the period.[60] There had been no women in the Pioneer Column, and non-African women were not officially permitted to enter the territory until the following year, and did not in fact begin arriving until after the rainy season of 1891-2.[61]

Salisbury, in 1891 could boast a white male population of somewhere between 400 and 500, and there were rumours of the presence of one white woman in camp.[62] Their numbers did not grow fast, for by 1893, there were only between 20 and 30 white women in Salisbury.[63] By 1897, there were 99 white women of 16 and over in Salisbury, as compared to 552 white men. The disproportion was even greater in Bulawayo which was a less established town, and where in March of 1895, there were 16 white women to every 100 white men.[64] The vast majority of these women were housewives, though there were a few nuns, nurses, housekeepers, dressmakers and

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[60] Keppel-Jones, Rhodes, 381.

[61] W.D. Gale foreword to Hole, Old Rhodesian, i. One woman, Countess Billy de la Panousse, who wished to travel to the area before the ban on women's presence was lifted, accompanied her husband into the territory disguised as a boy.

[62] Keppel-Jones, Rhodes, 380. Presumably this was the Countess de la Panouse.

[63] Hole, Old Rhodesian, 126.

[64] Kosmin, 'Imperial Frontier', 26-7.

prostitutes thrown in for good measure.[65]

It was a period which came to be celebrated in the memoirs and novels of many of the early settlers, both male and female, for its happy-go-lucky, unconventional, free-and-easy ways. One of the early Administrators, Sir William Milton, who served from 1896 to 1914, "...was content to demonstrate the dignity of his office by having his bicycle painted royal red."[66] By 1892, both Salisbury and Umtali were holding their first fancy dress balls, balls at which, in the case of Umtali, there was a ratio of 100 men to 8 women, and where there were 7 women present in total in Salisbury.[67]

Many writers make allusion to the camaraderie to be found among the settlers during this period, both among the fighting corps of the Southern Rhodesia Volunteers and, more surprisingly, among the men of business, who more commonly appear in the guise of competitors rather than as comrades-in-arms.[68] It was a society where everyone seems

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[65] Kosmin, 'Imperial Frontier', 28. The masculine society of Bulawayo in the early 1890's indeed served as a magnet for prostitutes and attracted women of a great diversity of ethnic backgrounds from South Africa. On this subject see Keppel-Jones, Rhodes, 381.

[66] Gann & Duignan, Rulers, 163.

[67] Keppel-Jones, Rhodes, 381 for information on Umtali, and 354 for information on Salisbury.

[68] See Gann & Duignan, Rulers, 128; and Charlotte Cameron, A Woman's Winter in Africa (London: Stanley Paul & Co., n.d.), 136.

to have known everyone else, or at least this is the impression that struck both travellers and residents alike. Even if they did not actually know one another, it was easy to strike up an acquaintance. People wrote with joy and humour about packing case furniture and tree trunk cupboards, along with the endless meals of tinned bully beef which, for many, were a novel and welcome deliverance from the material paraphenalia which crowded their lives in Britain.[69]

It would appear that it was this very freedom from convention which played a large part in attracting many of the early settlers. Emigration propagandists in Great Britain, contrasted the life of a tropical planter with that of a clerk or professional in a crowded English city. The first was glorified as being "...free, large and full of opportunity, " while the latter was judged to be "... narrow, unhealthy because confined, [and] a terrible struggle owing to competition."[70] Music hall sketches celebrated Africa as "... a colossal playground where the European personality could express itself in a fashion

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[69] See Hole, Old Rhodesian; Garstin, Sunshine; Sheila MacDonald, Sally in Rhodesia (Bulawayo: Books of Rhodesia, 1970 reprint of 1927 edition); Cynthia Stockley, Virginia of the Rhodesians (London: Hutchinson & Co., 1903); and Kingsley Fairbridge, The Autobiography of Kingsley Fairbridge (London: Oxford University Press, 1928).

[70] 'Upper Class Emigration', Chambers' Journal, Vol. 73 (April 25, 1896), 258.

impossible in civilised lands."[71]

They were a population characterised by a contemporary, as having left Britain out of a thirst for adventure, and a wish to establish themselves somewhere "...off the beaten track [in order to]...strike out new paths for themselves...."[72] As one character remarked to another in a Rhodesian novel published in 1903,

> My dear, what do all men come back to Africa for? Because when they've once lived this queer, free life, and breathed this 'Oh-let-things-rip' atmosphere, they can never rest content until they're back in the thick of it again.[73]

These free and easy days did not last long, however, and were brought to an end by the economic difficulties which dogged the life of many of the early settlers.[74]

The optimism of the early 1890s gave way as the promised gold failed to materialise. In fact, by early 1895, less gold had been produced in 4 1/2 years in the whole territory than was produced in a single day on the

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[71] Cairns, Prelude, 30. See also Porter, Lion's Share, 69-72; Mason, Dilemma, 96; and MacKenzie, Propaganda, 60.

[72] Hole, Old Rhodesian, 122.

[73] Stockley, Virginia, 109. See also Cairns, Prelude, 29.

[74] Kennedy notes that in spite of the camaraderie of the early days, and the apparently democratic nature of white Rhodesians at this period, economic disparities developed with "...remarkable speed. While Henry Borrow was importing horses costing £250 each for a race week at the Salisbury Turf Club and Sir John Willoughby was pursuing jackal through the veldt with a pack of hounds, other men were being reduced to hired labour, penury and crime." Kennedy, Islands, 17.

Rand.[75] It was not until many years later when more advanced machinery and mining techniques were developed that anyone made any money at all from Rhodesian gold. Even then, most of the gold was found in areas that had previously been mined by the Africans. The Pioneers "...made hardly a golden sovereign to rub between them..." and the BSAC paid no dividends for over thirty years.[76] In choosing to allow both the profits and the responsibility of financing the new territory to go to a private company, the British Government had made an astute choice.

Setting off during the rainy season, many found themselves in great difficulty and had to spend a considerable time waiting for the rivers to subside while their food supplies dwindled. During the wait, many died of malaria and hunger. Meanwhile, those who did make it to the Charter territory found themselves gravely disillusioned by the conditions they met on their arrival and during the first year or two of their stay.

The Company was held responsible for the failure of supplies to reach the territory throughout the first rainy season, a failure which the settlers were not quick to forget. The situation did not ease quickly and for a number of years the settlers continued to make a scanty living by relying on transport riding, share pushing and hunting,

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[75] Keppel-Jones, Rhodes, 365.

[76] Parker, Rhodesia, 16-7.

supplemented by handouts from the British South Africa Company and Cecil Rhodes. In the twelve years between the Pioneer 'occupation' of the territory in 1890 and his death in 1902, Cecil Rhodes is said to have spent between £40,000 - £50,000 from his own pocket to help destitute settlers.[77]

Very few took up farming during the first decade of white settlement. The Pioneers were more interested in their mining claims than in the land they were granted and many sold their land at low prices to the private companies which sprang up. Only 275 of the original 640 farms granted remained in private hands by 1899.[78] In one writer's estimation, it was in 1896, at the very earliest, that farming began to play a part in the settler economy.[79] It was a very small part.

At the first Salisbury agricultural show, held in 1897, there was little to show. According to one writer,

> the most vivid sign of the parlous state of settler agriculture was the fare that colonists regularly consumed: 'During the first fifteen

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[77] Mutambirwa, Rise, 27. For many years, life was hard for the majority of settlers, destitution was not unusual, and petitions for financial support from the government not uncommon. See also F.M.G. Willson & Gloria Passmore, Catalogue of Parliamentary Papers of Southern Rhodesia (Salisbury: University College of Rhodesia and Nyasaland, 1965), for a record of the petitions asking the government for financial assistance during the first two decades of white settlement.

[78] Kennedy, Islands, 15-6.

[79] Blake, A History, 93.

> years or so ... no picture of Rhodesia is complete which does not include the bully beef tin, the can of condensed milk and the native pumpkin and sweet potato.'[80]

During this period, most white farmers were absentee landlords, and even those who did farm did so at a subsistence level, cultivating an average of only 6 acres. It was cheaper to buy grain from the Africans than to grow it, much to the distress of those who sought to employ African labourers. The Shona, in particular, benefitted from this situation, and were able to gain sufficient income through the sale of agricultural produce during this period to pay the taxes imposed upon them by the BSAC.[81] In 1898, the Native Commissioner at Malena welcomed a swarm of locusts as "...not an unmitigated evil, for a really abundant harvest of kaffir corn and mealies would probably have the effect of reducing the number of Native labourers 50 per cent."[82]

Many of the early settlers soon abandoned prospecting for more profitable and more secure pursuits. They set up

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[80] Kennedy, Islands, 28, quoting Jollie, The Real Rhodesia, 132.

[81] Robin Palmer, 'The Agricultural History of Rhodesia', in The Roots of Rural Poverty in Central and Southern Africa, edited by Robin Palmer and Neil Parsons, (London: Heinemann, 1977), 228-30. For an account of the Shona economy in the days preceding settler rule see David Beach, 'The Shona Economy: Branches of Production', in The Roots of Rural Poverty in Central and Southern Africa, edited by Robin Palmer and Neil Parsons, 37-65. (London: Heinemann, 1977).

[82] NB 6/4/2, Report of the N/C Malema for the month of Nov. 1898, cited in Palmer, 'Agricultural History',230.

as shopkeepers, hotelkeepers, farmers, teachers, doctors, lawyers, bakers, butchers, and accountants - to name but a few of the occupations which were represented even among the small white population of Salisbury, by the late 1890s. There was also a significant representation of professional men such as lawyers, chemists and architects, and the new community was able to number among its members, 13 accountants and 3 stockbrokers - an indication of the financial wheelings and dealings that were going on at the time. However, almost half of the men in Salisbury in 1897 were employed by the British South Africa Company.[83]

The difficulties and disappointments of settler life at this period were many and varied. Gold did not lie on the surface simply waiting to be picked up; supplies were scarce and expensive; shelter was temporary and too unsubstantial to outlast the pounding of the rains; disease was an uncomfortable fact of life and often the cause of early death; and the Mashona proved to be 'lazy' since they were unwilling to work, and the Ndebele dangerous.[84] A trip to Bulawayo in 1895 involved days of hard travel through dreary wastes of sand and putrefying carcases [presumably the carcases of cattle that were dying from Rinderpest]. At this time, a bottle of beer cost 10s 6d and a cauliflower

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[83] Kosmin, 'Imperial Frontier', 28.

[84] See Mutambirwa, Rise, 26-7; and Mason, Dilemma, 160.

cost 36s.[85]

The settlers also had to contend with a commercial depression which hit Salisbury in 1896, when the town came out of laager during the 'Rebellion' in Mashonaland. Farmers and miners were forced to stay in the town, and there was consequently severe unemployment. When the post of Sanitary Inspector was advertised in October 1897, 15 men applied for the job, and 19 applied for the position of Ranger in November of the same year. In the two months of October and November, there were eight suicides among the white population.[86]

It was, however, the 'Rebellion' of 1896-7 which had the greatest impact on the settlers and which was to have a profound influence on the interactions between white and black for several decades thereafter. In the last week of March in 1896, the Ndebele rose, and killed 122 white men, 5 white women, and 3 children in isolated homesteads and camps in Matabeleland, and during April, 5 men, 3 women and 5 children were killed. Three months later the rising spread to Mashonaland and about the same numbers were killed. All in all, approximately 1/10 of the white population was killed during the 'Rebellion' which was not finally

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[85] Grogan, Cape, 3-4

[86] Kosmin, 'Imperial Frontier', 25.

suppressed until the end of 1897.[87]

There are few estimates of the number of African deaths; one author cites a figure of 5,000 Ndebele alone.[88] Certainly, the settlers were not gentle in their suppression of the rising, capturing single fugitives by putting dynamite into caves where whole villages were sheltering. A poem, entitled 'The Rhodesian' published in The Nugget in June 1897 captures the blood lust of the settlers which was roused by the killing of white women.

> Tho' he's not been trained to fightin', 'tis a
> game he takes delight in,
> And he's proved himself a rough and ruly chap,
> For he'll trail the rebel nigger till he grasp his
> woolly wig,
> And he'll scale the top-most kopje for a scrap.
> Tho' he revels in the singing of the bullet as its
> pinging
> Past his ear, which makes him grin and duck his head,
> 'Tis primest when his lead 'un scores his gun another
> dead 'un,
> And the nigger sinks to sleep as if in bed.
> While he pots his man he'll hum 'there goes another for
> my chum',
>
> But a thousand lives won't bring the white lives back;
> So he thinks 'Revenge is sweet' as he grips his saddle
> seat,
> And his horse bounds forward on the rebel's track.
> Oh, he glories in the pig-skin as he holes another nig-
> skin,
> He fears not deadly ambush or stray picket,
> For he's in a killing mood and he's got the taste of
> blood,
> And he'll gallop through the densest bush and thicket.
> Let the folk in Exeter Hall and such-like other
> Grundies bawl,
> And rave and shout and cry that he's inhuman,

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[87] Mason, Dilemma, 197. For a detailed account of the 'Rebellion', see Ranger, Revolt.

[88] Parker, Rhodesia, 20.

They may yell till they are hoarse for they've never seen the ghastly corse,
Or grinning skull of some fair murdered woman.
'Tis not of blood he wants spilling, he fights just for the killing,
'Venging those poor souls unburied in the veld;
The black fiends never cared so why should one of them be spared?
First raise up the dead; then ask our hearts to melt.[••]

Not many white women were killed.[•o] Undoubtedly they were fewer in number than the African women killed in the white suppression of the rising. But a few were enough to raise the settler anger to a fever pitch.[•1] Moreover, the fact that both the British Government and the BSAC had been slow to offer help in the form of additional troops served to further fan the flames of settler fury.

The 'Rebellion' marked the beginning of the end of the frontier days of Rhodesia. Henry Milton took over the post of Administrator in July 1897, and set about building a more professional bureaucracy than that which had existed in Jameson's time. "I can hardly describe the thin, evasive, official atmosphere of this place," lamented one

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[••] Ranger, Revolt, 131-2.

