

## Review

# White power, white desire: Miscegenation in Southern Rhodesia, Zimbabwe

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While European patterns of miscegenation in colonial situations tended to be influenced by the demographic composition of the population, and in particular the proportion of non-whites and the ratio of white women to white men, there are other factors that need more emphasis. First, miscegenation was used to control and dominate the colonised peoples, and second miscegenation itself can be looked at as proof of the white man's desire and sexual appetite for the black woman. In the colonial situation, black women sat at the focal point where two exceptionally powerful and prevalent systems of oppression come together – race and gender. The dynamics between race, sexuality, class and gender cannot be overstated. It is therefore plausible to argue that European men were prone to have sex with black women, not only from a shortage of white women, but also from the need to exercise power and authority as well as to satisfy their sexual desires for black women. The desire for domination and the desire for 'otherness', propelled by the sexual attractiveness of black women was at the centre of the white man's obsession with sexuality, fertility and hybridity. But while European men sexually abused black women, they denied African men access to white women by legal means. This, they did under the guise of patriarchal tenets of 'ownership' of women and children and the old insecure feeling that white women might, if granted equality sexually prefer black men. This paper therefore makes two propositions about miscegenation in Southern Rhodesia (Zimbabwe). First, European men needed miscegenation to control, dominate and reinforce and sustain white domination and black subordination; and second, miscegenation itself was a testimony to the fact that white men saw black women as sexually desirable and attractive. Using the qualitative descriptive analytical approach, archival and secondary sources are interwoven to bring to the fore the said propositions.

**Key words:** Miscegenation, matrix of domination, sex, desire, intersectionality, white women, black women, white men, black men, black peril.

## INTRODUCTION

In colonial Africa, particularly Southern Rhodesia and South Africa, the central division of all societies was racial. Those who wore the uniform of the white skin wore it with inherent power, authority and privilege. One clear manifestation of this was through the regulation and control of sex between black men and white women (Gray, 1960; Keegan, 2001; Mason, 1970; Rogers and Frantz, 1962; Schmidt, 1996; Sollors, 1997). Patricia Hill Collins usefully deploys intersectionality theory and the matrix of domination to explain the division of society in any colonial situation. Intersectionality refers to particular forms of intersecting oppressions such as race, gender,

sexuality, social class, ethnicity, nation and age. Matrix of domination refers to how these intersecting oppressions are actually organised – the overall organisation of power in society ([www.uk.sagepub.com/upm-data/13299\\_Chapter\\_16\\_Web\\_Byte-Patricia-Hill\\_Collins.pdf](http://www.uk.sagepub.com/upm-data/13299_Chapter_16_Web_Byte-Patricia-Hill_Collins.pdf)). People's positions in the matrix impact their life experiences, opportunities and resources available to them. As the Rubic's Cube amply demonstrates, people can be in positions of privilege and oppression at the same time, for example, in colonial situations, a black man could have privilege as a male but was also oppressed because of his race. In addition,

it was possible to be in the matrix because of some modifiable social identity such as class and education. However, other social identities such as race and sexual orientation could not change. For that reason, people will forever remain impacted by these unalterable social identities. The regulation of sex in Southern Rhodesia by the white patriarchal and colonial racial society in the early colonial era clearly bears out this matrix of domination. As Lusane (2004) writes with reference to Afro-Germans:

While white men could freely exercise sexual power over white and black women, and racial power over black men, white women were circumscribed to exhibit only racial power, still a very significant force nevertheless. Black men, trumped by the racial power of white women and the totalizing power of white men, were then left with only a limited gender power whose boundaries were thrown over the political and social spaces of black women. Thus, black women were doubly vulnerable due not only to the direct assault upon their physical and psychological being by white men, black men, and white women, but also to the explanatory race-sex discourse that then justified their exclusion, marginalization, and oppression in the first instance.

In Southern Africa, Southern Rhodesia (Zimbabwe) and South Africa in particular, colonial governments criminalised, through legislation, sex between black men and white women, while white males were exempted from such restrictions and tended to abuse black women with impunity (National Archives of Zimbabwe, N3/27/5; McCulloch, 1999; Mushonga, 2008; Pape, 1990; Schmidt, 1996; Sollors, 1997). Thus white males, while pretending to despise African women whom they referred to as 'stinking Kaffir' women, usually satisfied their sexual fantasies with black women under cover of 'darkness'. However, despite attempts to regulate sex between black men and white women, this did not stop illicit sexual relations between the two groups. Throughout the colonial period, white women had sexual relations with black men, with some white housewives, driven by both desire and an appetite for the exotic and wild (jungle fever), even blackmailing their black 'house-boys' into having sexual liaisons with them (National Archives of Zimbabwe, 1926: S1227/2). White housewives' blackmailing tactics included threats of concocted 'rape' charges against their male domestic servants.

Emphasising the issue of control, domination and conquest, on the one hand, and covert but insistent obsession with sexuality, fertility, hybridity and miscegenation, on the other hand, the paper argues that white men were not only prone to have sexual relations

with black women from any shortage of white women, but from a happy combination of both. Miscegenation in Southern Rhodesia and South Africa was located at the intersection of race, sexuality, class and gender. Intersectionality theory shows that notions of inferior and superior, socially constructed identities, intersect in peoples' lives to place them in positions of privilege or oppression in the social hierarchy ([www.socialpsychology.org/action/pdf/2012/intersect-handout.pdf](http://www.socialpsychology.org/action/pdf/2012/intersect-handout.pdf)). Even white women and children exercised racial power and control over African men and women. A white child did not need a gun to take him or her to the front of a queue in a shop.

