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Title: Race, Class and Gender in Proletarian Militancy: The Rand Revolt
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Race, Class and Gender in Proletarian Militancy

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There can be few more disturbing facts for socialists than the historical role played by labour - all too frequently organized labour - in entrenching racial discrimination. The evidence for this is so overwhelming, and comes from so many disparate regions, that it cannot be gainsaid. In Australia, the labour movement was central in restricting 'Asiatic and coloured labour' from trade unions, and from the country as a whole: it was, in fact, only in 1971 that the Australian Labour Party was to dispense with the 'White Australia Policy' in its platform.¹ In the United States, a similar phenomenon can be discerned. 'For most of American history,' Eric Foner writes, 'black workers were systematically excluded by most unions' while the labour movement on the West Coast was shaped by anti-Chinese prejudice.² Indeed, US labour history is marred by moments of white working class militancy which degenerated into racial outrages, as in San Francisco in 1877 and East St. Louis in 1917.³ In South Africa, meanwhile, a range of studies have explored the centrality of white labour to the consolidation of racial segregation.⁴

One major strand of the literature exploring this phenomenon explains it largely in terms of class struggle. Put crudely, white labour is seen here to be contesting the undercutting effects of Chinese and black labour in situations where capital is using such workers precisely to lower the costs of production, or to weaken the power of organized labour. This would be Bede Nairn's argument for Australian workers, or George Fredrickson's for white workers in South Africa and the United States in the early twentieth century.⁵ It is a theory which has much value, and which certainly helps to account for the particular class-cum-racial upsurge in South Africa which is the focus of this paper; it also assists in the explanation of those conflicts in the United States which are alluded to here for comparative purposes. Thus in East St. Louis in 1917, the role played by the Aluminum Ore Company in replacing unionized white workers with unorganized blacks - many of them migrants from the South - was a key factor in the genesis of the strike of 1917 which formed an important part of the background for the bloody pogrom of July 2.⁶ In Chicago in 1919, the campaign for 100% union membership in the stockyards, in conditions where most blacks were unorganized and specifically targeted by companies to be kept such, comprised at least a part of the backcloth to the murderous conflicts between black and white people which erupted in July 1919.⁷ And on the Witwatersrand goldfields in South Africa - the core case-study presented here - mineowners moving the 'colour bar' to admit unorganized and poorly-paid black workers to positions once the exclusive preserve of whites sparked the great strike of

January 1922.⁸ In March, this strike provided a tragic paradox when it was almost simultaneously elevated to the revolutionary level of insurrection against the state, and depressed to the level of a pogrom which left several black people dead.

Unquestionably, a focus upon springs of racial conflict which lie in the workplace and the labour market has a number of advantages. It draws attention to the way in which capital often structures conflicts within the labour force, while it offers a salutary warning that the narrower forms of trade unionism may accentuate the racial stratification of workers. And yet the very neatness of the theory - its location of proletarian racism in the machinations of bosses, or the 'labour aristocratic' forms of trade unionism - puts the historian on guard. After all, the machinations of capital were known well enough to workers at the time. Why did organized labour so often fail to counter capital's strategy by systematically organizing black workers, and thereby liquidating the employers' ability to utilize them as 'undercutters'?

The answer to this question appears obvious in the South African case. A colonial context placed white miners within the 'master race' from the start; moreover the very paths to the proletariat of these miners imbued many of them with the hopes of joining (in some cases rejoining) the ranks of the exploiters;⁹ further, the relatively high wages of white miners were directly related to the extremely low wages of black workers: a differential of 10 to 1 was the norm between these workers, if certain non-monetary elements provided to black workers are excluded from the calculations; finally, white miners (or 'gangers') in charge of a group of black miners engaged in ore extraction would be paid not only their basic wage, but an amount dependent upon the quantity of work done by the workers under them.¹⁰ Not surprisingly, organized white workers on the South African mines constituted a 'labour aristocracy', and their trade union strategy centred upon the demarcation of the more skilled and better-paying jobs as a white preserve - the creation, in effect, of a racial closed shop. When this was threatened in 1922, white miners came out powerfully, and then violently, to meet the threat.

But not all of the factors delineated above were operative in East St. Louis in 1917. Its white working class was not part of a colonial order; most of it was composed of unskilled groupings; moreover, elements within its labour movement recognised the tactical necessity to organise black workers, although they had failed to make decisive steps to do so before the town was convulsed by the events of July 1917.¹¹ The historian might here be tempted to argue that different tactics might have unified the workforce, perhaps prevented the terrible violence in which the labour movement was complicit. This kind of reasoning, a variant of which was actually provided after the violence by a leading American of the Left, Eugene Debs, would particularly appeal to the socialist anxious to discover a mode

of class politics which would preclude heightening racial tensions and divisions. If the East St. Louis Central Trades and Labour Union had energetically set about organising black workers, rather than protesting about the arrival of black immigrants to the city, perhaps crowds of whites would not have dispersed from first a protest, and then a place, associated with the labour movement, and commenced their indiscriminate attacks upon black people.¹²