[•o] Of the 450 whites killed during the uprisings, 9 were women and 23 were children. It is interesting to note that the deaths of the women had a more profound effect on the white Rhodesian consciousness than did the deaths of the children. Deborah Kirkwood, 'Settler Wives in Southern Rhodesia, A Case Study', in The Incorporated Wife, edited by H. Callan & S. Ardener (London: Croom Helm, 1984), 145.

[•1] See Mason, Dilemma, 197; and Blake, A History, 125.

correspondent from Salibury in July 1898.[92] The administration turned its attention to pushing Africans into reserves; controlling their movement by making them carry passes; and forcing them into paid labour by increasing the hut taxes.

The Company began actively to encourage white immigration to the territory, and the white population which had dropped to 2,737 in 1897, had grown to 11,032 by 1901, and 15,000 by 1903.[93] By 1899, it was possible to breakfast on fresh pheasant or sole in Bulawayo.[94] A dinner at the Grand Hotel in Bulawayo in 1913 consisted of Creme d'Asperges, Boiled Scotch Salmon with sauce Mousseline, Venison a la Chasseur, Brains a l'Italienne, Roast haunch of mutton with red currant jelly, Pheasant and bread sauce, fried and boiled potatoes, green peas, marrow, smoked sardines and fruit. Bulawayo could apparently also boast some shops which would not disgrace Bond Street, while at the 'At Homes' at Government House it was possible to meet both men and women of the finest 'specimens of ideal colonials'.[95]

However, in spite of the amateur theatrics, the lawn

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[92] Ranger, Revolt, 318.

[93] Mutambirwa, Rise, 26.

[94] Grogan, Cape, 7.

[95] Cameron, Woman's Winter, 135-7.

tennis clubs, the opera productions, the hospitals, libraries and banks, the settlers retained a sense of themselves as a small island of civilisation in a sea of black barbarity.** The 'Rebellion' confirmed the settlers' preconceptions about the brutishness of the Africans, while also awakening in them a sense of their own vulnerability which diminished little over the next two or three decades. It was this legacy of fear and hate which found expression in phenomena such as the black peril.

** See Keppel-Jones, Rhodes, 352-361, for information about the establishment of the paraphenalia of a British type of society.

CHAPTER 2

1903 - 1916: THE BLACK PERIL AND THE IMMORALITY ACTS.

SETTLER INSECURITY AND THE REGULATION OF SEXUAL INTERCOURSE BETWEEN WHITE WOMEN AND BLACK MEN.

In Southern Rhodesia, during the first two decades of this century, considerable energy was devoted to the regulation of sexual interaction between white women and black men.[1] The frequent public uproars about the 'Black Peril', a catch-all phrase used to describe a wide-range of apparently sexually related 'attacks' upon white women by black men, give evidence of white insecurity and discontent thoughout this period.

Voluntary sexual relations between white women and black men were also discouraged. The Immorality Suppression Ordinance of 1903, which prohibited illicit sexual intercourse between white women and black men, providing punishments of up to two years in prison for the woman

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[1] Indeed, a number of authors, writing in the late 1950s, argued that it was the white settlers' horror at the idea of sexual intimacy between black men and white women which lay at the very foundation of the Rhodesian social system and at the heart of the European prejudices towards the Africans. See Blake, A History, 158; Lawrence Vambe, From Rhodesia to Zimbabwe (University of Pittsbugh Press, 1976), 107; Mason, Dilemma, 251; Cyril Rogers & C. Frantz, Racial Themes in Southern Rhodesia: The attitudes and Behaviour of the White Population (New Haven & London: Yale University Press, 1962), 284.

involved and up to five years for the man, was reinforced in 1916 by a further piece of legislation which banned unnamed indecent acts between the two.

The immorality ordinances were geared towards discouraging those white women who voluntarily entered into sexual relations with African men, thereby, it was assumed, endangering all other white women and threatening the safety of white society as a whole.[2] Given the limited numbers of white women, it was particularly important for white men to retain control of "their" women's productive and reproductive powers, though very little was ever said about the potential for the sullying of racial waters inherent in such liasons.[3]

Together, the black peril and the immorality laws served not simply to restrict the sexual interaction between white women and black men, but had the more profound effect of reinforcing white male control of Rhodesian society.

The rather arbitrary functioning of the white judicial system in apparent black peril cases no doubt contributed to a sense of insecurity among African men. Though the law prohibiting attempted rape did not discriminate on the basis

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[2] This reaction also came up when it came to white men and black women, though to a lesser extent, since it was assumed that white men, while pioneering, might have to live in areas far removed from white civilisation and not be able to afford to have a white wife.

[3] Kirkwood, 'Settler Wives', 146, notes that in 1911, there was a total white population of 23,606 and a ratio of 51 women to every 100 men.

of race, the courts did, and judicial reactions to sex-related crimes were greatly influenced by the race of both the assailant and the victim involved.[4]

Of the 32 black peril convictions in the years between 1901 and 1910, the death sentence was imposed in five cases, though it was later commuted in two of the five.[5] In contrast, of the 106 convictions of African men for assault on African women during the same period, the death penalty was imposed in only one case, one in which the offender was also charged with murder.[6] According to one writer, in the years up to 1935, 30 African men were hanged for rape or attempted rape. No white man ever was.[7]

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[4] In debates on the subject in 1902, legislators had sought to limit the ordinance to those cases involving the attempted rape of a white woman by a black man. However, this proved to be unacceptable by the terms of the Rhodesian Order-in-Council, which permitted legal discrimination between white and black only where liquor and the carrying of arms were concerned. For details about the complicated constitutional arrangements between Great Britain and the British South Africa Company, see Clare Palley, The Constitutional History and Law of Southern Rhodesia 1888 - 1965, with Special Reference to Imperial Control (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1966).

[5] It is interesting to note that Attorney General Tredgold gives a much higher figure for black peril offences for approximately the same period. He states that in the years between 1899 and 1914 there were 75 black peril cases. This discrepancy might be explained by the difference between the number of cases reported and the number of cases in which there were convictions. BSAC, Debates of the Legislative Council of Southern Rhodesia (1916), 172.

[6] Vassilatos, 'Race and Class', 231-2.

[7] Although the author doesn't specify, this figure presumably includes the executions which resulted from African men raping African women and not simply those that resulted from black peril charges, since on the basis of the official

White juries were quick to convict African men for any behaviour which could be construed, or misconstrued, as being threatening to white women.[8] In many cases, it is unclear that the African man involved had any intention of assaulting a white woman. One servant who made the mistake of asking for a Christmas bonus with the words 'Kisimisi Missus', found himself serving twelve months in prison on a black peril charge.[9]

The identification of the so-called assailants was also usually unsatisfactory, often based simply on very general and rather vague descriptions of the attackers' features and clothing. Thus, any African man who owned the particular combination of clothing which a woman described her attacker as having worn might find himself charged and prosecuted for a crime of which he was entirely innocent. For African men

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records dealing with the black peril, the number seems rather high. Vambe, Zimbabwe, 108.

For the official records of the BSAC, see BSAC, Southern Rhodesia Law Department - Detailed Reports, Original Papers, 1897-1904, LO 4/1/1-16, National Archives of Zimbabwe, hereafter NAZ; BSAC, Southern Rhodesia Law Department - Departmental Reports, 1902-1932, SRG 3/JUS 6, NAZ; and BSAP, Report of the Commissioner of the British South Africa Police, 1913-37, RG 3/BR 41, NAZ.

[8] This was a factor which caused a number of revisions to be made to the system of selecting juries throughout this period, as white administrators attempted to find a way of avoiding the grave miscarriages of justice which had occasioned international criticism of the settler treatment of the African populace. See Mason, Dilemma, 304-9; Blake, A History, 160; Murray Cairns Steele, 'The Foundation of a 'Native' Policy: Southern Rhodesia, 1923 - 1933' (Ph. D. diss., Simon Fraser University, 1972), 129-131.

[9] Vambe, Zimbabwe, 109.

throughout this period, being at the wrong place, at the wrong time, wearing the wrong clothes might lead to a death sentence.

The black peril and the immorality laws also resulted in restrictions not simply to women's sexual freedom, but to the entire range of their activities.[10] Women were warned against walking unescorted in unfrequented parts of the towns, and were urged to learn to use a revolver. The latter dictum was one which they took to heart, and ladies' pistol and rifle clubs became popular in many of the Rhodesian towns.[11]

It was, however, in their own homes that the danger was thought to be greatest. The black peril was linked in the settlers' minds primarily with the urban African houseboy. Of the 32 black peril convictions during the years between 1901-1910, 13 of those convicted were servants.[12]

Certainly, white women arrived in Rhodesia expecting

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[10] Beverley Gartrell, 'Colonial Wives: Villains or Victims ?', in The Incorporated Wife, edited by H. Callan & S. Ardener (London: Croom Helm, 1984), 165-185, and Janice N. Brownfoot, 'Memsahibs in Colonial Malaya: A study of European Wives in a British Colony and Protectorate, 1900-1940',186-210,in the same volume, have shown that white women's fear of local men resulted in the similar limitations to their sphere of activity in both Malaya and Uganda.

[11] Kennedy, Islands, 135-6. In 1910, after the British High Commissioner in South Africa reduced the death sentence passed on Singana to life imprisonment, Mrs. Scanlen, the "leading lady revolver-shot" offered free coaching to any woman who wished to buy a firearm. G.H. Tanser, A Sequence of Time (Salisbury, Rhodesia: Pioneer Head, 1974), 200.

[12] Vassilatos, 'Race and Class', 233.

the worst from African men, and the fears which they had were reinforced by their experiences in the country.[13] Sheila MacDonald, one of the earlier white settlers in Rhodesia, later came to laugh at her initial reactions to her African houseboys. She recounts how, on her first morning in Rhodesia, in her new house, with her new servants, she was disturbed in her bedroom by a gentle knocking at the door.

> On opening it, I found to my horror both domestics standing outside smiling cheerfully and chattering gibberish. They only wanted to come in and tidy up the room, but every story I had heard in Durban of Black Peril flashed into my mind, and panic stricken I slammed the door, locked it and then fled, or rather crawled, for protection, under my bed, and cried for my mother. There I remained all morning.[14]

Others took the threat of an attack rather more seriously, barricading themselves into their rooms at night and reacting with horror and violence to any transgression on the part of their menservants.[15] African men who came knocking at white women's windows or doors when they were alone in the house, or who were found in the bedrooms of young white girls at any time of the day, were quite likely to be charged and convicted of a black peril offence, in

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[13] One author argues that the tales of the black peril and 'the Rebellion' with which old Rhodesia hands entertained new settlers served to teach the newcomers the 'value of vigilance' and to reinforce white solidarity. Kennedy, Islands, 137, 145-6.

[14] Macdonald, Sally, 10.

[15] Rhodesia Herald, 28/4/16.

spite of the absence of evidence as to their intentions.[16]

African men, were thought to be almost incurably immoral.[17] The behaviour of Africans was contrasted with that of other 'uncivilised' peoples and found to be wanting. As one legislator confidently proclaimed in 1916, "...the male native more or less has a tendency to commit rape...."[18]

Though the black peril was ultimately attributed to the uncontrollable lust of the black men, it was frequently suggested that white women were at least partly responsible for such attacks. Their treatment of their male servants was the subject of a good deal of critical commentary.

White women were chastised for allowing their African men servants to perform the "intimate duties" of a lady's maid, it being assumed that the sight of a white woman in bed would unleash the barely restrained passions of the African man. Women who permitted their male servants to enter their bedrooms to bring them early morning coffee in

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[16] See for example, Rhodesia Herald, 6/4/05, 1/04/10, 25/09/13. For offences of this kind, the man was, if lucky, likely to be fined £10-20 or given six months in jail. If unlucky enough to be charged with attempted rape, the offender was liable to serve a rather lengthier sentence.

[17] One writer, who has made a survey of representations of blacks in the Rhodesian Press between 1892 and 1939, asserts that the image of the black man as rapist was second only in popularity to the image of the black man as labourer throughout this period. Vassilatos, 'Race and Class', vii.

[18] BSAC, Debates (1916), 49. See also Rhodesia Herald, 14/7/16.

bed, to draw their bath water, or to dust and sweep while they lay in bed were thought to be guilty, at the very least, of criminal carelessness. As one outraged correspondent to the Rhodesia Herald put it, "...such palpable imprudence as this can only have one result, and that is the production ad infinitum of natives who commit outrages on our wives and daughters."[19]

It was suggested that white women often failed to recognize that their African servants were, in fact, men. There were even some who felt that given the temptations offered them, African men conducted themselves with greater propriety than many white men would.[20]

The black peril thus effectively inculcated in white women the attitudes and behaviour which they were expected to adopt in their dealings with African men.[21] In 1916, when the Immorality and Indecency Ordinance was passed, a law which made all white women liable for punishment for soliciting an African to commit an indecent act with them, a number of legislators worried that such a law would make

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[19] Rhodesia Herald, 26/7/12. See also Rhodesia Herald, 12/5/12, 22/5/30.

[20] Rhodesia Herald, 2/6/11.

[21] One writer, in describing the situation of white women in India, has noted their ambiguous position in the power hierarchy of the colonial world. "Within the dominant group women are perceived as a subordinate group but towards all other subordinate groups they are expected to display attitudes appropriate to the dominant group." Ballhatchet, Raj, 8-9.

white women vulnerable to blackmail by unscrupulous servants. Yet, as one legislator maliciously remarked, if by increasing the white women's fear of blackmail such an ordinance led women to behave with greater decorum towards their servants, it could only be a positive thing.[22]

The black peril served as a means of instilling in those women who were not accustomed to employing servants an awareness of the importance of maintaining an appropriately aloof stand in all their dealings with the African men.[23] For, according to one contemporary observer, it was mainly "... women of the less educated class..." whose behaviour encouraged black peril attacks.[24]

There were those, however, who felt that some white mistresses' familiarity with their servants was not

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[22] BSAC, Debates (1916), 170-171.