This paper is organised around four sections. The first section gives some introductory background to issues surrounding race and sexuality in colonial situations. The second contextualises race and sex matters. The third talks to encounters between black and white and the rampant sex between white men and black women, while the last section grapples with how the white society exercised patriarchal, racial and colonial power at the same time.

## **RACIAL THEORY AND THE MASTER TABOO OF THE WHITE SOCIETY**

Historically, the fear of black men as sexual partners has its roots in slavery. The first anti-miscegenation law, barring marriage between whites and blacks, was passed in Maryland in 1661, and by the 19<sup>th</sup> century, such laws had been enacted in most Southern states. In Southern Africa, the first anti-miscegenation law was passed in South Africa in 1903, with Southern Rhodesia following suit in the same year.

The word miscegenation was invented in 1864 in an anonymous pamphlet published in London and New York entitled *Miscegenation: The Theory of the Blending of Races Applied to the American White Man and Negro*. Until then, the word that was used was 'amalgamation'. Since 1864, miscegenation came to be seen as a dilution of 'pure racial stocks' and the decline of white civilisation, resulting in the production of polymorphously perverse people who are white but not quite, derogatorily known as 'hybrids', 'mongrels', 'Coloureds', 'half-castes', 'mulattos', 'creoles' etc. Miscegenation was therefore seen as a phenomenon of being degraded from a civilised condition to a decivilised condition, with South America being used as an example of degenerative results of racial hybridization. Long, quoted in Young (1995) writes:

Let any man turn his eyes to the Spanish American dominions, and behold what a vicious, brutal, and degenerate breed of mongrels has been produced, between Spaniards, Blacks, Indians, and their mixed progeny.

According to Young (1995), racial theory sought to keep races apart forever and yet “transmutes into expressions of the clandestine, furtive forms of what can be called ‘colonial desire’; a covert but insistent obsession with transgressive, interracial sex, hybridity and miscegenation”. Young goes on to say that debates about theories of race in the 19<sup>th</sup> century, by settling on the possibility or impossibility of hybridity, focused “explicitly on the issue of sexual unions between whites and blacks” and arrives at the conclusion that theories of race were thus covert theories of desire.

The master taboo of the white society was the intimacy between a black man and a white female. “Our women are at the mercy of the Negroes. For the sexual potency of the Negro is hallucinating. ...God knows how they make love”, writes Fanon (1967, 1986) in a study of the black psyche in a white world. Fanon’s clinical study, appropriately dubbed *Black Skin, White Masks*, tries to show the “...insatiable fear and desire for the Negro” (Bhabha, in Fanon, 1986). This was the master taboo of the white society. Therefore white men could not entertain the thought of a black man, or Negro as he was called in America, ‘messing’ or in sexual embrace with a white woman. The white man had much to lose psychologically if he were to permit the black man access to the white woman.

The white rulers of Africa had a central assumption and paranoid fantasy that was endlessly repeated - the uncontrollable sexual drive of the non-white races and their limitless fertility. Nineteenth century theories of race were also about the fascination with people having endless, illicit inter-racial sex. Consequently, the sexuality of the black, both male and female, was seen as an icon of deviant sexuality. Blacks were seen as having lascivious, uncontrolled and primitive ape-like sexual desire to a point whereby “this animal-like sexual appetite went as far as to lead black women to copulate with apes”, postulates Gilman (1992). Seen in that light, black bodies came to embody evil and bestiality. For that reason, black sexuality, and in particular black male hypersexuality was seen as a threat to white femininity to the point where it was deemed necessary to regulate it (South Africa regulated sex between whites and non-whites through the Immorality and Indecency Suppression Act 1903, 1927, 1950 and 1957 while Southern Rhodesia did so through the Immorality and Indecency Suppression Act 1903). At the same time, black women were stereotyped as slaves to their sexual desire, allaying any guilt a white man/rapist might feel for taking advantage of a truly defenceless black woman. African women represented to the white man all that was carnal - the embodiment of lust and animal sexuality. Schmidt (1996) quotes one Rhodesian official as writing to the Rhodesian Herald newspaper in 1926, expressing the view that African women “have more of the animal about them in sex matters and [that] they have not the

restraint and control that white women have”. However, the attempt to control black fertility and sexuality, argue Pajaczowska and Young (1992), was in itself a reflection of whites’ attempts to regulate their own sexuality according to the socio-economic and sexual exchanges of the time. It was a way of maintaining the social distance between the colonizers and the colonized. Discouraging or preventing or refusing to miscegenate was one sure way to maintain the European social system because to do so meant giving equality to the exploited.