However, tactics simply do not settle this question. For if the union strategies on the Rand in South Africa and in East St. Louis reflected white workers' tendency to wage their struggle against employers and black workers simultaneously, the same cannot be said of such strategies in Chicago at this time. There, the Stockyards' Labour Council paid due attention to the organization of black workers, and despite initial difficulties occasioned by the segregationist practices of craft affiliates, developed neighbourhood-based locals to bring black workers into the ranks of the organized. The Council engaged in a 'determined fight against prejudice among white workers' and in 'efforts to bring the two races together'. In fact, there was a not infrequent election of black shop stewards by whites. And yet, within weeks of a successful interracial rally, the South Side of Chicago was convulsed by murderous battles between blacks and whites. Even if unionized stockyard workers were not the perpetrators of this violence, it sufficed to shatter interracial solidarity on the killing floors. Racial conflict, as Barrett remarks, came to be a key factor 'leading to a fragmentation of the packinghouse workers' movement'.¹³ And this in conditions where the union strategy had specifically been crafted to counter that of the packers' studied attempt to keep the workforce divided. Quite obviously, class organization had been unable to reach the areas of mental and social life to which race and racial consciousness pertained, despite conscious efforts to overcome divisions between black and white workers. Arguably, one has to move to a set of considerations distinct from, if not independent of, class to understand why this was so.

The closer one looks at racially-inflected proletarian militancy, the clearer it becomes that it is not only a distorted form of class struggle (which it is), but that it articulates a set of specific concerns 'surplus' to purely class interests, some of which turn about gender. The importance of gender and sexuality to racial consciousness has long been noted. A recent work by Vron Ware demonstrates the centrality, within white racial and imperial ideology, of both the alleged vulnerability of white womanhood and the necessity for its defence.¹⁴ Within the set of phobias that figure prominently in white racism, there has been a particularly acute anxiety about white women's liaisons with black men. As is well known, in the South of the United States, in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, such relationships were popularly invested with extreme criminality and policed with brutality: the inter-racial amorous liaison could quite easily be judged as rape, the black

male party to it lynched.¹⁵ Even in the north - as Roberta Senechal's recent study reveals - accusations of the rape of a white woman by a black man could help to spark a 'race riot' and lynchings.¹⁶

It is when one begins to look at the class-cum-race struggles of the proletariat with such concerns in mind that they begin to take on a new significance. One only has to look more closely at the statements of white workers and their leaders to determine this, and to realize that issues of gender crucially aid the historian in delimiting racial consciousness. For part of the baggage beyond class interest carried by the white proletarian militant in cities like East St. Louis and Johannesburg, during and after the Great War, unquestionably related to the question of white womanhood. When in May 1917, delegates of the East St. Louis Central Trades and Labour Union - supported by a crowd - gathered to convey to the city council their opposition to black migration to the town, female trade unionists were among the first to arrive: 'Their presence was calculated to dramatize that white womanhood required protection from Negro criminals.' And when this crowd commenced the first of the generalized indiscriminate attacks upon black people in the city in 1917, it was acting - in part - on rumours that black people had insulted or shot white women and girls. Moreover, the fears of this time were not merely that brutality was to be meted out to white womanhood. Alois Towers, one of the local labour leaders, was to allege that black workers had boasted of an intent to seduce numerous white women when white men were conscripted for war service.¹⁷

If one turns to South Africa, one finds evidence of similar fears. Thus, in a pamphlet distributed by the white miners in 1922 in their attempt to rally the support of farmers to their cause, it was remarked that

As the Kaffirs will get higher wages when they start to do the work of white people they will also take up a certain position in society, with the result that many white girls...will enter into marriage with coloured people...¹⁸

And at the Old Apollo Hall in Germiston, a mining town on the Rand, E. S. Hendrickz, the general secretary of the white miners' union, told a crowded meeting that the employers were 'clearly trying to make this country a bastard country'.¹⁹ The fear of sexual liaisons between black men and white women conveyed by this notion should not be glossed over. For Hendrickz, an Afrikaner, would have been using the term 'bastard' in a particular way: its Afrikaans equivalent ('baster') carries distinct notions of the 'half-caste' and 'half breed'. Quite obviously, the movement of the colour bar on the mines - even in working conditions which did not bring the genders together - sparked fears of sexual unions between the races. And, as in East St. Louis, it was not just a fear of women slipping away from white men into new liaisons that was expressed. Important, too,

were allegations of insults, and molestation, of white womanhood. Hence this declaration in parliament, in March 1922, of the representative for Johannesburg's Vrededorp, a stronghold of the white working class, which had just been the site of pogrom-like attacks in which six black people had been killed:

Natives walked about Vrededorp as if the whole town belonged to them and insulted women and children...When they got to the bottom of the matter they would find that the women had been insulted and molested by the natives, and that was the reason why the public had sided with the strikers. (Voices: "What ground have you for saying that?")²⁰

It is this sexual dimension to the concerns of those supporting the Rand strike which, perhaps, helps to explain why the white strikebreakers - viewed as traitors to their race as well as to their class - could come in for not only violence, but a certain sexual humiliation. This is at least intimated in the report of the three men 'pulled out' of work in late February and 'subjected to gross indignities'. When one of these men was then 'taken to a dance' in the mining town of Springs, the maltreatment he received there would no doubt have been calculated to appeal to those engaging in an entertainment in which men and women sent coded sexual signals to one another. When William Hammond, a "shift boss" on his way to work, was abducted by a party in which women were prominent, he was not only beaten but stripped, while one of the women attacking him attempted to strike his genitals - an action which a striker present advised against.²¹