[23] Though a number of the Pioneers and the early settlers came from the lower reaches of the British aristocracy, the majority came from somewhat more humble backgrounds. For the comments of one comtemporary observer, see Ethel Tawse Jollie, The Real Rhodesia (London: Hutchinson & Co., 1924), 5-6. The relationship between class background and occupation was, however a complicated one. Needing to perceive and to portray themselves as members of the ruling class, there came to be a re-definition of occupations among the settlers so that it became gentlemanly to be a store-keeper or trader. For further information on this subject see Terence Ranger,'The Invention of Tradition in Colonial Africa,' in The Invention of Tradition, edited by E. Hobsbawm and T. Ranger (Cambridge University Press, 1983), 211-262. For details about the different waves of white immigrants, see Kennedy, Islands, 39-41, 47-51, 58-66, 88-95.

[24] Letter from Judge Watermeyer to Lord Selborne, 5 Dec. 1910, CO 417.495/4494A, Public Record Office, London, hereafter PRO.

altogether innocent. There were, according to Judge Watermeyer, the judge for Matabaleland, women who were 'beyond the pale' and who deliberately tempted 'native boys'.[25] Mrs. Fripp, of the Federation of Women's Institutes of Southern Rhodesia echoed his distate in speaking, in 1931, of her horror at the whisper that white women voluntarily associated with natives.[26] In justifying the extension of the 1916 Immorality and Indecency Ordinance prohibiting indecent acts between white women and black men to include all white women and not just white prostitutes, a matter which provoked outraged responses from the women of the white community, Attorney General Tredgold explained that 'the evil' was not confined simply to women of 'the unfortunate class.' He claimed to know of 12 cases between 1899 and 1915 where "degenerate" European women had voluntarily entered into sexual liasons with African men, and in two of these cases could produce irrefutable proof in the form of coloured children.[27]

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[25] CO 417.495/4494A.

[26] Women's Institutes, Paper on Miscegenation read at Gwelo on July 7, 1931 by Mrs. C.E. Fripp for private session of Congress, WO 5/1/1/3 (1931), NAZ, 9.

[27] BSAC, Debates (1916), 165, 168. It is interesting to note that Doris Lessing feels that in the 1940s, it would have been unlikely for white women of the lower-middle-classes who had been born in Rhodesia to actually have sexual intercourse with their servants though they might well have sexual feelings for them. However, she adds that there were rumours that some women did indeed have sex with their servants, rumours which centred on what were known as the "cheque-book-farming" districts where upper-class women, mainly from other

White Rhodesians were not prepared to look kindly upon relationships between white women and black men. In the estimate of one legislator,

> A European woman consorting with a native lowers herself below the level of the native. I agree that a white woman who consorts with a native for sex purposes should be treated as an outcast, because if sex gratification is her desire, she need not go outside her own race.[28]

The situation changed little as time passed. In the late 1950s, when an African man arrived in Rhodesia who was married to a white woman, the hostility of the white Rhodesian community was so great that it soon drove them away from the country.[29]

According to one author, most white women, like most white men, could have sex with their African servants on demand. He suggests that European women who were involved with African men, would, if exposed, cry rape, and reports that during his stay in Salisbury in the 1940s he was repeatedly told that if a white mistress ordered her servant to sleep with her he had little choice but to obey out of fear that a refusal might well lead to a charge of attempted rape.[30] In 1916, one Member of the Legislative Council

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parts of the Empire lived. Doris Lessing, unpublished letter, courtesy of Michael Thorpe.

[28] BSAC, Debates (1930), 1791. See also BSAC, Debates (1921), 522-4.

[29] Rogers & Frantz, Racial Themes, 190-1.

[30] Vambe, Zimbabwe, 109-110.

warned his colleagues that unscrupulous white women who were caught in compromising situations would defend their honour by crying rape.[31]

Another writer, in describing the situation on the Rand at the turn of the century, argues that European mistresses in fact used black peril charges as a way of ending relationships with their houseboys.[32] He finds that while relationships between European women and African men may not have been tolerated, they nevertheless existed, and on a fairly substantial scale.[33] Such revelations cast a rather different light on black peril charges.

When African menservants spoke out about the black peril, either as individuals or in groups, it was to assert their innocence and express their doubts as to whether rape, in the true sense of the word, was as common as the number of court cases might lead people to believe.[34]

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[31] BSAC, Debates (1916), 44-5. See also Rhodesia Herald, 22/5/30.

[32] One author argues that a black peril charge may well have provided the means whereby an employer was able to defraud her houseboy of his wages, or provided the white female servant with the means of getting rid of a male competitor when difficult economic times loomed on the horizon. van Onselen, 'Witches', 52-3.

[33] van Onselen, 'Witches', 45-54.

[34] One member of the Legislative Council remarked with some distress that although he had heard that houseboys had complained to the police about the behaviour of their mistresses, he was unwilling to believe that such complaints are well-founded. They were, he maintained, merely the expression of the native 'inventive genius', a means of providing servants who wanted to leave their work with an

In 1906, after Mlanduli, alias Sixpence, was sentenced to death for attempted rape, a deputation of 30 African servants approached Native Commissioner C.L. Carbutt in Bulawayo.[35] The latter reported that they asserted that "...no native would have the audacity to assault his mistress without some encouragement, either intentionally or unintentional...." They suggested that many cases were the result of the servants' misinterpretation of their mistresses behaviour. Furthermore, they alleged that some white women offered themselves to their native servants, and though unable to substantiate this statement with a definite case, they stated that their allegations were notorious in the native community.[36] The statement made by Singana on his arrest confirms his awareness of the stark prohibitions inherent in the class relationship between black servant and white mistress. "I am innocent. I was not anywhere. I did not do such a thing. I would not touch a white woman. I am a boy."[37]

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excuse for doing so. BSAC, Debates (1916), 161.

[35] The High Commissioner, Lord Selborne, later commuted the sentence to life imprisonment with hard labour, the sentence to be reconsidered every five years.

[36] Deputation of Native Servants in Bulawayo to C.L. Carbutt, N.C. Bwyo on March 2, 1906. Letter to CNC Bwyo, Herbert J. Taylor, March 3, 1906. CO 417.495/5460, PRO.

[37] Despatches relative to the Singana case, 27 March, 1909, CO 417.465/10653, Gt. Br. PRO. In his study of the situation on the Rand, van Onselen found that African men seem to have felt inhibited by the employer/employee relationship from becoming sexually involved with their white mistresses

The settlers believed that in order to ensure their survival as the ruling elite, it was necessary for them to maintain a social distance between themselves and the Africans. This was a matter of some difficulty given the physical proximity in which whites and blacks often lived and worked. It was a problem which was particularly acute in the home, where African servants worked alongside their white mistresses. The potential familiarity between black male servants and white mistresses seemed, to the settlers, to represent a threat to the very foundation of their society.

Eager to establish themselves as the ruling elite in a situation where they had neither a legal nor a historical sanction for this role, and without the numbers or the fire power to make themselves truly invulnerable, the settlers instead sought to control the Africans by commanding their respect.[39] The settlers sought to convince the Africans

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unless given much encouragement. van Onselen, 'Witches', 49.

[39] Even in 1939, at their pre-war peak, the white settlers only represented 4.4% of the total Rhodesian population. Kennedy, Islands, 128.

In 1901, there was a white population of 11,070, and an estimated black population of 500,000 - or, to put it somewhat differently, there were 45 Africans for every European. By 1916, the imbalance had diminished somewhat, and there were now only 30 Africans to every European, with European and African populations respectively standing at 28,320 and 836,000. See Colin Leys, European Politics in Southern Rhodesia (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1959), 14. Other sources of information about population figures are to be found in Kennedy, Islands, 33; Blake, A History, 175; Parker, Rhodesia,

that there was, naturally, and should be, immutably, a closed border between the black and white cultures.[39]

Though the liberal use of the sjambok and the racial bias of the Rhodesian judicial system were to prove instrumental in promoting the settler control of Rhodesian society, according to the rhetoric of settler culture, it was white prestige that was the strongest weapon in their arsenal.[40] The safety of settler society became invested in the maintenance of white prestige, for it was seen as a means of putting social distance between black and white despite the inescapable physical proximity of the two groups. It was in essence, according to one writer, "... an amulet against the dangers of familiarity."[41]

White women had a particularly important role to play in maintaining the prestige of settler society. Welcomed to the territory as the biological agents that would fulfill Rhodes' wish to see the country filled with 'homes, and more homes', white women were also appreciated for their powers

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22; and Gann, Early Days, 313.

[39] See Richard Gray, The Two Nations, (London: Oxford University Press, 1960), on white segregation policies in Southern Rhodesia.

[40] For information about the importance attributed to the maintenace of white prestige in other British colonies, see Ballhatchet, Raj, 2; Gartrell, ' Villains or Victims ?', 168; Brownfoot, 'Memsahibs', 192; and Helen Callaway, Gender, Culture and Empire: European Women in Colonial Nigeria (Basingstoke, Hampshire: The MacMillan Press, 1987), 16.

[41] Kennedy, Islands, 154.

of moral suasion.[42] For, to the settlers of Southern Rhodesia, the white woman represented the pure and untouchable core of their society. White women were seen as the carriers of civilisation, the guardians and enforcers of the moral code.[43] It was the virtue and moral rectitude of white women which provided confirmation of the superiority of white culture.

The settlers were therefore particularly sensitive to any signs which they perceived of African disrespect towards white women. White prestige, and therefore, more fundamentally, the safety of white society, became invested in the untouchability of white women. An attack on a white woman was perceived as an attack upon white society as a whole.

The effect of the black peril was to encourage the

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[42] Though there was an initial ban on women's entry into the territory, this was soon lifted and efforts were made to encourage female emigration in order to save white society from the evil of miscegenation. Kennedy, Islands, 178. This subject will be discussed at greater length in the next chapter.

[43] This vision of white women as the carriers of civilisation is drawn from mid-Victorian views about the role of middle-class women in society. This idealization of the moral powers of women and the situation of their primary role of activity as being in the home was to persist in the colonies long after it died out in Britain. Parker, Rhodesia, 13, and Doris Lessing, Martha Quest (St. Alban's, Herts.: Panther Books, 1974), 54, note the backward-looking nature of Rhodesian society. Callaway, Gender, Culture and Empire, 17, has described a similar time warp in colonial Nigeria. See also Browntoot, ' Memsahibs', 189-91; Gartrell, 'Villains or Victims, 169; and Kennedy, Islands, 178.

perception that women were weak and were potential victims, threatened even in their own homes. It is interesting to note that male settlers felt that white women were more vulnerable to sexual assaults than African women were. Indeed, the very ease with which she became a victim was seen as a badge of the white women's superior morality, a sign of her gentility. According to one legislator, "...the unfortunate white woman was an easy victim, and when attacked that was sufficient to render her unconscious, and further action was readily accomplished."[44]

Yet, much evidence exists to the contrary. If white women were quick to perceive African attempts to assault them, they were equally quick to defend themselves from such assaults. Women struggled on the ground with their attackers, barricaded their doors with furniture, despatched children to fetch neighbours, threatened to shoot their assailants even when they were without a gun, and threw milk jugs, in what were, in most cases, successful attempts to resist a perceived assault. The real white woman was far less easily victimised than the ideal white woman that Rhodesian men sought to protect.[45]

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[44] BSAC, Debates (1916), 43-6.

[45] There is ample evidence to suggest that the white women who entered the territory during this period were rather more hardy and capable of dealing with any number of difficulties and dangers than the idealized vision of their role in society might lead one to suspect. See Jeannie M. Boggie, First Steps in Civilizing Rhodesia (Bulawayo: Kingston's Ltd., 1962); Boggie, Pioneer Women; Madeline Heald,

It was the settlers' sense of insecurity which prompted the more virulent reactions to the black peril.

Intent on establishing themselves as the dominant group within the territory, they found themselves faced with a local population which was both hostile to their rule and reluctant to enter into wage labour. Memories of the Rebellion lasted far longer than the event itself.

The mainly Afrikaner farmers in the Enkeldoorn region did not come out of laager until 6 months after the uprising had been put down, and went back into laager in 1899, 1904, and 1911. One writer records rebellion scares in 1900, 1901, 1903, 1904, 1912, 1913, 1914, & 1915, and the civil commissioner at Gwanda reported in 1918 that rumours of a suspected black uprising along the Transvaal border caused white residents to close the mines and flee from the area.[46] Such travellers as Henri Rolin, found that even fifteen years after the end of the uprising, white relations with blacks were still touched by a pervasive atmosphere of hostility.[47]

It was not until the 1920s that the Rhodesian Native Department began to express greater skepticism about reports

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comp., Down Memory Lane with Some Early Rhodesian Women, 1897-1923 (Bulawayo: Books of Rhodesia, 1979); R. Blennerhasset & L. Sleeman, Adventures in Mashonaland; By Two Hospital Nurses (London: MacMillan & Co., 1894); Jollie, Real Rhodesia; and MacDonald, Sally.

[46] Kennedy, Islands, 131-2.

[47] Rolin cited in Kennedy, Islands, 131.

of impending risings.[48] And, while fears of a traditional uprising diminished, the white community began to find itself faced with organised expressions of black discontent in economic, political and religious spheres.[49]

Educated Africans were thought to be particularly likely to commit assaults on white women, for these were Africans who no longer knew their place. The educated African was seen as 'a savage' who had acquired simply 'the veneer' of civilisation, but who still harboured, underneath, all the 'unbridled passions' of his race.[50]

According to Ethel Tawse Jollie, a prominent Rhodesian settler writing in 1925, the danger of the black peril increased as Africans became more sophisticated.[51] Education, it was thought, only fostered impudence, and the 'raw native' alone retained the proper respect for whites. As Gertrude Page, a popular Rhodesian author put it in an article on the 'Houseboy Question',

> As long as your houseboy is a raw savage you are practically as safe as with a white man continually on guard. It is the civilised savage who is a menace and a danger and growing more so with alarming rapidity.[52]

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[48] Terence Ranger, The African Voice in Southern Rhodesia, 1898-1930 (London: Wm. Heinemann, Ltd., 1970), 12-3.

[49] For details about African resistance throughout this period see Ranger, African Voice.

[50] See Rhodesia Herald, 26/7/12.

[51] Jollie, Real Rhodesia, 2'6.

[52] Rhodesia Herald, 2/6/11.