### **BLACK-WHITE ENCOUNTERS IN SOUTHERN RHODESIA AND THE DESIRING MACHINE**

Desire can be defined as a longing for something that one does not have - a voraciousness for an absent thing or person. Kohn (1998) says that it is in “the insecurity, the unsure imagination of the unknown, that the intensity of desire is born”. If this is what was at the heart of black-white sexual relations, then the argument that European patterns of miscegenation tended to be influenced by the demographic composition of the population, and in particular, the proportion of non-whites and the ratio of white women to white men is not convincing (R. S. Roberts, ‘The Settlers’, *Rhodesiana*, vol. 39, 1978; G. J. Bender, *Angola Under the Portuguese: The Myth and Reality*, University of California Press, Berkeley, 1978; C. A. Rogers and C. Frantz, *Racial Themes in Southern Rhodesia: Attitudes and Behaviour of the White Population*, Yale University Press, New Haven, 1962; P. Mason. *Race Relations*, Oxford University Press, London, 1970 have all associated European patterns of miscegenation with the demographic composition of the population, and in particular, the proportion of non-whites and the ratio of white women to white men). If the figures given by Bender for the sex ratio of whites in Southern Rhodesia from 1901 to 1961 are anything to go by, then the argument that white men made sexual arrangements with black women due to the shortage of white women becomes even less convincing (Mandaza, 1997). Even Roberts (1978) admits that the high Coloured population growth since 1901 was not due to immigration but due to the fact that there was rampant sex between white men and black women, and that this continued well into the 1940s. What Roberts does not emphasise here is the white man’s sexual fantasies and drives. Table 1 shows Southern Rhodesia’s white male/female sex ratio per every 100 females between 1901 and 1961 and the Coloured population as per the 1956 Census.

Table 1 also shows that there was a steady decline in the white sex ratio between 1901 and 1936 and a large Coloured population as per the 1956 population census. The decline over the years, in the white sex ratio and the large Coloured population is attributable, it seems, to

**Table 1.** Southern Rhodesia's white population sex ratio 1901-1936 and Southern Rhodesia's Coloured population as per the 1956 Census.

Year	Male/Female	Race of father	Race of mother					Total
			White	Coloured	Asian	African	Not stated	
1901	278/100							
1904	246/100	White	-	487	10	1 033	1	1 531
1911	194/100	Coloured	48	4 869	100	623	42	5 682
1921	130/100	Asian	9	350	-	181	6	546
1926	126/100	African	11	42	2	-	-	55
1931	120/100	Not Stated	1	78	1	9	176	265
1936	116/100	Total	69	5 826	113	1 846	225	8 079

Source: I. Mandaza, *Race, Colour and Class*, p. 149 and 156.

rampant sexual intercourse between white men and black women (Mandaza, 1997). This probably shows that colonial encounters and colonialism were always locked into the machine of desire. The sexual conquest along with territorial conquest was an essential component of the colonial project. Pajaczkowska and Young (1992) observes that in the West Indies, British men were:

all too prone to make unions with black women ... not from any shortage of white women ... nor even from the supposed burdens and expenses of marriage, but from the sexual attractiveness of black women.

Thus from the earliest encounters between Europeans and 'Others' right to the present, sexual anxieties and desires manifested themselves in an "endless series of speculations, projections, fantasies and crimes...", argues Rattansi (1992). While it could be said that many of the anxieties whites had about blacks were of a sexual nature, patriarchy and racial power tended to complicate these anxieties and desires. Given the desire for the other, and the private attraction between black and white, miscegenation ultimately proved to be beyond the legitimate reach of legislation. Legislation could not deal with the strange magnetism of association.

From the onset, white men were attracted into sexual arrangements with African women despite their public refusal. In the Gwelo Native District of Southern Rhodesia alone, there were 30 'half-caste' children, otherwise known as Coloureds, whose fathers were known but who publicly refused their paternity (National Archives of Zimbabwe, 1926: S1227/3). In the Salisbury (Harare) District alone, there were 55 Europeans known to indulge in sexual intercourse with black women, resulting in 251 Coloured children of whom 158 were not acknowledged, or cared for, by their fathers (National Archives of Zimbabwe, 1930: S1227/3). Correspondence in 1928 on miscegenation also shows that there were 65 Coloured children under the age of five years, 104 between the age of five and ten, and 61 between ten and

fifteen years whose fathers were also known but who did not acknowledge such children (National Archives of Zimbabwe, 1928: S482/802/39). There were numerous complaints against such white fathers. An example is a letter directed to the office of the Law Department, the Rhodesia Coloured Society (National Archives of Zimbabwe, 1929: S1227/3):

We ask the government if the Government [sic] can help us against our fathers. Of course they don't look after us, because they know that they are natives womans [sic] they are going to have children with them... We beg the Government to put up the law against these Europeans who have native womans [sic]. The thing made [sic] us to ask is this because they still go forward making more children and leave them again, the poor native woman have to carry very [sic] hard to support these children.

In the native districts of Gwanda, Fort Rixon, Filabusi, Shabani, Belingwe, West Nicholson, Mtetengwe, Beit Bridge, and Tuli, a total of 117 Europeans were known to be cohabiting with African women (National Archives of Zimbabwe, 1930: S1227/3). Thus while calling African women 'stinking Kaffir' women, they (European men) had sex with them under cover of darkness. James (1938) wrote of the white men of San Domingo:

Neither legislation nor the growth of race prejudice could destroy the attraction of the black woman for the white man of San Domingo. It was characteristic of all classes; the rabble on the shorefront, the planter or overseer who chose a slave to pass the night with and drove her from his bed to the lash of the slave-driver next morning; a governor of the Colony, newly married from France, who was disturbed at finding himself seized with the passion for the handsomest of his four black maids.

It was therefore easy for any white man to have sexual relations with a black woman while remaining a dyed-in-the-wool racist. While the slave society of 17<sup>th</sup> Haiti cannot be compared to conditions prevailing in early 20<sup>th</sup> century Zimbabwe, the evidence does throw light on a complex of sexual encounters under conditions of domination, exploitation, colonisation, patriarchy and racism. In Southern Rhodesia, that some pioneers abstained from flirtation with African women either “from fastidiousness of taste and hygiene or from moral principles, or from a happy combination of both, can be taken for granted”, argue Dotson and Dotson (1968). Therefore, the number of early European men who lived for long periods of time amongst the Africans without contracting such relationships was probably very small. Instead, as we have already seen, there were many white men who took African women as wives or concubines, not from a shortage of white women, but also from the sexual attractiveness of such women and yet they were least prepared to go public about such relations. The exercise of patriarchy, colonial and racial power always worked in their favour. There was every attempt to pretend that such relations did not exist.