In some of the attacks, there is clearly a studied attempt to insult the manhood of the scab, and a deliberate utilization of women to drive this home. Joseph Erasmus, a miner on strike, looking out for strikebreakers at a railway station, did so with a small group of women - those who went on to participate in the attack upon the 'shift boss' mentioned above. Once the latter had been abducted, bundled into a car and driven to an open field, '[n]one of the men in the party' took part in the beating delivered to Hammond on the veld. It was the women who punched and kicked his head and then decided to strip him.²² This studied standing back by men while women delivered punishments can be viewed elsewhere. J. G. R. Devenish and Simon du Toit, two strikebreakers accompanied by their wives and escorted by mounted police, were en route to the South Vertical Shaft of the Randfontein Mine when they were halted on a bridge by a crowd, women to the fore of it. The men in the crowd were unarmed, but not so the women who turned the strikebreakers back with an evidently proficient use of hide whips and hosepipes.²³ Significantly, the men in the crowd had specifically suggested that the women deal with this particular party of strikebreakers. As one of the people turned back at the bridge was later to recall 'Men took no part - they called out continually "Leave it to the women"'. And in so doing the men clearly left the matter in capable and extremely enthusiastic hands: one woman who struck

'mercilessly' appears only to have stopped 'at times for breath'.²⁴

Women (and children) were used in another tactical capacity during the strike: as a means of hampering police operations. This was clearly done in an attack upon a strikebreaker's home where men were said to have 'put women and children in front of the police horses' prior to scaling the fence around the property.²⁵ It would appear that this kind of tactic came generally to have a place in the militants' strategy. On 18 February, two strikers detained in Newlands for kidnapping alleged scabs were rescued when commandos rushed the police station. The crowd present was described as "a mob of about 2 000 men, women and children". A policeman who requested that the two former prisoners be surrendered stated that he "was obliged to humour these people". Tact was required or bloodshed would have resulted: "and what made me particularly anxious was the fact that there were many women and children amongst the mob[,] and had we used force many of them would have been killed or badly injured". In fact, crowds bent on militant action during the strike were described, as 'a rule', 'to have [had] large numbers of women and children': 'wherever the police came into contact with these crowds, the large majority consisted of women and children mixed up with the commandoes, so it made it very difficult for the police to take drastic action...' There was 'not the slightest doubt' in the mind of a senior officer that this had been 'done deliberately'.²⁶

It would, of course, be a major error to see the white women's involvement in the Rand strike merely through the eyes of their men. Clearly, male commandos did keep women in their midst to rein the police in; and, as demonstrated earlier, men were prepared to use women in their attacks upon those breaking the strike, a tactic designed perhaps to cast aspersions upon scab manhood. Finally, a putative threat to white womanhood was a factor in male consciousness, and - for the strikers - there seemed to be a link drawn between the alteration of the industrial regime and the loss of white women to black men. However, the evidence already cited is sufficient to prove that white women participated enthusiastically - even violently - in the struggle of 1922 on their own account. Let us not forget that, in at least one of the violent attacks discussed above, a woman was actually held back by a striker from committing further and particularly humiliating violence against a strikebreaker while, in another, only physical exhaustion stayed the merciless whip-hand of a woman lashing a scab. The Rand's Deputy Commissioner of Police, who referred to a 'man...severely handled by...women' at the Wolhuter Miner on 17 February, noted that 'women began to take a very prominent part in the handling of men who had gone to work'.²⁷ Mack Fifer, who attempted to move his household possessions to mining property when he broke the strike, could testify to this. When a crowd broke through a police cordon around his home and poured into his house, a woman brandishing a knife 'continually called out "let me have the damn

scab"; another looped a belt around his neck enjoining him to "come along with me [,] we will pay you for your dirty work...as a scab"; still other women appeared with a rope and similarly invited him to join them.²⁸ Like the men, women formed their own commandos - semi-military formations - during the strike. A 'particular talent' of the women's commandos is said to have lain 'in marching to mines and abusing and punching strike breakers'. The women's commando of the town of Krugersdorp 'requested their menfolk to turn captured scabs over to them'; that of Benoni was 'greatly feared' and was 'especially prominent' in the severe beating of two detectives detained in the Workers' Hall after they had attempted to prevent a crowd from burning a strikebreaker's furniture.²⁹

The beating of the detectives points to one of the reasons for police hostility to women in Benoni. In this town, police officers knew well enough the enthusiastic violence of women, which is probably why Mary Gallagher, an arrested woman later found to be innocent of public violence, was refused water in her cell, and why the particularly reviled Detective-Sergeant Murphy of this locality abused her as a 'bloody cow', 'the bloody bastard who set his house on fire', someone 'like all the fucking men who when caught swore they were innocent. He took a bullet from his pocket,' she recalled, 'and said it would just fit the centre of my forehead as I was to be shot...'³⁰ A similarly crude response greeted the wife of 'a motor man' employed by Johannesburg tramways. She left Fordsburg before it was stormed, and returned with her husband 'to see if the house was still standing'. When a constable aggressively asked them where they were from, the woman - hard of hearing - 'went up to him and asked him if it was safe to bring the children home...The policeman then took his bayonet and pointing at her side said 'You, you b..... swine, don't you come and talk to me or I shall put a hole through you'.³¹ That the armed personnel of the state should have expressed such hatred towards women was not accidental. Aside from their participation in the illegal activities detailed above, militant women had shown their contempt for soldiers and police. On 20 February, a Fordsburg crowd confronted the police and made 'most objectionable remarks. One lady was especially conspicuous and addressed Sub-inspector Matthews as a "bastard scab".' Before the declaration of Martial Law, declared a senior officer, police were 'constantly called every name under the sun. The women used to spit on them and they were insulted and abused in every way...'³² In fact, more than cursing was engaged in, as one of the incidents delineated above suggests, and as the following evidence makes clear. When a stone felled horse-borne Sergeant Henning in Germiston, women were amongst those who proceeded to attack him. Even death could be threatened: when, during the insurrection, army officers had the misfortune of breaking down in their car in Jeppe, one of them was immediately killed, and the other wounded and captured. An eyewitness of the events recalled seeing the captured officer in the street: 'The crowd shouted out "March him up in front of