The settlers had little tolerance for Africans who chose to emulate the 'civilised' manners of their betters, perceiving in such behaviour an attempt to narrow the gap between the races, and hence a challenge to white supremacy. In 1905 a municipal by-law was passed in Bulawayo prohibiting Africans from walking on sidewalks or carrying knobkerries.[53] According to one writer, "Even so trivial a matter as the 'mission boy's' propensity for donning trousers and other Western apparel was regarded as a disturbing transgression of racial boundaries."[54]

There was strong settler antagonism towards the work of the missionaries. "The first thing to do with the coloured man is to teach the dignity of labour, and not to read and write and not to indulge in praying in a loud voice", was the opinion of one of the Herald's correspondents in 1903.[55]

This view was echoed almost 30 years later, by Sir Cecil Rodwell, the Governor of Southern Rhodesia, who warned of the danger of trying to civilise the African too fast. He suggested that a practical education, directed at making Africans better agriculturalists, was safer, for the Africans, than an academic one would be.[56] Such opinions,

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[53] Rhodesia Herald, 30/3/05.

[54] Kennedy, Islands, 162.

[55] Rhodesia Herald, 7/2/03.

[56] Rhodesia Herald, 27/6/30.

though no doubt genuinely held, were nevertheless self-serving. They provide evidence of European concerns about maintaining the gap between themselves and the Africans.

The early years of this century were uncertain ones for the white settlers of Southern Rhodesia. From 1903 onwards, in the absence of the discovery of large-scale, easily-extractable, gold finds, the BSAC set about to encourage agricultural settlement, achieving particular success in the years between 1907 and 1911. The white population increased from 11,000 in 1900 to 26,000 in 1914, with the greater part of the increase coming in the years after 1907.[57]

While those who were anxious to promote white immigration assured propective settlers that it was "eminently" a white man's country, though not a place for the 'ordinary', or impoverished, immigrant, "...as white men cannot perform menial labour...", the reality was somewhat different.[58] Farms and mines alike had considerable difficulty in recruiting African labour. There were particularly acute labour shortages from 1896-1903, 1905-11, and 1916-19, during periods of rising demands.[59]

Taxation and land segregation were used to force

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[57] For details about the white settlement of Rhodesia during this period see Kennedy, Islands, 33-52.

[58] Cameron, Woman's Winter, 140; and Colquhoun, 'Empire', 316.

59 G. Arrighi,'Labour Supplies in Historical Perspective: A Study of the Proletarianization of the African Pesantry in Rhodesia,' The Journal of Development Studies, 6 (1970), 200.

Africans into the labour pool, though initially with mixed success. The settlers came to rely on employing 'alien' or foreign labour, and by 1911, over half the Africans employed in Southern Rhodesia came from elsewhere in the region.[60]

Political insecurities compounded the economic problems. The settlers were not quick to forget that the British had failed to send in troops to protect them during the uprising of 1896-7, and were determined that in future, they would be able to take care of themselves.[61] Early newspapers are filled with accounts of settler dissatisfaction. "An attitude of resentment towards authority in general, and to British authority in particular, thrived among the independently-minded settlers."[62]

By the terms of the concession granted to the BSAC, the British government could step in to safeguard the rights of the subject peoples if they were threatened by Company policies. This concession to the humanitarian lobby in Britain cost little and ultimately had little effect, apart

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[60] Lemon & Pollock, Overseas Settlement, 94. See also Charles van Onselen, Chibaro: African Mine Labour in Southern Rhodesia 1900-1933 (London: Pluto Press, 1976) for details about labour recruitment for the mines; and Palmer, 'Agricultural History',234, for information about labour shortages on white farms.

[61] See Ranger, Revolt, Chapter 9, for the changes in Company administration brought about by the Rebellion.

[62] Parker, Rhodesia, 22.

from arousing the ire of the settlers.[63]

The settlers were angered by suggestions made overseas as to the appropriate treatment of 'the natives.' As one legislator put it, in 1902, during the debate about legislation prohibiting attempted rape, "...all they asked in this country was that they should be allowed to manage the natives justly and rightly." He expressed the view that the settlers were perfectly justified in forcibly putting down such crimes on the part of the natives, for it was up to "...the small, intelligent and enlightened community ...[to]... control the barbarous one."[64]

The settlers were convinced that they knew better than those in Britain the dangers which they faced. As a result, in 1908, when the British High Commissioner in South Africa commuted a death sentence which had been passed on an African man for the rape of a white woman, the settlers exploded with anger. Letters of protest were written, resolutions deploring the action of the High Commissioner were passed by the Umtali Chamber of Commerce, the Salisbury Chamber of Commerce and the Salisbury Town Council, the Rhodesian Chamber of Mines, the Bulawayo Town Council, the

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[63] A similar proviso was made when the settlers achieved 'responsible government' in 1923. The Colonial Office theoretically maintained the right to prevent the Legislative Assembly from passing discriminatory legislation. In fact, it had neither the power nor the will to do so. On this subject see Porter, Lion's Share, 273.

[64] BSAC, Debates (1902), 114.

Hartley Smallworkers Association, and the Kimberley Reefs and Lomagundi Farmers Associations, and questions about the case were eventually raised in the Houses of Parliament in Great Britain. It is an interesting case.

In 1908, a European woman in Umtali accused an African man of knocking her to the ground and attempting to rape her. The complainant, who is described, unsympathetically, as being "...of a very excitable temperament,"[65] claimed that she had been seized by her shoulders and breasts, thrown to the ground and dragged by the foot, and that it was clear to her that her attacker was trying to rape her.

Janetta Falconer identified her attacker as being a light native, having prominent whites to his eyes and wearing a light blue puggaree, dark coat, white shirt and dirty white trousers with light grey stripes. The sergeant who was investigating the case had seen no reason to question Singana, the man who was eventually charged with the crime, because the clothes he was found wearing shortly after the attack in no way corresponded to these which Miss Falconer had described. Moreover, Miss Falconer failed to identify Singana as her attacker in a police lineup, and it was only on seeing him being taken to the police station that she identified him as her attacker.

Singana was tried, and the jury, which included Mr McChlery, a Member of the Legislative Council who was

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[65] CO 417.465/10653, PRO.

notable for his unwillingness to compromise on issues relating to justice for Africans, was unable to reach an agreement, and the case was discharged. Singana was retried, found guilty, and sentenced to death. Given the doubts which existed about the identification of the assailant and the nature of the intended crime (it was suggested that theft rather than rape may have been the purpose of the attack), the High Commissioner intervened and the death sentence was commuted to ten years' imprisonment.

Shortly thereafter another African man came forward and made a sworn statement that the Bank of Africa's pet baboon had got loose, and that it had been the baboon which had been responsible for the attack. The baboon keeper, Kabuku, was dressed as Miss Falconer had described. Singana was pardoned by the High Commissioner, much to the anger of the local settlers, who responded by holding protest meetings and sending irate letters to the Colonial Office.[66]

Miss Falconer attempted to have the case reopened. She claimed that the baboon had been tied up as usual, and that his keeper was 140 yards away, and that there were five white men who were prepared to swear to this. She added that, excited and bewildered though she may have been, she was nevertheless able to distinguish between a native boy and a baboon. That the uncorroborated evidence of Kabuku was accepted while hers was not constituted a serious

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[66] Mason, Dilemma, 248.

insult.[67]

In the correspondence between the local authorities and the High Commissioner relating to the Singana case, it was later admitted that the case had been conducted in a somewhat perfunctory manner. There had been no cross examination of the complainant, nor had the police investigated Singana's movements sufficiently to discover that he had, in fact, got an alibi for the time at which the attack occurred. Indeed, it was only when the High Commissioner, Lord Selborne, asked for an enquiry, that the matter was investigated for the first time by someone who could speak Singana's language. Yet, in the view of one judge, such miscarriages of justice were inescapable.

> It must, I fear, be admitted that in cases of this kind there is often a considerable amount of racial prejudice, which makes some members of the class from which the jurymen are drawn inclined to convict on evidence less cogent and conclusive than would be thought requisite in other cases.[68]

Miss Falconer's annoyance is understandable. It was only when European women of questionable propriety brought black peril charges against African men that the latter had any chance of not being convicted.[69] Moreover, one of the

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[67] Despatches relative to the Singana case, 24 April 1909, CO 417.465/13887, PRO.

[68] Despatches relative to the Singana case, 27 March 1909, CO 417.465/10716, PRO.

[69] Such cases were comparatively rare. For one example, see Rhodesian Herald, 5/11/09.

fundamental tenets of Rhodesian society was that in any conflict between Europeans and Africans, the white man or woman was telling the truth and the African was lying.

The settlers appear to have felt that in order to maintain the hierarchy of white over black, it was necessary for them to be virtually invicible in the territory's courts, at least in so far as serious crimes were concerned.

In debates on the Immorality and Indecency Ordinance in 1916, one legislator expressed the view that no court in the country would convict a white woman on black evidence alone, and that it was unlikely that a single white witness would appear to support a case where an African man charged a white woman with soliciting him to commit indecent acts.[70] In 1931, a member of the Women's Institute, in writing about the proposed concubinage legislation, declared her opinion that the evil itself, while a serious one, was less dangerous to the settler community than it was to convict a white man on the evidence of a black woman.[71] The courts were just one more area where the whites were able to use a system which they had set in place in order to maintain their superior position.

An investigation of white reactions to the black peril cases in the period between 1908 and 1912 suggests that the

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[70] BSAC, Debates (1916), 169.

[71] WO 5/1/1/3 (1931), 15-6, NAZ.

settlers were concerned less about the assaults themselves, than about their freedom to make their own judicial decisions in a situation where they felt their survival to be threatened. Discussions about the black peril thus provided the settlers with an arena in which to express their discontent with British overlordship and to pressure for political control over Rhodesian affairs.

This single example calls into question the real nature of the settlers' reaction to the black peril. If the white settlers of Southern Rhodesia were indeed so disturbed by the black peril, why, one must ask, was so little done to prevent the crime ?

Those who have examined the subject suggest that there is a ritual quality to black peril fears, and argue that black peril fears were episodic and hysterical in nature.[72] They maintain that the European reactions to the black peril can best be understood as a manifestation of the settlers' general anxiety about their precarious position, and that outbreaks of black peril hysteria were triggered by particularly difficult economic or political

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[72] van Onselen,'Witches', 45, 51; Kennedy, Islands, 138-147; Vassilatos, 'Race and Class', 219-239; Norman Etherington, 'Natal's Black Rape Scare of the 1870s' Journal of Southern African Studies, 15 (Oct. 1988): 36-53; and Steele, 'Native Policy, 124-131. For an interesting study of the black peril in Papua-New Guinea see Amirah Inglis, 'Not a White Woman Safe': Sexual Anxiety and Politics in Port Moresby, 1920-1934 (Canberra: Australian National University Press, 1974).

times.[73]

The black peril clearly existed rather more in the minds of the observers than it did in reality. According to one author,

> the fecund existence that the fear of black men raping white women had in the minds of the settlers was not matched by a comparable fertility of genuine incidence. On the contrary, the colonial community's concern about the black peril thrived in virtual independence of actual assaults on European women.[74]

Similar opinions were occasionally, though very rarely, expressed by contemporaries. One legislator affirmed in 1921, that a large number of black peril cases existed only "...in the diseased imagination of a few idle women", while another writer proclaimed her view that the natives of Rhodesia in fact had a rather good record in terms of their

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[73] Marguerite Elaine Lee, 'Politics and Pressure Groups in Southern Rhodesia, 1898-1923,' (Ph. D. diss., London University, 1974), 109, notes that there were dramatic increases in the number of cases reported in 1902, 1905-6, 1908, 1910-11, 1924, 1929 and 1932. She asserts that the 'outbreaks' of the black peril in 1905-6 and 1910, "...were not unconnected with some form of hysteria amongst the white women." Vassilatos, 'Race and Class', 221, identifies peaks of black peril hysteria in 1910-11, when there was a drought; during the early 1920s, after the influenza epidemic; and in 1932-33, during the worst of the Depression. Kennedy, Islands, 141-6, points to the years 1902, 1908, 1910-11, and 1932 as times when there were particularly intense reactions to the black peril. Mason, Dilemma, 246-253, in a much earlier work, notes that the reaction to the black peril was out of proportion to the number of attacks which occurred, however he does not investigate the timing of such scares.

[74] Kennedy, Islands, 138.

relations with white women.[75]

Others, while ready to believe that the black peril was a real phenomenon, were nevertheless critical of the way in which Rhodesians were attempting to reduce the crime. In 1912, the white community of Rhodesia once again reacted with fury when the British High Commissioner in South Africa remitted yet another death sentence passed on a black peril offender. An editorial in The Rhodesia Herald, however, expressed the hope that the public feeling aroused by recent events would prove productive "...not of hysterical brutality or insensate racial bias, but of an earnest and reasoned effort in the direction of much-needed social and criminal reforms."[76]

There is, in fact, considerable difficulty in gauging the actual extent of the crime. Neither newspaper reports, nor police statistics are particularly helpful in judging how real such attacks were.[77] The official statistics

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[75] BSAC, Debates (1921), 1244; and Jollie, Real Rhodesia, 276.

[76] Rhodesia Herald, 3/5/12.

[77] The newspapers offered only the most bare outline of the crime, since it was not thought to be a subject which was fit for public discussion. Indeed, there was some fear that detailed reporting of such assaults might have the unfortunate effect of encouraging the crime.

The Guild of Loyal Women, a group which concerned themselves mainly with benevolent work for the white community, passed a resolution in 1926 calling on the Press to curtail its reporting of black peril attacks out of fear of the effects which such reports would have both on their own children and on the Africans. They further suggested asked that shops consider their advertisements carefully since

about black peril attacks were swollen by the number of cases in which the man was charged with housebreaking with intent to commit rape, a charge used in any case where an African man was caught breaking into a house where there was a white woman alone.

Therefore, the rates of black peril reporting and convictions cannot be seen as being indicative of the real extent of the crime, but instead can be seen as suggestive of the extent of white fears of Africans. The white reaction to the black peril does not appear to have been either a product of the number of cases which were reported, or the severity of crimes which did occur. As one writer points out, it is difficult to decide whether white paranoia on the subject was a consequence of periodic increases in the reporting of black peril attacks, or was itself the cause of increased reporting.[78]

The settlers appear to have been generally rather lax about employing methods other than judicial ones to discourage the black peril. They failed to take advantage of the Native Foreigners' Identification Bureau which had been set up specifically to allow employers to check on the

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"....it is not desirable that undraped figures should be exhibited publicly in this country." Guild of Loyal Women, Records, GU 1/3/1/5. NAZ.