Moreover, even those married according to African custom never wanted it known that they were married to African women or that they had Coloured/half-caste children and descendants. Fredrick Courtney Selous, Willi Edwards, Stephanus Cecil Rutdget Barnard, Peter Forrestall, M. E. Weale, Billy Green, William Harvey, Thomas E Rhoades, Bunting-Gray, among many others, are some of the whites who were known to be cohabiting, or married to African women, but who were not prepared to go public (Mandaza, 1997; National Archives of Zimbabwe, 1930: S1227/3). Many of these whites were traders, hunters, farmers, planters, prospectors, adventurers, provincial commissioners, native commissioners, district commissioners, or police officers by profession, among many others. Below, more light is shed about a few of these white men, beginning with Fredrick Courtney Selous.

Fredrick Courtney Selous was born in England of a Jersey couple and came to Rhodesia first as a hunter and then as a guide for the British South Africa Company (BSACo). His adventures in Africa brought him into physical contact with African women and his flirtation with them, let alone domination and exploitation, cannot be doubted. In Southern Rhodesia, he was known to have two African wives or concubines. One was an Ndebele woman by whom he had a daughter called Magdalene Selous who lived in Bulawayo for most of her life. The other was a Tswana woman known as Allis by whom he had a son called James John Selous (Mandaza, 1997; Samkange, 1964). Allis was a sister of Seretse Khama's father. It was claimed that Fredrick Fisher was F. C. Selous' Coloured son. Neither Selous nor the white settler society in which he was regarded as a hero ever

wanted it known that he had Coloured or 'half-caste' children. This is the reason why we do not find references to his half-caste children or his African or Coloured wives or concubines in the many writings by the man himself, and in the numerous accounts about him by his admirers (Notwithstanding this, it is possible to say a word or two about a one James John Selous. James John Selous was known to be the only surviving son of Frederick Courtney Selous by a Tswana woman called Allis. According to Samkange, Selous met, admired, and eloped with Allis during his frequent visits to the Royal Kraal of the Bamangwato before being brought back to the royal kraal. Selous is said to have apologized and pleaded to be allowed to marry Allis by African custom. At around the time of the Anglo-Boer War, Allis gave birth to a baby boy at Bloemfontein, South Africa, before moving to Southern Rhodesia to a farm in Essexvale (Samkange's article in Central African Drum, 1964).

Selous was not the only white man who flirted and sexually exploited African women in those early days. Stephanus Cecil Rutdger Barnard, nicknamed 'Bvekenya', was well known for his desire for African women. Barnard operated in the Nuanetsi District of Southern Rhodesia as a hunter for nearly twenty years (Cecil Barnard was born in 1886 of a Scot father and of a mother of mixed Dutch Irish origin). It was claimed that Barnard had two Shangane women. The first wife who lived near the Limpopo area had a son, Samuel Pieter, and a daughter, Maggie, with Barnard (Wright, 1972). Barnard had another son called John Piet with his second Shangane wife. John Piet was a registered taxpayer in headman Masuvanele's area and he preferred to be treated as an African and to live as an ordinary tribesman as he considered himself to be a full-blooded Shangane (Wright, 1972). John Piet also married and lived among the Shangane in the Nuanetsi District. Other whites who operated in the Nuanetsi area, and who cohabited with African women, but whom we know very little about included Pye, an Irish man, Thompson and Billy Green (Bulpin, 1967). Sounding apologetic for Barnard's desire let alone exploitation of African women, Wright (1972), wrote of him:

In taking to himself African 'wives', Bvekenya Barnard merits no criticism. There were few white women in Rhodesia those early days—especially in the Lowveld—and the bare-breasted Shangane maids, with their fine features, shining skins and well-rounded limbs, shown off to advantage by the 'miniskirts' which were virtually all they habitually wore must have appeared physically very attractive to any virile, red-bloodied man living as close to nature as did Bvekenya. I understand he observed all the niceties of African custom and paid lobola [bride price] for his wives.

Wright's apology, and to some extent his justification is typical stereotyping of black women who were often seen as sexual fetishes and desirable objects, clothed in the exotic aura of sexuality associated with the orient (Sackur, 1992). Black women were seen as passive objects of the white man's sexual gratification. It was that desire for otherness, an obsession with sexuality that drove white men to sexual relations with black women. However, readers should not lose sight of the fact that these men were dominating African women from the privileged position of colonial masters as the last section of this paper attempts to show.

Peter Forrestall, nicknamed 'Ndambakuwa' by the local Africans in the Chibi District in Southern Rhodesia, and M. E. Weale, Native Commissioner for Chirimuhanzu, are other whites who had married African women according to African custom (Beach, 1986). As Beach (1986) has shown, NC Chirimuhanzu first married Chinyama's daughter of the Chirimuhanzu area before being transferred to Chibi District where he again married in the Musipambi house. Mandaza (1997) says that police officers, too many to mention, also had African women as wives, and Mandaza himself believes to be a direct descendant from this crop of officials and believes that his own maternal grandfather, Vivian Kelly, was at first a white settler policeman and soldier who subsequently became a farmer near Marondera, a small town 74 km east of Salisbury, the then capital city of Southern Rhodesia. It should be stated here that while some of these unions may have been conducted in full view of the public, they were publicly condemned but secretly tolerated. And some of these relationships tended to reflect political alliances borne of patriarchy as both sides offered alliance with a woman as the content of a bargain between political positions. The African woman became a commodity to both parties. "There have been suggestions that most European and Indian males who married the daughters of chiefs, did so with a view to set their sights on a mining or hunting concession or even permanent residence in the area" writes Mandaza (1997). Thus while these cases where white men decided to marry according to African custom may not properly qualify to be described as part of the sexual fantasies and desires, but they still demonstrate how white men flirted with African women.