Kelly's Hotel and do the bastard in." Women as well as men were shouting like that.'³³

The manifest violence which the women perpetrated gives the lie (if it be needed) to the idea - advanced by Beatrix Campbell in an article on the British miners strike of 1984/5 - that violence 'is a peculiarly masculine characteristic'.³⁴ Extremely cruel forms of violence could be mooted by women during the Rand strike, as evidenced by the suggestion to gouge a man's eyes out, made during a discussion amongst women of what to do with a captured worker who had remained aloof from the strike.³⁵ Women in the mining town of Benoni were amongst those who brutally attacked strikebreakers in the latter half of February. The weaponry apparently used - pick handles with bicycle chains attached to them - left victims "looking like red pulp".³⁶ And nor was the violence meted out by the women only aimed at males not supporting the strike. The women who whipped the party which was halted at the bridge mentioned earlier did not omit to strike the wife of one of the men en route to work, so that one of the strikebreakers was forced to exclaim: 'Don't hit the woman, hit me!'³⁷ And this beating of the scab's wife was not a half-hearted or unsystematic affair. As her husband was later to recall: 'a lady was hitting my wife on [the] chest with [a] fist....[A woman] armed with a piece of hose pipe, was hitting my wife over [the] head and neck with the pipe'.³⁸ Elsewhere, a 'women's inquisition court' charged a striker's wife with attempting to weaken her husband's resolve to stay out. Had she been found guilty of such an offence, not only would her ration entitlement have been halted, she would have been lashed.³⁹ Adriana van Niekerk, a soldier's widow who appears not to have been greatly in favour of the strike, 'had to lay a charge against Mrs. v. d. Berg for threatening to blow up my house'.⁴⁰ Even a woman manifestly supportive of the struggle could be battered about for not behaving more militantly. Phyllis Clements, a woman who strongly supported the strike, and who was later to be sentenced to prison (or a fine) for some of her activities, attempted to prevent violence against scabs or policemen just once too often. The result: she was 'pounced upon' backstage at a Workers' Hall, 'knocked about by a crowd of women & others', and accused of being in the pay of the employers.⁴¹

Clearly, much of the women's militancy during the strike can be accounted for in terms other than racial. To a great extent, theirs were the actions of people supporting their community in a battle against an arrogant and overwhelmingly powerful grouping of employers, a grouping determined to worsen wages and conditions with the help of the armed forces of the state. Thus, in March 1922, when women arrived at the house of Gabriel Mare, a local strike leader in the town of Germiston, after a battle on the Primrose Mine - between management, mining officials and black workers on the one side, and white miners on the other - and accused him of being a "lafhart" [coward] for not calling his men out to go to Primrose for the...fight', they were not necessarily offering any view about race relations.⁴² Their

action is perfectly intelligible in terms of the class struggle. But when this has been noted, it is equally undeniable that for women the issue of race was as important as it was for white men. Even if, on the basis of the evidence already cited - of men worrying over the import of racial changes in the workplace for their access to white women - one may concur with a writer who, in a different context, sees some connection between "racism and male dominance",⁴³ one must be wary of reducing the phenomena under consideration to this. . It was perfectly possible for women to step outside their traditional role by violently attacking men, by creating commandos composed of women alone, and to be concurrently as concerned as men with preserving racial privilege. 'The strikers' wives,' writes one historian, 'were particularly Colour conscious.'⁴⁴ Too great an emphasis upon the relationship of racism to male domination will tell us little, perhaps nothing, of why women challenging elements of their everyday positions should not only not come to challenge racism but actually to reinforce it. There is even a hint in the evidence that women came to consider those who broke the strike as associated in some way with the loss of white men to women of colour: in one incident in which women were especially prominent, strike-breakers escorted home by police were described by elements within a hostile crowd as men 'living with coloured women'.⁴⁵

It is simply not sufficient merely to note the importance of issues of gender in a racial strike by male workers. While important in directing the historian to issues beyond those strictly concerned with class, so long as they are not placed within a broader explanatory framework, what do they tell us? The great advantage of a class analysis of proletarian racism is that it attempts to account for conflicts between black and white workers through a specific theory, one which hinges upon the struggle over exploitation between capital and labour, a struggle made inevitable by a prior ordering of economic rights and rightlessness by the relations of production. A mere emphasis upon the gender and sexual concerns which were undeniably present in the racial strike certainly illuminates aspects of consciousness; it doesn't necessarily explain anything. What is required is the situation of these concerns within a wider and deeper conceptualization of racial consciousness, one able to comprehend not just male fears about the loss of women to other (racially different) men, but also the fears and hopes of white women who came powerfully to support the racial strike in an industry in which they themselves were not employed. These women, after all, were explicit in accusing a prime minister of seeking 'to bring their men folk down to the level of the Kaffir and the Coloured man'.⁴⁶ And one cannot impute to such statements women's collusion in their subordination through support for an ideology linked to 'male dominance', if only because much of their most militant activity during the strike was directed against men. Indeed, women could be more insistent than the men in demanding combativeness. In Germiston, at the very moment that the strikers entered the road which led to armed confrontation, the (male)

leaders of a demonstration were found to be somewhat timid in the face of mounted police. One of these leaders was later to recall the specific role of women in the crowd in abusing them for retiring in the face of this force, the men's role being given a subordinate place.⁴⁷ Thus, during the Rand strike, women boldly stepped out of a traditional role. This was suggested even by a prosecutor, who asked a woman charged with obstructing the police: 'Don't you think that the best place for a woman is at home looking after her babies?'⁴⁸ But the combativeness and self-organization of white women entailed no critique of ideologies subordinating other (black) people in their society.