There are, moreover some inconsistencies in the statistics kept by the police and by the Law Department. Compare RG 3/BRI 41, NAZ with SRG 3/JUS 6, NAZ.

[78] Kennedy, Islands, 143-5.

antecedents of their employees, and so screen out the potentially dangerous ones.[79] Nor, according to the Commissioner of the British South Africa Police, did they take those elementary precautions, such as locking doors and shutting windows, which they would quite naturally employ in a civilised and comparatively safe country such as England.[80]

Moreover, those who were thought to be the primary offenders, the African houseboys, continued to be employed in large numbers despite suggestions from various quarters, including from the servants themselves, that either African men should cease to be employed as houseboys, or that they be should be replaced by female servants.[81]

There were, however, a number of obstacles in the way of substituting women for men as domestic servants. African men were reluctant to allow their wives and daughters to work in the towns for fear that they would either become the mistresses of white men or prostitutes in the locations,

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[79] Vassilatos, 'Race and Class', 219.

[80] RG 3/BRI 41 (1913), 8-9, NAZ.

[81] After Mlanduli, alias Sixpence, was sentenced to death in 1906, a delegation of 30 African servants approached C.L. Carbutt the Native Commissioner for Bulawayo, and suggested that African men cease to be employed in houses where there were European women. They expressed their desire to leave the service of their employers at once, but were dissuaded from doing so by Carbutt. It is possible to speculate that the servants' motive for making such a suggestion was their awareness of the danger of their position given the rather haphazard functioning of the Rhodesian judicial process where black peril cases were concerned. CO 417.495/5460, PRO.

which were judged to be 'hot-beds of evil'.[82] This was not unlikely given the striking disproportion between African men and women in the urban locations.[83] Moreover, beer brewing and prostitution were far more lucrative than domestic work, and prostitution offered African women an avenue to wealth as well as a means of gaining a position of some power in the African society in the locations.[84]

There were indeed those who felt that the best prophylactic against the black peril was to allow African prostitution in the locations, for it was thought that so long as the African men had access to prostitutes there would be less danger of their turning their attention toward the white women.[85] One possible solution, that of providing accommodation for married couples, was dismissed, since white authorities were unwilling to contribute to the growth of a stable African population.

The Women's Institute of Rhodesia which took up the

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[82] On this subject, see Vassilatos,'Race and Class', 190-1. See also Rhodesia Herald, 26/7/12, 28/4/16, 8/4/21, 9/5/30; BSAC, Report of the Native Affairs Committee of Enquiry, 1910-1911, presented to the Legislative Council, 1911, NAZ, 39; and RG 3/BRI 41 (1919), NAZ.

[83] In 1931, there were 15,043 African men and 60 African women living in Salisbury. By 1936, the numbers of African women had increased somewhat to 167, but there were now over 20,000 African men in the city. Vassilatos, 'Race and Class', 222.

[84] Vambe, Zimbabwe, 180. By 1931, prostitution had become the most lucrative profession open to African women, according to a contemporary social worker. WO 5/1/1/3 (1931), 11, NAZ.

[85] Vambe, Zimbabwe, 185.

matter in the late 1920s was ultimately unsuccessful in its attempts to convince Rhodesians that the best method of reducing the black peril lay in the substitution of black women for black men as servants.[86]

It was the fear that the employment of African women in the home would bring about an increase in concubinage and a resultant growth in the coloured population which seemed to prove the main stumbling block to the substitution of women for men as domestic servants. Convinced of her low moral calibre, many felt that once beyond the bounds of tribal control, the African woman would lead white men astray. Others, equally ready to foresee that the employment of African women in European homes would lead to an increase in miscegenation, saw the white man as the source of the danger in this situation.[87]

The fact that the settlers took so few practical steps to reduce such attacks calls into question the real extent of black peril fears. By reinforcing white women's fears of black men, the black peril acted as a means of maintaining the social distance between black and white, while the

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[86] By 1926 there were 22,456 African men servants in Rhodesia, and only 405 African women employed doing domestic work. The disproportion in the numbers of male to female servants increased rather than lessened as time passed, and by 1936 there were 30,932 African men and only 1,268 women employed as domestic workers. Vassilatos, 'Race and Class', 185.

[87] Vassilatos, 'Race and Class', 237-8; Kennedy, Islands, 179; and Rhodesia Herald, 8/4/21, 14/10/21.

arbitrary judicial treatment of African assailants served to reinforce white dominance. The immorality laws further acted as a means of discouraging both white women and black men from bridging those social barriers deemed so necessary to the maintenance of white power.

However, in 1916, when the Legislative Council passed the Immorality and Indecency Suppression Ordinance which contained a clause making white women liable for soliciting African men to perform indecent acts with them, this was too great for white women to swallow. They set about, in their turn, to attack white men's sexual freedom.

CHAPTER 3

THE MISCEGENATION DEBATES, 1916-1930:

WHITE WOMEN CHALLENGE THE ACCEPTED ORDER.

In the period between 1916 and 1930, the white women of Rhodesia made three separate attempts to have legislation passed prohibiting sexual relations between white men and black women.[1] They never succeeded.

In seeking to discourage such relations, the white women were simply fulfilling the role which they were expected to play in maintaining the prestige of the white community by exercising their powers of moral vigilance. However, by going so far as to try to have legislation passed to prohibit such intercourse, the women were effectively attempting to move the policing of men's sexual activities from the informal, private, female-dominated realm of the home, to the more formal, public, and traditionally male-dominated realm of the law. Moreover,

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[1] 'Miscegenation' was the most popular term used to refer to sexual relations between European men and African women, though when the white women petitioned the Legislature to pass a law prohibiting such relations, they asked for legislation to prevent the cohabitation of white men and black women. Cohabitation, however, did not necessarily imply that the couple involved actually lived together. It is clear that the white women were anxious to prevent all sexual contact between white men and black women, whether this involved merely the passing sexual interaction of a prostitute with her client, or more stable long-term affairs.

their primary motive for calling for such legislation appears to have been a desire to see legal equality between white men and women in this area.

The white women's demands for legislation prohibiting sexual relations between European men and African women can therefore be seen as indicative of an attempt to bring about an evolution in their roles as moral guardians of society, a change which was perceived as a profound challenge to white male authority.

It is difficult to know just how common such relationships were at any given point during this period, since the statistical information which exists on the subject is unsatisfactory. In the twenty year period between 1911 (when the first estimates were made of the coloured population) and 1931, the figures for the coloured population remained almost constant, hovering around 2,000, the only real increase occurring between 1921 and 1931, when the numbers grew dramatically by around 400. One author, however, believes that such figures are deliberate underestimates, motivated by the desire to diminish social embarrassment.[2]

The available information on the subject can be confusing. In 1914, a Native Affairs Department survey found only 16 cases of European men living with African women on reserves. Yet, at the same date, there were approximately

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[2] Kennedy, Islands, 241 n. 25.

400 'half-caste' children in the territory. More surprising still are figures which come from a somewhat later date. In 1959, there were only 27 known cases of concubinage, yet only five years before it had been reported that 6,000 coloured children lived with their African mothers.[3]

The usefulness of these statistics as a way of gauging the extent of relationships between European men and African women is further reduced by their failure to distinguish between the coloured children who were born, out-of-wedlock, to African mothers and European fathers, those who were born to a coloured father and an African mother, and those who were born into stable families where both parents were coloured. It is also unlikely, of course, that all sexual interactions between white men and black women culminated in the birth of offspring.

The numbers of coloured children alone are not particularly revealing as a source of information about the kinds of sexual liasons which existed between white men and black women. It is impossible to know whether the coloured offspring that were born of such unions were the outcome of a white man's assault of a black woman, the result of a single encounter between an African prostitute and her European client, or the second or third child of a fairly stable ménage.

Nor is the anecdotal evidence on the subject

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[3] Rogers & Frantz, Racial Themes, 233, 282-3.

particularly helpful, since there was considerable disagreement as to the extent of the problem. As in the case of the black peril, it is easier to examine what people thought was happening than what was actually going on.

Those who were concerned about the issue had plenty of stories to tell. During the 1921 legislative debate on the subject, one Member of the Legislative Council (hereafter MLC) described to his colleagues the circle of native women who had sat outside the laager in Bulawayo, waiting for their white 'husbands' who kept themselves safe inside. Another asserted that he had received letters from correspondents who claimed to know of 18 to 20 white men in a single district who lived with African women. Yet a third described his encounters with white men who boasted uncountable numbers of coloured offspring.[4] Others dismissed such tales as being exaggerated or simply untrue. They asserted that while miscegenation might have been a problem in the past, at some earlier and always unspecified date, it was now a fairly rare occurrence.[5]

Most were prepared to aknowledge that sexual relations between European men and African women had been fairly common during the early days of white settlement. One contemporary observer judged that in the days preceeding

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[4] BSAC, Debates (1921), 474, 504, 1243.

[5] BSAC, Debates (1916), 100; and BSAC, Debates (1921), 510, 515, 1228, 1240.

Company rule, sexual relations between African women and European men were the rule rather than the exception in Matabeleland.[6] Ndebele women were said to have been "far from shy", and according to one recent work on the subject, the African concubine or harem was, "...the regular and recognized appurtenance of almost every white Matabelelander."[7]

In Mashonaland, however, it was quite a different story. One observer, writing of Mashonaland in the late 1890's noted that it was almost impossible to "get possession" of a native girl.[8] As early as 1898, it was reported to be almost unknown for men in Salisbury and Umtali to have African concubines. According to one contemporary, though the women in Mashonaland were "exceedingly immoral", they were loath to enter into relations with white men because they believed that if they did, they would beget snakes.[9]

It was a problem associated mainly with men living far from the urban centres. In 1912, Sir Aubrey Wools-Sampson asserted that the number of prospectors in Matabeleland who

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[6] Marshal Hole memo in Dawson Papers in the Hole Collection cited in Cairns, Prelude, 261 n.99.

[7] Keppel-Jones, Rhodes, 381. See also Cairns, Prelude, 55.

[8] S. P. Hyatt, Off the Main Track (London: T. Werner Laurie, n.d.), 73 quoted in Keppel-Jones, Rhodes, 382.

[9] H. C. Thomson, Rhodesia and Its Government, (London: Smith, Elder & Co., 1898), 76.

were living with native women was "positively appalling", and by 1921, the newspaper was publishing letters from correspondents who claimed that it was a fairly general practice for Rhodesian miners and shopkeepers to live with native women.[10] By 1925, Herbert Taylor, the Chief Native Commissioner, reluctantly admitted to the Premier in a confidential letter, that the problem was a serious one and 'the evil' widespread in outlying areas.[11]

White traders had come in for special mention in this regard as early as 1910, when the Native Affairs Commission recommended that no European who cohabited with a native woman should be allowed to live on the reserves.[12] This recommendation was put into practice in 1914, when a circular was sent around prohibiting white men with a known history of concubinage from trading on the reserves, however, this did not prevent such white men from living on their very borders and keeping harems of African women who

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[10] A year later, the paper published another article which claimed that while the practice was not widespread or common, it was not abnormal either. In 1916 it was reported that, according to Archdeacon Etheridge, the practice was far more common in outlying regions than it was thought to be. See Rhodesia Herald, 10/5/12, 20/6/13, 12/5/16, 13/5/21, and 20/5/21.

[11] BSAC, Miscegenation File, Letter CNC to the Premier, 25th July 1925, S 138/10, NAZ.

[12] Native Affairs, 7.

lived just inside the reserves.[13] It was reported in 1921 that, in one area, African men were reluctant to allow their wives to go to the shop, because the man who ran it wanted "... to make every girl that goes to the store his wife."[14]

Relations between black women and white men during these early days of contact ranged from ones involving merely passing sexual encounters to fairly stable long-term arrangements. It is the view of one author that Afrikaner men were more prone to casual sexual encounters, while Englishmen were more likely to become involved in semi-permanent relationships.[15] Though, during this period there were no marriages between white men and African women that were sanctioned by Christian marriage ceremonies or European law, marriages under African customary law were not unknown. Some, at least, appear to have been fairly stable, including those of a number of Company officials.[16]

Indeed, in 1921, one MLC asserted that it was the

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[13] BSAC, Debates (1921), 507. The problem apparently persisted, however, for in the early 1930s the Prime Minister asserted, when questionned, that licences were no longer given to those who were even suspected of concubinage. BSAC, Debates (1930), 1807. Women's groups nevertheless continued to call for additional restrictions to be placed on those traders with unsavoury reputations. WI, Minute Books of Annual General Meetings, WO 5/4/2 (1931), NAZ.

[14] BSAC, Debates (1921), 507.

[15] Mason, Dilemma, 242.

[16] Keppel-Jones, Rhodes, 384.

Government officials who were the prime offenders in this area, a suggestion which was vigorously denied by the Attorney General.[17] And, while publicly representatives of the government responded with outrage to such charges, in private, the more senior members of the Native Administration wondered about how to deal with the problem effectively.[18]

Though the Government proclaimed its readiness to deal with the problem among its own employees, in practice, the measures which were taken were fairly half-hearted ones. There was a tendency to threaten those employees found cohabiting with an African woman with dismissal.[19] Very occasionally these threats were fulfilled. In one case, an official was dismissed for having been found guilty of using threats to get a chief to bring him his daughter, only to

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[17] BSAC, Debates (1921), 521, 1241.

[18] See Letter from Herbert Taylor, CNC, to the Sec., Dept. of the Administrator, T1719/1918 in BSAC, Correspondence to CNC, 1918, N 3/24/1/4 vol. 2, NAZ; Confidential Letter from W.E. Thomas, Superintendent of Natives to CNC, Salsbury, 19 Aug. 1918, Va 784/1918 in N 3/24/1/4 vol. 2, NAZ; and S 138/10, NAZ.