Many of those whites who married by African custom, and had many 'half-caste' children, never wanted it known that they had African women or Coloured children. Every attempt was made to keep them secret as such unions were regarded as undesirable, but it was not possible to keep such unions completely secret. The Rhodesian white society frowned at whites who fraternized and tended to live 'cheek and jowl' with blacks, seeing them as 'disorderly whites' who were letting down other whites by associating in a familiar manner with 'natives', let alone publicly marrying black

women (In 1934, W. J. Ash, a white man, was declared a prohibited immigrant for merely applying to marry an African woman (National Archives of Zimbabwe, File S1542/M7/1).

However, Arthur Sydney Robinson, a general dealer and trader in Ndanga, in the Victoria Electoral District (VED) between 1916 and 1944, was the only known exception during the early colonial period as he married an African woman according to Christian or civil rights. Robinson married Mary Sanderai Mbevai in 1920 in church after banns before J. R. Roux representing the Dutch Reformed Church as the marriage officer, and du Toit and Mrs R. M. Roux as witnesses. The marriage between Arthur Sidney Robinson and Mary Sanderai Mbevai on 20 October, 1920 at Jichidza Mission in the parish of Victoria in the District of Ndanga is one of the earliest and first known involving a white man and an African woman in Southern Rhodesia, a marriage that lasted forty years. One outstanding feature of the marriage worth mentioning is that it produced ten children. The names of the children were Nelly (died in infancy), Rose Sanders, William Robinson, John Robinson, Margaret Wolfenden, Reginald Robinson, Jessie Manuel, Peter Robinson, and Thomas Robinson (died in infancy) (National Archives of Zimbabwe, N3/27/5, A. S. Robinson, Marriage to Native Woman, 1920). As Mandaza (1997) points out, despite attempts by white settlers and colonialists to "whitewash the history of miscegenation, genuine relationships did constitute the basis of a number of inter-racial unions before the full assertion of settler colonialism" in Southern Rhodesia.

There were also several white women who were also driven into sexual relations with black men for purposes of satisfying their desire and curiosity despite the fact that such relations were prohibited by law. Largely, such white women were seen by the Rhodesian authorities, particularly the patriarchal white male society as being driven into such "illicit satisfaction of sexual desire due to the unbalanced curiosity and hysterical wish to experience comparative sexual relationship" (National Archives of Zimbabwe, 1926: S1227/2). As the theory of intersectionality demonstrates, these women used their privileged positions and racial power to sexually exploit black men.

Between 1899 and 1914, there were 46 such recorded cases. According to Rhodesian authorities as stated in the archival record, the first case took place in 1905 and involved the wife of a well-known public individual in Southern Rhodesia. Briefly, the case was as follows:

A request was made to the Police authorities to obtain for the lady in question 'an exceptionally' clean Portuguese native – one used to housework and who always wore white limbo'. A boy was found and sent to the applicant. The

following morning the native came to the Police in a very excited state, stating 'the lady called him from the dining room to her bedroom and instructed him to put a bath in the room. She was still in her night clothes. He took the bath and water into the room and as he was about to leave she closed, locked and bolted the door, stripped nude and got into the bath. The native says he requested to be allowed to leave the room but she told him he would have to remain, wash her back and then dry her. Though frightened this native stated that he remained in the room, washed and dried her, then at her request had sexual intercourse with her (National Archives of Zimbabwe, 1926: S1227/2).

According to the authorities, the lady in question was also linked to the suicide case of a 'native cook-boy' in 1908. The 'native cook boy committed suicide because the lady in question would never allow him to leave the house' (National Archives of Zimbabwe, 1926: S1227/2). While the sexual link may be difficult to establish, what is clear here is the exercise of class and racial power by the woman in question.

In another case, in the later part of 1911, a married white woman, in the absence of her husband, called her house-boy to her bedroom, 'Kafir come here. You do to me the same as your boss does', ordered the woman, exposing her breasts and consequently forcing the house-boy to have sex with her. Immediately after sex, the house-boy reported the case to the police, and when the police visited the house, they found the woman naked (National Archives of Zimbabwe, 1926: S1227/2). Furthermore, in 1913, in what is classified as cases 5 and 6, it is reported in case 5 that a native of 18 years was in the habit of going into the bedroom of his mistress upon her instructions to perform sexual intercourse with her, while in case 6 it is reported that medical examinations of two young white girls aged 17 and 14 showed that complete and partial penetration had taken place respectively as the two were in the habit of admitting a 'Cape colonial native' into their bedroom in the middle of the night (National Archives of Zimbabwe, 1926: S1227/2). The elder white girl later confessed to 'dearly loving the native boy'.

The examples above and many more seem to point to the dialectic of attraction and repulsion as British colonial officials were caught in the push and pull of an irreconcilable conflict between desire and aversion for inter-racial sexual union, coupled with the insatiable quest for control, domination and exploitation. The situation that was obtaining in Southern Rhodesia was one of the pretence of separation when there was rampant sex between white men and black women, and between black men and white women or girls. But there

was also a complex of sexual encounters related to patriarchy, colonialism and racism.