What emerges clearly from the evidence is an ideological - and, as has been demonstrated, in some cases a tactical - correspondence between white men's and women's involvement in the strike. Women supported their men in a way conventional to any major strike by male workers, and they supported strongly the key racial-ideological element of the strike as well. This point was clearly articulated when, in the midst of a women's attempt to halt the passage of strikebreakers, not only was the cry 'We are fighting for our husbands' heard, but so was 'We are fighting for a White South Africa'.⁴⁹ The term 'White South Africa' - perhaps the key expression of the strike, and one which corrupted the classical communist call for solidarity when a strikers' banner was made to read 'Workers of the World, Fight and Unite for a White South Africa'⁵⁰ - this term had a certain all-encompassing quality. And it is when one surveys other evidence from this period of working class militancy that it becomes clear that such a racial concept pertained to far more than a particular battle against capital, or to questions arising from relations between the genders. For what emerges - and this helps to explain the place of women (and the notion of womanhood) within the class-cum-racial upsurge - is that race all too often related to areas of social life beyond production: for example, to the spheres of neighbourhood and community. This fact would support Michael Omi and Howard Winant's insight, crucial for this study, and made with reference to the struggle for black rights in the United States, that race is concerned with areas 'located outside those usually associated with class struggle - [i.e. areas comprehending] culture, community...issues of "reproduction" rather than production relations'.⁵¹ Certainly, the ideology of the white proletarian militants of East St. Louis and the South African Rand, and - indeed - many of their attacks upon black people, reveal a despairing concern with a changing world beyond the workplace.

When men and women on the Rand insisted that they were fighting for a 'White South Africa', or when workers in Missouri cried that 'East St. Louis must remain a white man's town',⁵² or when a trade union leader warned his audience that if vigilance was not exercised the predominantly white mining town of Benoni would become a black ghetto (or 'native location') within five years,⁵³ they tapped into the concerns of workers not merely as producers but - powerfully - into their concerns as residents of

particular localities. Significantly, fears of having to live in racially unsegregated slums were important to the Rand's white workers at this time, as were fears relating to miscegenation.⁵⁴ What was being addressed by these fears, and by the statements provided earlier - albeit in a labyrinthine, distorting and phobic way - was the zone of reproduction, very broadly defined here as the world beyond production, the world in which people are produced, where they sustain themselves for their productive roles on a daily basis, and where workers seek their sanctuary from, and their compensations for, that which they suffer in the world in which they procure their livelihoods. Women were central to this sphere - most obviously in the labour they performed within the household, in their pivotal role within the family and community generally: the characteristic white miner's wife on the Rand in the 1920s may well have been a 'housewife'⁵⁵ - that is, a person whose entire labour and time, unlike her husband's, was spent in a social world at one remove from that of the labour process commanded by the bourgeoisie. It was women's centrality to the world beyond production, and the centrality of that world to racial consciousness, which helps to explain the place (and perhaps the militancy) of women in the racial strike.

The Rand Revolt may have been one of those moments when, as Omi and Winant write, race and class came to encompass one another. This, however, does not entail the reduction of race or racial consciousness to the status of a mere 'epiphenomenon or manifestation of class'. These writers are correct to insist upon the 'degree of autonomy' exercised by each. The distinct spheres to which racial consciousness pertains - to questions of identity, to the world of reproduction as defined above - may help to explain why the challenge to the racial order in the US constituted by the black civil rights movement served to inspire new social movements revolving around issues of gender and sexuality.⁵⁶ In regard to the Rand strike, it is precisely because racial consciousness relates - in however distorted a way - to a set of human concerns beyond the workplace, that this particular class struggle flowed along some surprising channels. Once the employers determined to use black workers to undercut the position of more organised and better paid white workers, they triggered not only class struggle, but conflicts and fears with no direct link to the battle against the employers: fears for the loss of prospective white wives (or prospective husbands), violent attacks upon black people not related to the mining industry.

On the Rand, at the end of the first week of March 1922 - that is, before the escalation of the strike into a rebellion, when still more killing took place - violent, often fatal, combats ensued between black and white people. There were certainly cases in which the conflicts could be accounted for by reference to the actions of capital. In the Germiston area, gung-ho managers were responsible for mobilizing black workers against strikers. Andries de Jager, a miner tasked to 'pull...out' strikebreakers at the Witwatersrand Mine on 6 March, made the

error, en route, of stopping to chat with a woman and her daughter at the gate to their home, presumably on mining property: 'the Battery Manager stole upon me from behind...pushed his revolver against my head and said "you bloody bastard if you move I'll blow your brains out".' The manager then detailed five Africans to surround his prisoner, and ordered 'about 30 natives armed with sticks to fall upon the commando' in the immediate vicinity, apparently to no great effect.⁵⁷ A few days later, however, managerial tactics of this kind brought great tragedy to the Germiston District. On March 8, the Primrose Mine there was the scene of a battle between white and black miners (supported by mining officials) which was carefully constructed by management. It left ten people - two strikers, and eight black miners - dead. On the morning before the affray, management officials had distributed pickhandles to black miners and deployed them around a shaft, later to be the scene of an attack upon a strikers' commando. Armed defenders of the mine also appear to have utilized black miners to facilitate their firing upon strikers. Thus a party of strikers was beckoned by mine officials only to be met by 'a shower of missiles' from the compound gate, and - 'simultaneously' - bullets from the quarter of the officials.⁵⁸