[19] This was at a time when efforts were being made to curb such practices throughout the British Empire. In 1909, the Earl of Crewe sent out a circular to all those employed by the Colonial Civil Service warning that any men found engaging in illicit sexual activities with the natives would face dismissal. See Ronald Hyam, 'Concubinage and the Colonial Service - The Crewe Circular (1909)' in The Journal of Imperial and Commonwealth History, 14 (May 1986): 170-186.

then be rehired nine months later.[20] In 1916, however, the Attorney General confirmed that during the time that he had been in office, two white men had been dismissed for concubinage, one only the month before.[21]

More often than not, however, 'the evil' was either simply ignored, or punished by the imposition of a rather negligible fine. W.E. Thomas, Superintendent of Natives, wrote to the Chief Native Commissioner in August of 1918 complaining that not enough was done to punish offenders. He asserted that Acting Cattle Inspector, Trooper Pic' ering, kept a native woman for 'illicit sexual purposes', and even took her on a long patrol with him, though she was very pregnant at the time. When this was discovered, he lost his stripes, which represented an additional revenue of sixpence a day, but continued to draw a salary of five shillings a day while cohabiting with another African woman.[22]

It was said that white men living with native women felt little sense of shame about such relations. One MLC claimed to know of a Native Commissioner who boasted openly of the number of young native girls he had been able to

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[20] Mason, Dilemma, 202-3. He notes, however, that this occurred at the time of the 'Rebellion' when every man possible was needed to defend the white community.

[21] Rhodesia Herald, 19/5/16.

[22] Va 784/1918 in N 3/24/1/4, vol. 2, NAZ.

seduce.[23] In one case, in 1916, a policeman went so far as to challenge the right of the Board of Officers of the B.S.A. police to penalise him for cohabiting with an African woman. He lost the appeal however, and therefore presumably did not recover the £2 fine he had been obliged to pay.[24]

It is likely that there was less willingness to tolerate concubinage when the employee in question was in a relatively elevated position in the official hierarchy, in which case the threat to white prestige implicit in such behaviour was increased. Thus, behaviour which might be more or less ignored in an acting cattle inspector was beyond the pale for a Native Commissioner. There was, however, a clear reluctance on the part of the Government to do much more than rebuke its employees for what was, " ...an act still dismissed in most male circles as a venial sin."[25]

There was, generally, a fairly sympathetic attitude towards those men who became involved with African women. They were characterized as "victims of weakness" who had "become entangled" with African women, and were deemed to be foolish, rather than actually evil-intentioned. In the estimation of one MLC, they were frequently men who had

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[23] See BSAC, Debates (1916), 98; BSAC, Debates (1921), 504; and Rhodesia Herald, 19/5/16, 20/5/21.

[24] Rhodesia Herald, 17/11/16.

[25] Kennedy, Islands, 177.

"...acted ignorantly without thinking of the seriousness of the consequences." It was thought to be necessary to treat such men carefully, in order to save them from themselves, and there was immense sympathy for those who, having contracted a veneral disease from their liasons with African women, were obliged to put off visits to their relatives.[26]

The licentiousness of African women was deemed to be one of the main causes of such liasons. According to one person who investigated the problem in the early 1930's, it was the immoral native woman that was at the root of 'the evil'.[27]

Climactic theories of human behaviour were coupled with references to the African polygamous marriage system and offered as explanations for African women's lack of moral restraint.[28] An article in the Rhodesia Herald in 1914 reported that young African girls "...were not animated by any feelings of virtue. Their very childhood was strikingly immoral, and their games even were tempered by sensual

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[26] BSAC, Debates (1921), 505, 513, 514.

[27] WO 5/1/1/3 (1931), 23-4, NAZ.

[28] Cairns, Prelude, 53-4; Rhodesia Herald, 27/6/30. One writer, however, discerns a note of envy in many of the disapproving comments which were made about the African women's lewd behaviour. Mason, Dilemma, 243.

play."[29] As one writer puts it, "...in the eyes of most white Rhodesians the African woman was either a mute, ignorant breeding machine or a prostitute."[30] White men thus came to be seen simply as the passive victims of their own lust, while African women were frequently attributed the active role in initiating such relations.[31]

It was assumed that many of those who became involved with African women were men who were "doing useful pioneer work" away from their own kind, and who, as a result of poverty and isolation, became involved in liasons with African women.[32] African mistresses were thus the accepted compensation for a life lived far from the center of Rhodesian civilisation.

It was also suggested that many of the white men who became involved with African women were too poor to expect to marry one of their own kind. Indeed, in 1913, the Cost of Living Enquiry heard reports from artisans who asserted that it was cheaper for them to keep a wife outside the

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[29] Rhodesia Herald, 20/11/14. One of the by-products of this view was a reluctance to educate any but the very young African girls alongside African boys, out of a fear that the latter would 'fall' morally. See Native Affairs, 17.

[30] Vambe, Zimbabwe, 189.

[31] One visitor to Matabeleland in the days just preceding Company rule, described his difficulties in trying to ward off the attentions of the young Ndebele girls, who apparently tried with great persistence to crawl into bed with him. Cairns, Prelude, 56.

[32] WI, Minute Books of Annual General Meetings (1928), WO 5/4/1, NAZ.

country than to keep them in it.[33] It was therefore with distress that Superintendent Thomas wrote to CNC Taylor that white men were not always willing to give up native women and find wives 'of their own kind and status', even if they could afford to support them.[34]

The ultimate responsibility for such relationships was, however, thought to lie with the white women who had failed in their duty towards their men.[35] White women were held responsible for maintaining the white community's prestige through the exercise of their civilising influence and were blamed for any loss of prestige to the white community as a result of the white men's adventures with local women. Thus, according to one MLC, the greatest part of the blame for concubinage lay with the mothers who had failed to equip their sons with sufficient moral armour to face the temptations they would find overseas. She also chastised the middle class sweethearts and wives of Great Britain who thought too much about the luxuries of life and their own comfort to come and share in the sufferings and hardships of settling a new territory in order to be at the side of their men.[36]

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[33] Kirkwood, 'Settler Wives', 147.

[34] Va 784/1918 in N 3/24/1/4 vol. 2, NAZ.

[35] See Brownfoot, 'Memsahibs', 207, for comparative information about white women's role in Malaya.

[36] BSAC, Debates (1921), 528.

White women had been welcomed to Rhodesia mainly for their ability to provide male settlers with what one writer has termed 'socially legitimate' sexual relations.[37] Indeed, it was the physical presence of white women which was seen as the best prophylactic against miscegenation. In 1895, the Rhodesia Advertiser of Umtali lamented the lack of 'good white servant girls' and pointed out that, "... for want of a class of white females suitable for the wives of our artisans much intermixture goes on - a fact to be deplored from every point of view."[38]

Attempts were therefore made to encourage suitable single women to emigrate to Rhodesia. In 1902, the British Women's Emigration Association formed a Rhodesia sub-committee and opened hostels in Bulawayo and Salisbury to house the new arrivals, though the number of single women who came to the country under its auspices was very small.[39]

'Respectable' single women who arrived in the territory did not tend to remain single for very long.[40] "Without

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[37] Gartrell, 'Villains or Victims?', 169.

[38] Kennedy, Islands, 178.

[39] Kennedy, Islands, 178. See also Monk, New Horizons, 93-4.

[40] It is interesting to note that a cursory survey of the newspapers also reveals that divorces were surprisingly common in the white community during the first decade or two of this century. It is possible that the imbalance between the numbers of white men and women allowed white women greater freedom to exchange one husband for another, when, for one

being unduly exacting one could wish that the Rhodesian Education Department had less success as a matrimonial agency," noted one settler, who added that, "..the hospital was an even shorter cut to matrimony than the school."[41] Sheila MacDonald, writing of her experiences in Rhodesia in 1908, records her joy at getting a new nanny from Scotland. "Everything about her was perfect, elderly, ugly, squints, has false teeth, partially bald, lean, sallow and a heart of gold, oh paragon of nurses."[42]

Among the single women who came to the territory during the first decade or two of white settlement, there were also a considerable number who were not respectable. The expectations of gold finds which had brought large numbers of young men to the territory as prospectors, had also encouraged the influx of white prostitutes from South Africa. Melina Rorke, writing of Bulawayo in the early 1890s, claimed that she was the only eligible white women in town, a statement which, in one author's view, must have

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reason or another, they wished to do so. Certainly, in one of the fictional works of the period, white women seemed to spend much of their time engaged in flirtation with men other than their husbands. See Stockley, Virginia. Another author repeatedly assures her mother that she is not to believe what she hears about Rhodesia as most marriages are stable, a fact which is, in itself, suggestive. MacDonald, Sally, 59-60, 118-9.

[41] Jollie, Real Rhodesia, 237.

[42] MacDonald, Sally, 182.

been close to the truth.[43]

Throughout the 1890's, travellers recorded their impressions of the maleness of white Rhodesian society. In 1891, Salisbury's white population was composed of between four and five hundred men, and one white woman who had accompanied her husband into the territory disguised as a young man. By 1892, there were judged to be enough white women in Umtali to hold a dance, though at this date there were only 8 white women to every 100 white men.[44]

The situation changed only very slowly. In 1911, the white population of the territory was composed of 15,580 men and 8,026 women. By 1921, there were 771 white women to every 1,000 white men, and by 1931, the proportion of white women had increased so that for every 1,000 men there were 830 women. The imbalance did not right itself fully until after the Second World War.[45] Small wonder that one Rhodesian man of the cloth described in such glowing terms in 1915 "...the rising generation of young Rhodesian women who were well-trained physically and mentally,...some of

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[43] Keppel-Jones, Rhodes, 381.

[44] There was a high degree of regional variation in the ratio of white men to women. The districts settled by the trekker families were more evenly balanced in terms of the ratio of white men to women, while the mining frontier was less so. See Keppel-Jones, Rhodes, 380-1.

[45] Kennedy, Islands, 241, n. 24; Gann, Early Days, 313; Rogers & Frantz, Racial Themes, 14-15, 23, 283; and Gann & Duignan, Rulers, 71-2.

them almost at a marriageable age."[46]

Women were also appreciated for their ability to provide the men with a stable home environment. "Without the women standing four-square behind them, the men could not have endured," asserted one white Rhodesian, for they "...laid the foundations of civilised living in a country that had hitherto known only a primitive way of life."[47] White women were expected to exercise a refining influence on those around them.[48]

There were those, however, who were rather dubious about the benefits to be derived from white women's presence in the territory. " With the women came the dreadful era of respectability," complained one old-timer from Northern Rhodesia. " Men were expected to wear starched shirts, stop swearing in public, and to put away their African mistresses." According to this pair of writers, " ...it was the cheap steamship ticket for women that put an end to racial integration."[49]

It is not an uncommon view. Indeed, there has been a tendency among historians to make a link between the arrival

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[46] Rhodesia Herald, 17/9/15.

[47] W.D. Gale foreword to Hole, Old Rhodesian, ii.

[48] For positive comments about white women's 'civilising' influence from one early white male settler, see Hole, Old Rhodesian, 122, 126, 127.

[49] Gann & Duignan, Rulers, 242.

of white women and a deterioration in race relations.[50] Such authors suggest that by attempting to discourage sexual relations between white men and black women, white women were responsible for ushering in the era of racial hostility. A superficial, unsympathetic and unflattering portrait of the snobbish, narrow-minded, racially-prejudiced colonial wife has been imported from the pages of fiction and put to use in the histories of various British colonies.[51]

There is, however, little evidence to suggest that the sexual relationships which existed between white men and black women in the days before white women were able to exercise their restraining powers fully, were in any way characterised by the mutual respect and equality which might have contributed to the growth of a racially integrated society. On the contrary, such liasons frequently give

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[50] For comments on the effect of white women's arrival n Rhodesia, see, for example, Keppel-Jones, Rhodes, 383-4; and Gann, Early Days, 320-1. For similar comments about the effect of white women's arrival on race relations in other British colonies, see Henriques, Children, 123; and Hyam, 'Sexual Opportunity' 62.

[51] This view of the character of white women in the British colonies has come under attack as more women begin to write colonial history. See Callaway, Gender, Culture and Empire, generally for a study of the range of activity of white women in Nigeria, and 26-7 for her assessment of the stock image of the white women in the colonies. See also Brownfoot, 'Memsahibs', 186-7, for a similar refutation of this negative stereotype. Gartrell, 'Villains or Victims?', 165, 180-1, argues that the petty snobbery of some colonial wives was related to a more general dissatisfaction with their situation.

evidence of the white men's contempt for both African women and men.[52] In general, in the estimation of one writer, "... while mutual affection was not impossible, liasons were invariably conducted in the service of the European partner."[53]

Some liasons appear to have been of a particularly brutal and fleeting nature. There are reports that during the 1890's, Shona women fled, shrieking in terror, into their huts at the approach of any white man, having been adversely affected by the practice of some of the white policemen of raping any African woman that they found on the veld alone.[54] One prominent South African, speaking in 1912, asserted that "... the natives could point to hundreds of instances where their women had been outraged."[55]

African women remained vulnerable to sexual assaults from white men even after the frontier atmosphere gave way to a more stable society, though it is difficult to know just how common such assaults were. A sizeable proportion of the offenders in the cases which did go to trial were

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[52] See Philip Mason, Patterns of Dominance (London: Oxford Univeristy Press, 1970), 88, for general comments on this subject; and Inglis, Sexual Anxiety, 13, for her comments on such relations in Papua/New Guinea.

[53] Kennedy, Islands, 175-6.

[54] Keppel-Jones, Rhodes, 382. See also Mason, Dilemma, 202; Thomson, Government, 76; and Blake, A History, 119-20.

[55] Rhodesia Herald, 10/5/12, speech by Sir Aubrey Wools-Sampson.

members of the B.S.A. Police force, a fact which probably discouraged many African women from reporting the crime.[56] One MLC noted coolly during a debate on miscegenation in 1921 that it was unlikely that any legislation which passed would be enforced, since its enforcement would depend on the cooperation of policemen, men who were not reknowned for being "surrounded by halos."[57]

One of the problems which African women faced in their attempts to press charges for rape against a white man was that following an assault, the white man frequently gave the woman some money, a fact which served to blurr the line between prostitution and sexual assault.[58] Newspaper reports of those trials which did occur referred to 'alleged' assaults, and often managed to suggest that the white man was the victim of an African conspiracy.[59] I found no evidence of an African woman successfully

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[56] See Rhodesia Herald, 14/11/13, 26/11/13, 23/5/13, and 17/3/16 for accounts of African women's rape charges against white policemen.