## MISCEGENATION AND WHITE PATRIARCHAL POWER IN SOUTHERN RHODESIA

The Rhodesian colonial society used racist sexual fears and the politics of the body to control the lives of both its citizens and subjects. McCulloch (1999: <http://www.indiana.edu/~inpress/books/0-253-33728-3.shtml>) shows that from 1902 to the 1930s, Zimbabwe was swept by a series of panics known by the name 'black peril' (In the Rhodesian context, 'black peril' was defined as the actual commission of rape, or as an assault on white females with intent to commit rape, or as indecent assaults, acts, or overtures, or molestation of white females for purposes of exciting or satisfying bestial desires. For examples, J. Pape's 'Black and White: The 'Perils of Sex' in Colonial Zimbabwe'; J. McCulloch's 'Black Peril, White Virtue: Sexual Crime in Zimbabwe, 1902 to 1935'; T. Keegan's 'Gender, Degeneration and Sexual Danger: Imagining Race and Class in South Africa, ca. 1912'; J. Martens' (2002) 'Settler Homes, Manhood and 'Houseboys': an Analysis of Natal's Rape Scare of 1886'; J. Krikkler's (1995) 'Social Neurosis and Hysterical Pre-Cognition in South Africa: A Case-Study and Reflections' among many instances) and such similar panics were common and occurred in various colonial settings in Southern Africa. This perceived threat provoked a flood of legislation designed to control African male and female sexuality. The panics, argues McCulloch with reference to Southern Rhodesia, were complex happenings which encompassed a variety of issues such as miscegenation, the management of venereal disease, the politics of cohabitation and concubinage, and the construction of whiteness. In the main, these controversies were used in constructing the boundaries and bridges of race, class and gender within the context of Collins' intersectionality theory and matrix of domination thesis.

Likening the white minority people of Kenya and Southern Rhodesia to 'islands of white' in a sea of black, Kennedy (1987) argues that fear of being 'exterminated' by the majority black led whites to the reconstruction of new forms of social identity, as a form of survival strategy in a new environment, despite the fact that the settlers came from diverse backgrounds. The idea/obsession with black peril was rooted in a household economy that was heavily dependent upon black male labour and a pioneer society that was numerically dominated by men. Denying African men access to white women was part of the process of establishing hegemonic control.

To do this, they turned to legislation which, in the eyes of white males, was meant to prevent sexual pandemonium between black men and white women.

The authority of the white patriarch and his own crisis of legitimacy was at the centre of the anti-miscegenation laws. The first anti-miscegenation law in Southern Rhodesia was passed in 1903. It was known as the Immorality and Indecency Suppression Act 1903. The Act made it an offence for a black man to have sexual intercourse with a white woman or girl, even with her consent. By controlling sex between white women and black men, the law also aimed at addressing the challenges to white male patriarchal power. Chapter 36 of the Act reads, "To provide for the suppression of illicit sexual intercourse between white women and natives and to suppress certain forms of immorality and acts of indecency" (National Archives of Zimbabwe, 1903: AS/21/28) while Section 3 of the Act reads:

Any white woman or girl who shall voluntarily have illicit sexual intercourse with any native shall upon conviction thereof be liable to imprisonment with or without hard labour for a period not exceeding two years (National Archives of Zimbabwe, 1903: AS/21/28),

with Section 5 reading:

Any native who has illicit sexual intercourse with a white woman or girl even with her consent shall upon conviction be liable to imprisonment with hard labour for a period not exceeding five years (National Archives of Zimbabwe, 1903: AS/21/28).

For 54 years, the Act remained in force, as white legislators turned down, on every occasion, the suggested amendment that also sought to make it an offence for white men to have sexual intercourse with black women. What has to be emphasised here is that while the law provided that African male offenders would serve a maximum prison term of five years, in reality, they served long jail terms with hard labour plus a certain number of lashes, while others were marched to the gallows (National Archives of Zimbabwe, 1916: S1227/2). Table 2 gives a detailed breakdown of selected cases of 'black peril' between 1899 and 1914 and the various sentences meted out to alleged African male offenders. As is clear from the sentences, the punishments far exceeded judicial fairness and archival sources in the National Archives of Zimbabwe contain many such cases in which African men were 'convicted' of various offences classified as 'black peril'.

On the contrary, as Table 3 shows, white female offenders did not only not serve any jail term, but instead were, upon conviction, either deported as undesirables or simply charged under the lesser harsh liquor law. Moreover, it was not uncommon to hear officials describing such females as mentally unbalanced and

therefore ignoring to take any action. In the case of female juvenile offenders, they were recommended for indentureship or apprenticeship to farmers in remote districts "instead of ... sending them to goal where they come into contact with habitual criminals" (National Archives of Zimbabwe, 1929/30: S1227/2). As Table 3 would show, compared to Table 2, for the same duration, 1899-1914, there was only one conviction under the law. White females therefore enjoyed privileged positions in the Rhodesian society and sexually exploited black men with impunity.