One cannot deny that at the Primrose Mine, black workers had been prepared to be deployed against white miners. Indeed, William Hobson, a local hotel proprietor who had accompanied a 'shift boss' on the mine on the fateful day, reported black workers as saying '"When the Dutchmen come we shall give them all they want" and words to that effect.' But the fact remains that this confrontation between black and white workers was engineered by management. Indeed, the mine manager and mine captain had themselves played a prominent role in arming and deploying black miners against the white workers.⁵⁹ Elsewhere, the violence or threatened violence, of whites upon blacks is explicable in terms of class struggle raised to a military plane. After the insurrection had begun in Benoni, an African 'carrying a White Flag' passed what appears to have been a rebel post on Newlands Ave. 'quite a lot'. Suspected of being a police spy, he was apprehended and came perilously close to summary execution, with insurgents talking of 'blotting him out' or 'plug[ging] him'.⁶⁰

However, if these violent acts or threats are explicable within a broad definition of class struggle, what remains notable is the large number of such acts which cannot be so explained. Consider, for example, the following. On 7 March, a Benoni striker was part of a grouping sent to collect cattle for the Distress Committee. One of their number, the striker later reported, upon coming upon 'a kaffir hut', kicked its door open 'and fired two shots into the hut with a revolver'. When one of its inhabitants ran out, further shots were fired in the direction of the fleeing person.⁶¹ It is unconvincing to describe this kind of action in narrow terms of class conflict. And it becomes well-nigh impossible so to do when one turns to the attacks upon black residents which occurred in urban or suburban

centres in the days before the insurrection broke out. Here the attacks would generally have been upon Africans not associated with the mining industry, since the characteristic black miner of this time was cut off from such centres by the closed compounds. White working class strongholds of Johannesburg saw a quite sudden explosion of anti-black violence from about March 6. Not only were Africans attacked in their midst, but the fighting was taken to Sophiatown, Western Native Township, and Newclare Coloured Township. In the suburb of Vrededorp, shooting appears to have begun on the night of March 7. On the following day, a senior C. I. D. officer could report 'unprovoked attacks by strikers on individual natives throughout the Witwatersrand'; in the suburb of Ferreiratown, a police lieutenant reported 'that things were very hot...he had managed to rescue ten natives but wanted to remove them otherwise the crowd would tear them to pieces'. There were 'very heavy' casualties reported, with Africans dying 'on the doorstep of Marshall Square'. Scores of Africans had to be held by the police for their protection. On the afternoon of 8 March, the attacks on the Rand by no means over yet, a report was handed in to the region's Deputy Commissioner of Police detailing the hospitalization of over twenty black people and the killing of five 'due to street riots'.⁶²

What were the reasons for these attacks? They cannot be explained away in the tidy way that is convincing for the violence at the Primrose Mine. A conspiracy theory of another kind might appear plausible to some. It is possible that commando leaders used the mobilization against black people as a cover for their preparations for attacks upon the police. It is notable that there were strikers who alleged that they were mobilized to meet a black threat only to be told to proceed to 'pull out' scabs or act against the police. This was said to be the experience on 9-10 March of east Rand men such as Abraham Kleinsmith, Andries Maritz and Johannes Schonfeldt. Schonfeldt alleged that, when he and his comrade were informed that they were 'not out to attack the natives' but 'to disarm the Police and pull out scabs', he 'shouted' his displeasure at being brought out on the ruse 'of a native rising'. Petrus Venter, giving evidence in the same case as Schonfeldt, also asserted that an initial mobilization to meet a putative black threat was displaced by other orders.⁶³ Notwithstanding the utility of some of these arguments to men wishing to get off a legal hook, it is certainly true that it was safer for commando leaders initially to mobilize their men on the basis of Swart Gevaar, and then give them new orders once they had assembled. The secrecy of impending attacks upon the police might have been preserved in this way.

However, the role of rebel leaders in fostering a Black Peril, and in encouraging attacks upon black people, for the reasons of ruse cited above, is diminished when one looks at the evidence more closely. For what emerges from it is a genuine belief in Black Peril, rather than a mere tactical use of the phenomenon, in white communities. Those arraigned for violence

and sedition after the Rand strike frequently referred to a belief amongst whites that blacks were shortly to rise against them, and it becomes difficult to see this purely as a mitigating factor summoned forth in court. A brief analysis of examples from Johannesburg, and the west and east Rand, serves to illuminate the question. Let us begin with Johannesburg's predominantly-white suburb of Newlands, which bordered the predominantly-black area of Sophiatown. Johannes Terblanche, a resident of the area, recalled that on the night of 8 March, a panic set in that there was a black attack upon Newlands ('een alarm dat die Kaffirs een in val maak op new Lands'). It was said that, around this time, men kept watch against a putative black threat.⁶⁴ Was testimony such as this merely an attempt to explain away deployment on the eve of an insurrection? Certainly, the fear at the beginning of the second week of March, and the posting of pickets, preceded an attack upon the Newlands police station which took place on the 10th. However, there must have been more to the sense of being imperilled than this, which is why non-miners could testify to it. For it was not only a miner, such as Henry Porter, but a motor mechanic, such as John Middleton who recalled March 8 as a time when an African rising or attack was expected in Newlands. George Kay, an employee of the Newlands Central School, referred to the night of this date as that 'when the native attack scare' obtained. Finally, one who was not charged in the case in which he gave testimony, could confirm that the swart gevaar had taken hold of groupings beyond those soon to be deployed against the police: thus, women and children were described as fleeing to a local hall during the night of 8 March.⁶⁵