[57] BSAC, Debates (1921), 1227.

[58] See Vambe, Zimbabwe, 137, for an account of a case where an African woman who had been gang-raped by seven white men was prevented from pressing charges because the men had left some money with her when they left her by the side of the road.

[59] See Rhodesia Herald, 20/6/13, 27/6/13, and 4/7/13 for an account of one such trial. The contrast between the newspaper reports of black peril and white peril cases is striking. It would have been almost unthinkable to suggest that African men had been the victims of a white conspiracy in a black peril charge, though frequently this was not far from the truth.

prosecuting a white man for rape, and, according to one author, the only case in which this occurred was in the early 1940's.[60]

Other relationships, while somewhat more benign, were nevertheless unequal. Thus, it was said that in the 1890's, it was not uncommon for farmers to buy Zumbo women for about £5 from the neighbouring Portuguese territory of Mozambique. John White, a Methodist missionary, claimed that these women regarded themselves as the slaves of the white men.[61] A contemporary writer nevertheless assured his readers, lest any of them be shocked by such revelations, that such women had a much better time with their new 'owners' than they would have been the case had they remained in their kraals.[62]

Many of the white men who lived with African women however, eventually married white ones, at which point they rid themselves of their African concubines by sending them back to their villages. There was also a tendency for white men to unburden themselves of their concubines once they

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[60] Both the offender and the woman's husband were members of the BSAP. The white man was sentenced to nearly 4 years in prison. Vambe, Zimbabwe, 112.

[61] Keppel-Jones, Rhodes, 382; and Mason, Dilemma, 203. It is important to keep in mind however, that many whites saw African marriages as being akin to slavery for the women involved.

[62] Thomson, Government, 76-77.

became pregnant.[63]

As early as 1890, Lobengula called a meeting to discuss interracial sexual relations because he was worried about the growing numbers of coloured children.[64] African witnesses speaking to the Native Affairs Committee of 1910-11 asserted that miscegenation was,"...very bad; whites ought to take whites, and blacks ought to take blacks. It is very evil and a thing we resent very much in our hearts."[65]

What the settlers failed to understand for a long time, was that African objections to miscegenation stemmed not, as in their own case, from a conviction that their racial supremacy would be threatened by such liasons, but out of distress and anger at the white men's treatment of their African concubines and coloured children. By 1930, some of these offspring were themselves writing to the Premier to ask for laws restricting white men's sexual freedom.

> Dear Sir, - We ask the Government if the Government can help us against our fathers. Of course they don't look after us as well as they should look after us, because when they living with native woman they knows that they are going to have children with them they must support as well as a white child. We beg the Government to put the law against these Europeans who have native womans. The thing made us to ask is this because they still going forward making more

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[63] Keppel-Jones, Rhodes, 382; Rhodesia Herald, 12/5/16; and BSAC, Debates (1921), 505.

[64] Cairns, Prelude, 56-7.

[65] Native Affairs quoted in BSAC, Debates (1921), 501-2.

> children and leave them again; the poor native woman have to carry very hard to support these children.
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> Dear Sir, - We ask Sir whatever you can tell us about our white father, the thing which we can see is this. They always go after native girls. By going after them they spoil them. As soon as she get baby he will never look after her; the poor girl she will carry hard by herself. Same they have to try there best which they got still going forward when the poor baby is big have to be in hard time Sir. Just look at us now Sir: we can hardly write, but what can we do about that Sir? Sir, can you kindly tell us? We thinking to hear from you, Sir.[66]

Certainly, concubinage, or 'miscegenation' as it was often called, was identified from the first, by both the men and the women of the white community, as being an issue which was of particular concern to white women. In discussions on the enfranchisement of white women, some Members of the Legislative Council spoke with approbation about the "tremendous purifying effect" which they expected women's political participation would have on public life, and particularly on racial questions.[67]

It was believed that women had more finely-tuned racial sensibilities than did white men. One member of the conservative Federation of Women's Institutes of Southern

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[66] BSAC, Debates (1930), 1805-6. These letters came from the Rhodesian Coloured Society, a group which comprised 86 members, and though the W.I. judged this number to be too small to be truly representative, there was nevertheless a readiness to admit that the letters expressed the "united cry of a genuinely distressed section of the community." WO 5/1/1/3 (1931), 3, NAZ.

[67] Rhodesia Herald 19/4/12; BSAC, Debates (1918), 428, 430, 432; and BSAC, Debates (1919), 86, 119.

Rhodesia (hereafter W.I.) judged, in 1930, that white women were far more outspoken in their disgust at such unions than were white men. It was her opinion that while white men condemned such unions largely on economic grounds relating to the "unwisdom" of allowing the growth of a coloured population, the "average laywoman's" reaction was based on an instinctual loathing, which she felt was, "...perfectly sound from a scientific point of view, since it is probably unsound to mate two races so widely differing physically as are the European and negro stocks."[68]

As one writer has explained in discussing the role of white women in the Colonies,

> Women became agents of the external moral order... even against their own men, specifically with regard to sexuality and generally in the maintenance of behaviour defined as essential to 'dignity'.[69]

Thus, in attempting to curb sexual relations between white men and black women, the white women were simply behaving in the fashion that was expected of them. Their motives for discouraging miscegenation were, however, far more complex

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[68] WI, Paper on Miscegenation read at Gwelo in November 1930 by Mrs. C.E. Fripp to the Executive Committee of the Federation of Women's Institutes of Southern Rhodesia, WO 5/1/1/3 (1930), NAZ, 2. It is interesting to note the popularity of the use of eugenic arguments at this time. See, for example, Gray, Two Nations, 20 for Charles Bullock's statement to the 1925 Carter Commission on land segregation. Bullock was later to be Chief Native Commissioner.

[69] Gartrell, 'Villains or Victims?', 169. See also Brownfoot, 'Memsahibs', 189-91; and Callaway, Gender, Culture and Empire, 10.

and far more diverse than those which are generally attributed to them.

The Administration, itself, made a rather ineffectual attempt to do something about the situation, during the second decade of this century. In 1911, the Committee on Native Affairs tabled its report. Having received a number of "earnest representations" on the subject of sexual intercourse between white men and black women, and prompted by the wish to preserve the "prestige and influence" of the settlers, the Committee recommended that in order to prevent future problems, both concubinage and marriage between white men and black women should be prohibited.[70]

The Administration acted on this recommendation in the following year, and in 1912, under the aegis of a law aimed at controlling African sexual activity, an attempt was made to include the prohibition of sexual contact between European men and African women. Though those members of the legislature who were representatives of the Company administration supported such a prohibition, the elected representatives of the settlers did not, and by 1911 they were in the majority on the Legislative Council. Those clauses of the ordinance which dealt solely with the restriction of African sexual behaviour were passed, and those sections which related to the control of white men's sexual behaviour were rejected. This was also the case in

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[70] Rhodesia Herald, 19/5/11.

1916, when the Administration made a second attempt to restrict such liasons.

It was in the same year that white women became actively involved in advocating legal reform in this area. A petition sponsored by the Women's Christian Temperance Union and The Women's Franchise Society and signed by between 1,700 and 1,800 white women, mainly from the Bulawayo area, was presented to the Legislature during the debate on the Native Adultery Ordinance. The white women called on the Legislature to protect both African girls and married women from the attentions of white men. They asserted that any ordinance which was aimed at discouraging African women from entering into adulterous relationships would be meaningless so long as white men were not also included within its purview.[71]

Their eagerness to have a law passed prohibiting such liasons was fostered by their anger at the legal inequalities between white women and men in this area. During the same session in which the Legislative Council refused to legislate to prohibit sexual relations between white men and black women, the Immorality and Indecency Suppressions Ordinance was passed. Aimed at discouraging indecent acts between white women and black men, the law contained one clause which created a furor within the white

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[71] BSAC, Debates (1916), 97. See also BSAC, Debates (1916), 103, 105.

community, particularly among its female members.

By the terms of this ordinance, all white women, and not just prostitutes, became liable to a year's imprisonment for inciting or enticing the appropriate member of the other sex and the other race to engage in illicit intercourse or other indecent acts.[72] The suggestion that respectable women might solicit African men to perform indecent acts with them was seen as highly insulting. There was also a fear that such legislation would allow white women to be blackmailed by discontented servants.

The white women responded by immediately sending a petition with the signatures of over 200 women to Lord Buxton, the British High Commissioner in South Africa, and by holding a series of protest meetings all around the country. In Salisbury, one meeting which was held brought together representatives of The Girls'Friendly Society, the Women's Franchise Union, the Presbyterian Women's Association, the Wesleyan Ladies Guild, the Women's Christian Temperance Union, as well as members of the Jewish

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[72] All African men were also subject to the same punishment. What so incensed the majority of the white women was that while many were in favour of further restricting the contact between white prostitutes and their clients, the ordinance was not limited in this way, a fact which was perceived by many as a grave insult to white womanhood.

It is interesting to note that all the legislation which was passed or discussed was geared towards preventing inter-racial heterosexual relations. No mention was ever made of inter-racial homosexual relations, though occasionally both European men and African men would be convicted for sodomy.

community.[73]

A sympathetic MLC, acting on behalf of various women's groups, introduced a resolution calling upon the Administration to pass a law making it illegal for white men to cohabit with native women in the same way that it was illegal for white women to cohabit with native men. The resolution was summarily rejected by a vote of 15 to 1.[74]

In spite of this initial defeat, the white women continued to press for legislation aimed at prohibiting sexual relations between white men and black women, bringing resolutions on the subject before the Legislative Council again in 1921 and 1930.

Very little has yet been written on this subject, and unfortunately, much of the evidence which exists about women's motives for pressing for such legislation comes not from the women's group that was most active in this area, the Rhodesian Women's League, but from the comments made by those white men and women who opposed these demands. Their remarks are nevertheless enlightening. It becomes possible to gain an understanding of the motives which activated those who were in favour of such legislation by looking at the reactions of those who opposed it.

The conservative Federation of Women's Institutes of Southern Rhodesia were reluctant to become involved in what

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[73] Rhodesia Herald, 12/5/16, 8/6/16.

[74] Rhodesia Herald, 12/5/16.

they saw as the controversial attempts of the Rhodesian Women's League to pass legislation in this area. The W.I. had been constituted in July 1927, with the aim of involving white women, especially those living in rural areas, in the "...life and development of the country."[75] Wishing to avoid being pegged as "... merely a propagandist institution," they preferred to remain non-confrontational and thereby avoid internal dissension.[76] They therefore took care to disassociate themselves from the efforts of the Rhodesian Women's League to enact what they perceived as "drastic" legislation.[77]

Members of the W.I., as well as legislators, were, nevertheless, concerned about such relations, and were prepared to discourage them in a variety of ways short of legislating against them. Their motives for doing so were diverse. They wanted to preserve white prestige, worried about the consequences of the growth of a racially-mixed population, and feared that the black peril was a consequence of the white peril.

It was a well-accepted view that African men's attacks on white women were provoked, at least in part, by white

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[75] WI, Report of the Standing Committee on Domestic Service, July 1930, NAZ, Foreword. For comments on the work of the Women's Institutes see Joy MacLean, The Guardians (Bulawayo: Books of Rhodesia, 1974), 197-8.

[76] WO 5/1/1/3 (1931), 25, NAZ.

[77] WO 5/4/2 (1931), NAZ; WO 5/1/1/3 (1931), 24, NAZ.

men's attacks on African women. In 1916, one MLC had even asserted that it was common knowledge that one of the main causes of the 'Rebellion' had been the African outrage at the 'white peril', a suggestion which was greeted by his colleagues with derision.[78] By 1921, some legislators reported that there were Africans who were calling on the settlers to rectify legal imbalances between white and black in this area by threatening to retaliate in kind. One legislator claimed to have been asked by a native, "If you permit your white men to take our native women, why should you stop us black men from taking your women?"[79] The white women's reported reluctance to accept the suggestion advanced by some legislators about redressing the legal imbalances between white men and women by repealing the Immorality and Indecency ordinances, was related to this perception of a link between the white peril and the black peril.[80]

A more important reason for many of those who wished to discourage sexual relations between white men and black women lay in the way in which such liasons were thought to affect white prestige. Writing in 1930, one member of the Women's Institute, in detailing her objections to miscegenation, referred to the "horrible degradation" of the

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[78] Rhodesia Herald, 12/5/16.

[79] BSAC, Debates (1921), 506.

[80] BSAC, Debates (1921), 1239, 1242.

white man involved, a degradation which passed "...through him to us all, as members of the British Empire."[81] By bringing white and black together in a situation of some intimacy, such relations were thought likely to lead to a loss of respect for the white man involved and hence to threaten the white control over society. As one writer points out,

> Europeans could scarcely make a convincing claim for the inherent superiority of their race and culture while simultaneously cohabiting on the most sordid basis of service and reward with 'inferior' peoples.[82]

It is interesting to note that one of the reasons given by the W.I. for their opposition to legislation prohibiting miscegenation was that they feared that if white men were convicted on such a charge on the basis of evidence given by 'natives' it would lead to a loss of status which would prove more detrimental to white prestige than the relationship itself.

> I judge that the man charged with murder would be in a prouder position than one arraigned for this particular offence! A conviction would drive him to the dogs - and natives. His relations! How perfectly awful it would be for them; they would rather he died! What would be the feelings of his

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[81] WO 5/4/2 (1931), NAZ. For further comments on this subject see Rhodesia Herald, 17/11/16.