White anxieties and excesses in Southern Rhodesia are also recorded in newspapers, magazines, novels and other sources. In one historical novel entitled, *The Mourned One*, the author, Stanlake Samkange, one of Rhodesia's best known novelist and historian, summons his artistic mastery to capture, in fascinating fashion, the story of a black man known as *Muchemwa* (The Mourned One), who was sentenced to death by hanging in Salisbury for allegedly raping a white woman. As *Muchemwa* remonstrated in his defence:

My crime is that I was found asleep, dead drunk, on a white woman's bed. It was then said I had legally, though not actually, raped the woman. In this country, it is a crime punishable by death, for a black man, such as I am, to make love to a white woman; let alone rape her, legally or otherwise, even though the law permits a white man to use and cohabit with as many black women as he likes. Yes, this is the law of Southern Rhodesia.... This is the crime for which I stand condemned and for which I must now lose my life (Samkange, 1975).

In South Africa in 1903, for example, under the country's anti-miscegenation law, a 'native' named Jan Mkonanzi was sentenced to 15 years imprisonment plus 15 lashes by a Circuit Court at Foursmith for 'merely loving a Dutch girl, who also loved him dearly' (National Archives of Zimbabwe, S1227/3). There is no evidence as to whether or not the girl was also punished under the law although it is most likely that she was either not prosecuted or got off lightly. According to Kennedy, quoted in Schmidt (1996) the application of the death penalty and the lynching of offenders were as much symbolic assertions of settler independence from outside interference as they were practical deterrents against 'black peril' crimes. In essence, it was an assertion of nationalism and the founding of white privileged nations in Africa free from the 'interference' of the European nations.

The white rulers of Southern Rhodesia also demonstrated their fears and intolerance to miscegenation in a number of ways. For example, in 1959, Patrick James Matimba, a Rhodesian African man,



**Table 2.** Sentences on selected cases of black peril (rape, attempted rape or indecent assault) in Southern Rhodesia, 1899-1914.

Case number	Date of offence	Place of offence	Sentence
1.	10.01.1910	Bulawayo	8 years in jail with hard labour and 30 lashes
2.	22.09.1902	Bulawayo	12 years in jail with hard labour and 36 lashes
3.	2.12.1902	Bulawayo	2 accused; 10 years jail with hard labour; 25 lashes each
4.	Jan. 1906	Bulawayo	Death sentence subsequently commuted to life in prison
5.	Dec. 1906	Bulawayo	Death sentence and executed
6.	Aug. 1911	Que Que	Death sentenced and executed
7.	Dec.1912	Bulawayo	Death sentence and executed
8.	4.03.1913	Gatooma	Death sentence and executed on 14.5.1913
9.	Feb. 1914	Gatooma	Acquitted
10.	17.10.1908	Umtali	Acquitted
11.	1.10.910	Umtali	Life sentence, and later 12 years jail with hard labour
12.	29.12.1912	Umtali	12 years in jail with hard labour and 20 lashes
13.	Aug. 1911	Gatooma	5 years in jail with hard labour and 25 lashes
14.	1.09.1899	Salisbury	Acquitted
15.	8.02.1901	Salisbury	8 years in jail with hard labour and 36 lashes
16.	18.03.1902	Salisbury	10 years in jail with hard labour and 36 lashes
17.	20.09.1902	Salisbury	7 years in jail with hard labour and 25 lashes
18.	26.02.1904	Salisbury	-
19.	6.12.1907	Salisbury	7 years in jail with hard labour and 30 lashes
20.	15.02.1909	Salisbury	2 years in jail with hard labour and 25 lashes
21.	7.06.1909	Salisbury	6 years in jail with hard labour and 25 lashes
22.	20.02.1910	Salisbury	1 year in jail with hard labour and 12 lashes
23.	8.04.1910	Salisbury	Acquitted
24.	30.01.1911	Salisbury	Death sentence and executed
25.	3.05.1912	Salisbury	2 years in jail with hard labour and 20 lashes
26.	21.10.1912	Salisbury	15 years in jail with hard labour and 24 cuts
27.	11.01.1914	Salisbury	?

Source: National Archives of Zimbabwe, S1227/7 Black and White Peril in Southern Rhodesia.

was forced into exile for marrying a white woman. Very briefly, the story of Patrick Matimba is as follows. While studying law and languages at Guildford Technical College in England, Patrick Matimba met and fell in love with Adriana van Hoorn, a white female of Dutch origin. After wedding in church in Holland in 1955, the two finally decided to move to Southern Rhodesia, Patrick's country of origin and home. Their subsequent settlement in Southern Rhodesia was the first of its kind in the colony and the Federation as a whole, where such unions were not only rare but also prohibited by law. The couple had to contend with the practical question of where to live as Southern Rhodesia's Land Apportionment Act 1930 divided land into European and Non-European areas. Subsequently, their marriage and settlement in Southern Rhodesia generated public debates of an unprecedented nature in which highly emotional and exaggerated views were expressed until the pair was forced into exile in 1959 (For a detailed study of the affair, see M. Mushonga, 'The Criminalisation of Sex Between 'Black' and 'White' and Miscegenation Hullabaloo in Rhodesia:

An Analysis of the Marriage of Patrick Matimba and Adriana von Hoorn, 1955 to 1959', *Lesotho Law Journal: A Journal of Law and Development*, 2008 to 2009, Vol. 18, Number 2, pp. 435 to 456).

In the light of the Matimba case, legislators were forced to consider an amendment of the Immorality and Indecency Suppression Act (1903). Stormy debates around the issue of miscegenation followed in parliament, with the house finally voting to ban sexual relations between white men and black women, but the adopted amendment never came, and that cost Garfield Todd the Rhodesian Premiership in 1958 (It is also important to note that in the United States in 1864, the Democrats tried to use the threat of miscegenation in the 1864 elections to discredit Abraham Lincoln. Miscegenation was used as an election gimmick in order to inflame opposition by stating explicitly the alleged programme of official amalgamation between freed slaves and whites in the post abolition period. While the gimmick worked given the prominence miscegenation received in the elections, it was not good enough for Abraham Lincoln to lose the

**Table 3.** Sentences on selected cases of yellow peril (white females prostituting themselves to natives or sale/supply of liquor to natives) in Southern Rhodesia, 1899-1914.