To turn to the west Rand: strikers who, on 11 March, fired upon and killed an African proceeding to his home on the Bantjes Mine near Florida appear to have used the threat of a black rising as an intrinsic part of their legal defence. This may well have been a court ploy on their part, but a picket deployed at this mine, and not charged with the murder, referred to an imminent 'Break out' by 'the Natives' as the reason given for the general deployment of pickets there. It was asserted that, around this time, a meeting 'of all the Residents' of Maraisburg on the west Rand was called because of the general alarm caused by repeated rumours of 'Native Risings'. The formation of a vigilance committee was mooted, and the idea could have only been reinforced when certain families from the Aurora West Mine 'came over to Bantjes in a state of excitement'. They had been warned that 'the Natives were breaking out at New Clare Location'.⁶⁶

Over on the east Rand in the first half of March 1922, one likewise finds the Black Peril being summoned forth. According to Jacobus Swanevelder, who was discharged by the court which tried him: 'We often heard that the natives had attacked and hurt white people at different places on the Rand. On the 6th of March... I was called out...and...told that the natives had broken out in Germiston...' A compatriot of his, Andries de Jager, received similar information. Both of these men had their charges quashed, and the historian needs to ascertain whether they utilized the

Black Peril simply as ammunition in court. Swanevelde, for example, would have had to explain why the police had found on his person 'a short stick' to which was attached a bicycle chain. To state, as he did, that this 'was given to me to fight the natives...in case of a rising' was undoubtedly useful. However, both these men - the one implicitly, the other explicitly - conveyed the fact that, after their initial mobilization on a Swart Gevaar basis, they had been informed by a motor cyclist - presumably a strikers' messenger - 'that there was no native rising at all', but that they might wish to go on to a meeting in Germiston. It was their deployment after this meeting - i.e. when the Swart Gevaar rationale no longer applied - that led to their arrests. If the Black Peril element was not a genuine part of their testimony - but merely fabricated for court purposes - they would surely have argued that they were under the impression of a need to defend against a black attack throughout the day of 6 March, and not merely up to the time that they met the motor cyclist.⁶⁷

The Black Peril did not vanish from Germiston with the message of the motor cyclist. A few days later it was present in even greater force. The battle at Primrose Mine on March 8 was accompanied by intense fears amongst whites, in part due to the fact that white families were resident on the mine itself. Johanna Ferreira, apparently a miner's wife, feared the complete annihilation of her community ('die kaffers sal ons almaal vermoor'), while the news of the battle, or of Africans having 'broken out', ricocheted through the streets in and around Germiston. This was perhaps to be expected, given that a battle was actually taking place, but what remains notable is the exaggerated nature of the fears of this time. Benjamin Esterhuizen, the court messenger's clerk of Germiston, remembered the great commotion ('groot ophef') of that day. He and others had heard that blacks were massing on Primrose Hill with the object of seizing Germiston ('met die bedoeling om Germiston in te neem').⁶⁸

Given these extravagant ideas, one is bound to ask if there was some black threat to the white working class communities of the Rand in March 1922. To traverse, once more, our brief case-studies. On the night of 8 March, with people fleeing to the local Bioscope Hall in terror of a supposed African offensive upon the Johannesburg suburb of Newlands, a man who went to seek advice from the police returned to say that there was no such attack in progress.⁶⁹ On the west Rand, the terror in Florida and Maraisburg, likewise, was groundless. Local Africans such as Bessie Tshonie or John Mandoyie asserted that, far from their being 'talk of...attacking anybody', Africans at this time were fearful of strikers. Neither the police nor compound managers in the area feared a rising at this time. Joseph Fidler, The caretaker of the disused Bantjes mine, where an African was murdered on his way home, was a man who got 'good information from natives'. He stated that 'during all the recent troubles there has never been any danger from the natives. They have been

very quiet.' This evidently was the view of the senior policeman on the West Rand, Captain J. McCarthy, the District Commandant of Police, Krugersdorp: 'Rumours were circulated that natives contemplated rising and I received reports emanating [sic] from strikers to that effect but on enquiries found there was no foundation for such rumours.'⁷⁰ Little wonder that when the terror-stricken families came into Bantjes from the Aurora West Mine believing that Africans from the Newclare Location were on the rampage, a strike leader who immediately investigated the rumour found it to be 'a false alarm'.⁷¹

Finally, to consider the east Rand case. It has already been demonstrated how commandos were told, by motor cyclist, that they were mobilizing on a false alarm en route to their meeting a supposed Black Peril on 6 March; and on March 8 - it will be remembered - the conflict between black and white miners at Primrose was transmogrified into rumours of an impending black invasion of the town. If these fears were extravagant, it is probably true that - across the Rand - the racial attacks saw a mobilization of Africans, which then enhanced the initial feeling of Swart Gevaar. In the Newlands/Sophiatown area of Johannesburg, assertive crowd action was certainly undertaken by blacks. John Baynes, a builder in Sophiatown, opened his blind on the morning of 10 March and saw a formation of sixty Africans armed with sticks outside his window: 'They said they were going to meet the advance, and defend themselves and save their families.' On the 10th, retaliatory killings actually took place when two white men were stabbed to death in Sophiatown.⁷² In Vrededorp, Africans subjected to attacks retaliated, and a police sub-inspector reported that: "It is believed that the entire native population will rise against the strikers"; even "the Municipal and Railway compound natives" were "incensed against them".⁷³