[82] Kennedy, Islands, 176. See also Kennedy, Islands, 167, 173-4; Cairns, Prelude, 54, 57; Mason, Dilemma, 203; and Ballhatchet, Raj, 2.

mother![83]

Not only did such relations, in themselves, represent a threat to white prestige, but many legislators also felt that their legitimacy as a ruling group was called into question by the legal, and therefore, in a deeper sense, the moral imbalance between the races. For the existing legal situation, in the delicate and morally-charged matter of sexual relations, discriminated in favour of the white man, at the expense of both the white women and the Africans. "Surely we can show our superiority by at least insisting on equal justice," argued one MLC.[84]

Once again, in this context, the settlers voiced their fears about educated Africans, a fact which attests to their sense of insecurity. In 1921, some MLC's reported that Africans were closely following the debates in the House. They asserted that Africans were already angered by the imbalance in the law, (whereby white women were protected from sexual contact with African men while African women remained vulnerable to sexual assaults by white men,) and claimed that Africans would resent this inequality to an

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[83] Memo on Miscegenation by W.R. Benjies, presented to the Executive, July 1929, Minute Book of Annual General Meetings, WO 5/4/4, NAZ; WO 5/1/1/3 (1931), 15-6, NAZ. One author notes that white men's pronouncements in public on this subject were more important than the practices which they engaged in in private. Vambe, Zimbabwe, 180.

[84] BSAC, Debates (1921), 512. See also BSAC, Debates (1921), 471, 473, 474, 503-4, 513-4, 1227, 1231.

even greater extent as they became more educated and were better equipped to demand justice.[85]

These worries appear to have been justified. In 1924, the Rhodesian Bantu Voters Association, an African political organisation, published a manifesto which articulated African resentment at the hypocrisy of European attacks on African morals in relation to alleged black peril offences. They also expressed their anger at the unjust legal situation which placed white men in a privileged position, freeing them from any financial responsibility for their concubines or their children.

The Rhodesian Bantu Voters Association pointed out that the settlers had little basis for claims of moral superiority when European men were so clearly not fulfilling their duties to either their native 'wives' or their coloured children, neither providing economically for their support nor for their education. It is interesting to note that the attack was made in terms to which the settlers would have been especially sensitive.

> Is it then justice to have one-sided laws? As the Government knows that the natives are not getting more than one pound a month as their wages, can they support these fatherless children without demanding more money so as to educate these children? We should not mind the Europeans marrying our native sisters so that they become our legal brother-in-law. It is a painful sight to see our poor sisters are being kept as temporal wives, without a claim. Good example is expected from long, long civilised Nation, especially the

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[85] BSAC, Debates (1921), 503, 512.

> Great Britons, the lovers of justice and liberty to all her inferior and hopeless subjects.[86]

While the simple physical contact between white and black was thought, by the whites, to lower their standing, such relations also carried the threat of producing progeny which were likely to constitute a future political problem. As early as 1911 the white settlers expressed worry about the possible social and political repercussions for white community of the growth of a coloured population. The Native Affairs committee suggested that the problem of miscegenation could be solved, in part, by settling the status of the offspring of such unions. It recommended that the coloured offspring of unions between white men and black women be considered native.[87]

Indeed, the need to determine the social status of such children constituted a pressing worry for the settlers by 1921. Because such children were half-white there was a feeling that they were deserving of a certain degree of care not extended to the Africans, but because they were half-black they were ultimately not acceptable as members of the white community.[88] The growth of a coloured population

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[86] Minutes and Resolutions of the Rhodesian Bantu Voters' Association, 14 July 1924, S 84/A/260, quoted in Ranger, African Voice, 101.

[87] Rhodesia Herald, 2/6/11, article by Gertrude Page; and Report by the Conference of Superintendents of Natives, Native Affairs, 49.

[88] For comments on this subject see Kennedy, Islands, 176-7.

was seen as, "a distinct menace," and by 1921 there was a consensus among the legislators that no sacrifice was too great to save Rhodesia from 'the evil' of mixed blood.[89]

There were a limited number who felt that such a group represented a direct threat to the white settlers, since, "...they [the coloured] would supply the brains and the native races would supply the muscle and the numbers for our overthrow."[90] There was, however, generally, an assessment that the coloured children of liasons between black and white were a pathetic group, rather than an immediately dangerous one.

Many, particularly by the late 1920's felt that the coloured children were unjustly suffering for the sins of their fathers. As the president of the Women's Institutes of Southern Rhodesia put it, all felt a need to remedy 'the grievous wrong' which had been done to the coloured offspring of such liasons.[91] For, they were a group that was said to be despised and ostracised by all others, rejected by white and black as well as by those South African coloured who were born out of legitimate unions. A number of MLCs told moving stories, based on their own experience, of the kinds of discrimination which was faced

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[89] BSAC, Debates (1916), 94; and BSAC, Debates (1921), 513, 518.

[90] BSAC, Debates (1921), 509.

[91] WO 5/4/2, NAZ.

by such coloured children.[92]

It was the question of how to deal with the coloured offspring of unions between white men and black women which absorbed most of the attention when the white women once more brought a resolution on miscegenation before the legislature in 1930. They called on the Government, in very muted terms, to "... take into consideration the advisability ..." of passing legislation similar to that which had been passed in South Africa, where in 1927, legislation was passed prohibiting all illicit sexual intercourse between partners of different races.

The previous decade had seen a dramatic increase of 400 people in a coloured population which was estimated throughout these three decades to hover at around 2,000.[93] During the debate the Prime Minister expressed his concern about the possible effects of the growth of a dissolute, because fatherless, coloured population.

Two different solutions to the problem were suggested. The first, which had originally been proposed during the 1921 debate on the subject, at which time it drew little positive response, was that white fathers be made responsible for the material and educational needs of their coloured offspring. It was this option which the Prime Minister supported, expressing the view that such a measure

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[92] BSAC, Debates (1921), 505, 507, 508, 513, 1227.

[93] Kennedy, Islands, 241 n. 25.

would prove a sufficient deterrent to such liasons and would preclude the need for more stringent regulations.[94]

It was a solution which was also endorsed by some members of the W.I. The author of a study on miscegenation argued that concubinage could best be discouraged by imposing a fine on white men for the birth of all coloured children, thereby making it as expensive to keep an African 'wife' as it would be to keep a European one. She noted that the existing legislation was sufficient to force white men to look after their coloured offspring, and that it would simply be necessary for private individuals or a voluntary agency to set the process in motion.[95]

The second suggestion which was deemed to go even farther in the way of social legislation, and which was therefore more suspect, was to register the birth of all coloured children borne out of liasons between European men and African women. It was this one which was eventually adopted. In 1931 an ordinance was passed making African mothers and village headmen responsible for the registration of coloured children born out of sexual unions between black women and white men. Very few did so.

The women's primary motivation for calling for legislation in this area, however, appears to have been out of a desire to see legal equality between white men and

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[94] BSAC, Debates (1921), 1228.

[95] WO 5/1/1/3 (1931), 19, NAZ.

women. According to the W.I., it was "the principle of sex equality" which largely lay behind white women's demands for anti-miscegenation legislation.[96] Certainly, it was this aspect of the matter to which white male legislators reacted most strongly.

It was in 1921 that they made their most concerted attempt to have legislation passed. Prompted by a petition signed by over 1,600 women, or half the number on the voter's roll, a fact not lost on the legislators, the Legislative Council of Southern Rhodesia embarked on a lengthy and heated debate on a motion to prohibit illicit intercourse between white men and black women.[97] The resolution expressed the view that conditions in the Territory made it imperative that legislation be passed to deal with this matter. It further drew attention to existing inequalities in the law whereby illicit intercourse between white women and black men was punishable, while the reverse was not.

It did not pass. Instead, it was replaced by an amended version which made no mention of equality for white women or restrictions to the sexual freedom of white men, but called simply for a committee to investigate the matter. There is no indication that such a committee was ever formed.

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[96] WO 5/1/1/3 (1931), 15, NAZ.

[97] BSAC, Debates (1921), 470.

The fact that white women were calling for change in the name of equality was profoundly disturbing to the vast majority of the legislators. Many talked about the link between white women's recent enfranchisement and concomitant demands for legal equality.[98] While some welcomed the resolution as a sign of the positive benefits to be gained from women's suffrage, there was at least an equal number of MLC's who saw it as the unhappy consequence of treating women as their equals.[99]

One MLC explained that he would have supported the resolution, had it not been for the final sentence, the one referring to the legal inequalities between white men and woman in this area. Another, the only woman on the Council, expressed her outright opposition to equality in this area, claiming that there were times when women needed not equality, but a privileged position. Yet, a third, using the most convoluted logic, set out to demonstrate that the existing imbalance in the law was, in fact, a tribute to white women and a sign that the men put their women on a pedestal. In his estimation, "... it showed that they

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[98] White women in Southern Rhodesia were enfranchised in 1919, partly because of the pressure which they put on the Legislative Council (a petition signed by over 2,000 men and women was presented to the Legislative Council in 1918), and partly because legislators saw the advantage of increasing the number of votes which Rhodesians would have in a possible union with South Africa. See BSAC, Debates (1918), 310, 427-435.

[99] BSAC, Debates (1921) 513, 1226.

recognised their superior purity and their superior status over the men."[100]

There was a consensus among those who spoke up on the matter that the women already had the means to remedy the evil, since they could invoke the public censure of those who were guilty of the crime. This was one of the main themes in all discussions on the subject, and attests to deeply-rooted opinions about white women's powers of moral suasion, as well as to the belief that the primary role of women lay in exercising these powers in an informal fashion for the betterment of the whole community.

The views which many expressed about the power of public opinion as a method of discouraging such behaviour can therefore be interpreted as a rejection both of white women's bid for legal equality in this area, and of their attempts to change their roles in society. Those who endorsed the use of public pressure as the best method of dealing with the problem, were effectively simply arguing for the maintenance of the <u>status quo</u>. As one MLC put it, speaking for most of his colleagues, it was sufficient for women to oppose 'the evil', for the evil to disappear.[101]

The main effect of white women's prohibitory powers seemed to lie in their ability to isolate and socially

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[100] BSAC, <u>Debates</u> (1921), 1230, 522, 512.

[101] BSAC, <u>Debates</u> (1921), 1226. See also BSAC, <u>Debates</u> (1921), 515, 527-8, 1228.

ostracise those of whom they disapproved. A representative of the W.I. who was in favour of the use of non-legislative methods to discourage such relationships expressed her conviction that if society were to cast out the men who were reputed to be involved in such liasons, many would refrain from such relations, "...from fear of being exiled from their own."[102]

It is clear that most of the MLC's were deeply disturbed by the resolutions which were brought before the Legislature in 1916, 1921 and 1930 calling for the prohibition of miscegenation. What was distressing to the majority was not that white women were attempting to discourage such relations, for in doing so they were simply fulfilling their traditional role as moral watchdogs of society. Rather, it was that in attempting to use legislative means to prevent miscegenation, while at the same time calling for change in the name of equality, the women were perceived to be overstepping the boundaries of their role and to be directly challenging the authority of the white men. The lengthy discussions about whether public opinion or legislation was the most effective means of dealing with the problem, and whether it was possible to legislate on what were primarily moral matters must thus be understood in the context of a larger and unspoken debate about white women's role in Rhodesian society.

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[102] WO 5/4/1, NAZ.

CONCLUSION

It was only in the mid-1930s that public discussion of inter racial sex lessened, though it never entirely disappeared as long as the whites remained in power. Having by then set in place a barrage of legislation dealing with land and labour which served to reinforce their privileged position, the white settlers had begun to feel more secure in their dominance of Rhodesian society, a feeling which was heightened by the increase in white immigration following the Second World War.

The white women of the country, who had been unsuccessful in achieving their aims during earlier debates on the subject, however, continued to use public debate about anti-miscegenation legislation to pressure for change. The behaviour of the R.A.F. pilots stationed in Rhodesia during the Second World War, who took up with African or coloured women, "...stimulated vigorous efforts to educate the newcomers to the proper standards of behaviour."[1]

The last debate on this subject occurred in 1957, when Garfield Todd faced strong pressure from women's groups in the country to pass an ordinance prohibiting sexual intercourse between European men and African women. He proclaimed his opposition to such legislation, suggesting

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[1] Kennedy, Islands, 179. See also Blake, A History, 234.

instead that the existing ordinances which regulated sexual contact between white women and black men be repealed. The issue became central to the leadership contest in the country at this time. So unpopular was Todd's position that it contributed to his losing the election, and it was left to his successor, the far more conservative Sir Edgar Whitehead, to repeal the existing immorality laws very shortly thereafter.[2]

A number of questions remain unanswered.

At this point it is difficult to understand the reasons behind the timing of white women's periodic pressure for legislation prohibiting sexual liasons between white men and black women, and whether such increases in pressure for legislation in this area were related to an increase in the number of liasons or to some other factor. It is also impossible to be certain whether the majority of those women who signed the petitions calling for such legislation were as conscious of challenging male authority in the name of equality for white women as were the members of the Rhodesian Women's League.

There is also a need for further investigation into the black peril. I am dubious about the basis upon which differing authors have identified black peril scares during specific years, since there is some discrepancy from one work to another. Moreover, while admitting that European

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[2] Blake, A History, 301-2; Vambe, Zimbabwe, 110.

women's fears of African men which were encouraged by white society were probably exaggerated, some white women undoubtedly were raped, and it is not unlikely that some at least were raped by African men.

As is generally the case, it has been easier for me to find out about male attitudes towards the black peril and miscegenation than it has been to uncover traces of female opinions on these matters. The written information on the subject also comes almost entirely from the mouths of the white settlers, though there are rare instances where African men's views on these matters came to be recorded, initially by the white representatives of the Native Affairs Department, and later by the African men themselves. There is still a large gap to be filled in our understanding of the ramifications of the regulation of inter-racial sexual intercourse since at this time there is no information available about African women's attitudes towards, and experience of, such relationships. It is to be hoped that this lacuna will soon be filled.

A closer examination of the white reactions to inter-racial sex thus reveals that often, under the guise of public debate on this subject, other and quite different matters were being addressed which were of concern to the community as a whole, or to one group within the society. All were related to questions of social control. Thus, the public discussion about inter-racial sex provided one of the

venues where the settlers could, obliquely, express their insecurities about their small numbers, and their tenuous political and economic situation; protest British interference in local political affairs; and fight for changing visions of appropriate gender roles.

While discussions about inter-racial sex offered the settlers an opportunity to vent their anger, or pressure for change on a variety of issues, the legal regulation of such intercourse was instrumental in reinforcing the dominance of white over black, and of male over female. The regulation of inter-racial sexual intercourse thus contributed to creating a society controlled by white men.

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