Case number	Date of offence	Place of offence	Sentence
1	1899	Bulawayo	Not known
2	1899-1904	Bulawayo	2 years in jail
3	1899-1904	Bulawayo	Not known
4	1899-1906	Bulawayo	2 women convicted under liquor law
5	1899-1914	Bulawayo	Convicted under liquor law
6	1899-1915	Salisbury	Liquor conviction
7	1903	Bulawayo & Salisbury	Not known
8	1910	Bulawayo	Not known
9	1906-1907	Gwelo & Salisbury	Deported in 1907
10	1907-1914	Salisbury	Convicted but ordered to leave country
11	1904-1914	Salisbury	Convicted but left country for Paris
12	1913-1914	Salisbury	Not known

Source: National Archives of Zimbabwe, S1227/7 Black and White Peril in Southern Rhodesia.

1864 election). When the motion to amend the Immorality and Indecency Suppression Act was finally introduced in the Rhodesian Parliament, it read "that the Immorality and Indecency Suppression Act be amended to prohibit illicit sexual intercourse between a European male and an African woman" (Southern Rhodesia Government Legislative Debates, 1956). The motion was introduced on the 1st of May 1957, and speaker after speaker aired his views about the motion, with many members speaking against it, suggesting instead that the proper thing to do was to abolish the existing law. But, surprisingly, when the vote was finally taken in the white dominated parliament, only nine members including the Prime Minister Garfield Todd voted against the motion, and fifteen in favour, including Todd's four fellow Ministers (Holderness, 1985). It seemed a lunatic anachronism because throughout the years, from 1903 down to 1957, legislators turned down the suggested amendment on each occasion.

While on the vote of the House, the motion had been adopted, the amendment never came with the Prime Minister Mr. Todd saying that the government would study the question closely about amending the Act to include associations between African women and European men. Instead, Todd secretly amended the Act the other way round, to allow sexual intercourse and marriages between black men and white women. While the Prime Minister seemed committed to dismantling racial and gender privileges, the vote of the House shows that the majority of the white male dominated parliament was not yet ready to do so. But the activities of the Rhodesia Women's League (white only) seemed to point in the direction of equal treatment before the law (National Archives of Zimbabwe, 1929/30: S1227/3).

Reminiscing in an interview with the author in 1999, Garfield Todd had this to say:

When it came to voting, I said this was ridiculous...if you want to be correct we should do away with this law saying that no black man can have a white woman-that would be the best thing. But if you are determined to put this thing ... saying that no white man can have a black woman then I am going to vote against it because it is ridiculous, it is not sensible. Well that was the final straw in my being thrown out and of course they said all sorts of stories about me (In an interview with the author on 24 April 1999 in Bulawayo, Zimbabwe's second largest city, Garfield Todd told the author that he used to stay with a Coloured girl in his family. Many people within the vicinity confirmed this but as far as to claim that the Coloured girl was in actual fact one Todd's many Coloured children).

As Todd states, this move to secretly amend the Act to allow sexual intercourse and marriages between black men and white women was the straw that broke the camel's back, as he was thrown out of the Premiership in the forthcoming elections.

In another case, in 1962, Bernard Chidzero, a Rhodesian African male who was studying in Canada, was denied a Research Fellowship at the then University College of Rhodesia when he indicated that he was about to marry a Canadian girl whom he intended to bring with him to Southern Rhodesia (Gelfand, 1978). The same fate befell him when he applied for a lectureship position at the then Pius XII College (National University of Lesotho) in Roma in the then Basutoland Protectorate (Lesotho) (In a general discussion with David Ambrose, a retired Professor of Mathematics, on 9 November 2007 at the National University of Lesotho, Ambrose seems to remember that the Catholic Bishops of South Africa, the

responsible authority for the institution felt that it was unwise to give Bernard Chidzero a lectureship in the light of his mixed marriage).

In neighbouring Bechuanaland (Botswana), a British Protectorate, Seretse Khama, heir apparent to the Bangwato throne, was disinherited and exiled to Britain in 1950 for marrying a white woman, and was only allowed to return to Bechuanaland in 1956 as a private citizen after renouncing his claim to the throne (Parsons et al., 1995; Henderson, 1990). All these cases and many more, put together, add up to the thesis that whites in Southern Africa, and in particular white males more than females, exercised power in many ways.

## CONCLUSION

The paper has shown, through selected examples, the dialectic of attraction and repulsion, a compulsive libidinal attraction more compulsive than any other sexual attraction disavowed by an equal insistence on repulsion. Fearful of black men, the white patriarchal minority regime in Southern Rhodesia criminalised sex between black men and white women. At the same time, it catered for white men's sexual appetite by allowing them to satisfy their sex needs let alone abuse African women with impunity. British colonial officials were caught in the push and pull of an irreconcilable conflict between desire and aversion for inter-racial sexual union. The situation that was obtaining in Southern Rhodesia was one of the pretence of separation when there was rampant sex between white men and black women. Thus to argue that miscegenation was a consequence of the shortage of white women per se is to understate the white person's desire for control, domination and conquest, juxtaposed with the covert but insistent obsession with inter-racial sex, fertility and hybridity.

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