There was, however, much more to the Swart Gevaar of 1922 than either the fears of whites once street battles had actually commenced, or the strategies of commando leaders on the eve of the insurrection. One notes, for example, that the attacks upon Africans began a full four days before the rebellion - that is, much too long before the onslaught on the police for the attacks to be explained away merely as a tactic of camouflauge, even if the swart gevaar may later have been used as such. The strikers feared the introduction of Martial Law, and nothing could better be used to justify its introduction than street battles against blacks with mortal casualties. Something far more profound, and less obvious, was at play in the orgy of racial attacks which commenced in March. A hint to what it was is provided in the very timing of the killings.

The Rand strike, although much else besides, was a racial strike from its inception. And yet it was only towards its end, two months into the work stoppage, that the strikers and their supporters began their indiscriminate and fatal attacks upon black people. To be more specific: it was precisely at the penultimate moment of the strike, five minutes to the midnight of

all out combat with the full might of the state, that the racial attacks commenced. As the strike ran into late February and early-March, there was increasing violence on both sides, a growing arrogance amongst mineowners, a continuing deployment of state forces, and - above all - a determination amongst the great bulk of the strikers to stand their ground. In the second week in March, the struggle balanced uneasily on the edge of a brief general strike, and then tilted violently into insurrection. It was precisely in that brief interregnum that the racial attacks occurred, and that the Swart Gevaar raised its head. Here is the testimony of a Detective Sergeant of the C. I. D. in Vrededorp: 'On 6/3 a General Strike was proclaimed....From the date of the General Strike till 10/3 when [the insurrection erupted and] Martial Law was proclaimed natives in Vrededorp was [sic] fired on and killed....For the three or four days there was sniping at the natives and coloured people in Vrededorp.' And here is the recollection of a Doornfontein policeman: 'On 6/3/22 the strike became a general strike....Early in the morning of 10/3/22 a revolution broke out....Between 6/3 and 10/3...natives were being sniped.'⁷⁴

Early in March 1922, for the reasons stated above, it must have been obvious to the white working class communities of the Rand that a class struggle, the like of which South Africa had never seen, was impending. It was precisely because of this prospect that the racial attacks began. They were the violence of despair: a last desperate attempt by a besieged white working class to assert its community with that "White South Africa" that despised them, and that was shortly to attack them militarily. The chronology admits of such an analysis, as does the sincerity of the belief in a Swart Gevaar. Finally, there is considerable evidence that the strikers and their supporters used the Swart Gevaar, briefly, to ally themselves with the police, a grouping with whom they otherwise had extremely poor, not to mention violent, relations. Sometimes, the very pattern of rumour disclosed a psychological desire, or hope, to bridge the gap which had emerged within the white community. Jacobus Swanevelder, mobilized on a false alarm in March 6, 'was told that the natives had broken out in Germiston and that the police were unable to check them and that they were asking for help'. On the afternoon of 9 March in Benoni, 'a man in a Motor Car, just arrived from Johannesburg' was reported to have 'said that the natives were fighting the Whites in Fordsburg and Germiston and that the Strikers and Police were working in conjunction to suppress the natives'. One Benoni striker recalled hearing on the same afternoon 'that we had to go to the Van Ryn Plantation as we had to help the police' since 'the natives were going to attack the white people'.⁷⁵

It is notable, too, that on March 8 in Johannesburg, a man left the assembly at the Newlands Bioscope Hall, then filled with people fleeing a Swart Gevaar, to solicit advice from the police.⁷⁶ And then there is the quizzical case of the Langlaagte Police Station: it had actually been reinforced owing to the

demands of strikers who feared the 20 000 Africans 'compounded' in the area. In this case, a post shortly to be attacked was strengthened at the request of those soon to attack it. Finally, on 8 March, a commando leader actually offered a Johannesburg police chief his force of '250 strong' 'to deal with' 'trouble among the natives'. His men would 'carry out whatever orders' they 'were given in that regard'.⁷⁷ On the very eve of their final battle with the state forces, white strikers and their allies were reaching out to those with whom they were soon to engage in armed conflict. The evidence runs strongly to the conclusion that the attacks upon Africans, and the Swart Gevaar of 1922, were linked in some complex way to the striking communities' (perhaps subconscious) attempt to reconstruct a racial community in the face of an impending civil war amongst whites. The intense period of racial killing, and the moment of a heightened sense of Black Peril, should also be seen as symptomatic of the emotional and psychological difficulty the incipient insurgents had, in taking the final step towards civil war against members of their own race.

The racial killings were, however, even more complex than suggested above. It was no accident that a great number of the attacks upon black people took place in white working class suburbs, or in areas abutting them. Black residents here were, by definition, not miners controlled in closed compounds and thereby cut off from the mainstream of urban life. Given their target at people not associated with the mining industry, the attacks in the white suburbs might be considered a desperate and delirious attempt to preserve, in an image familiar to the white plebeian community, the sphere beyond the workplace at a time when the world of the workplace was passing utterly into the hands of capital: all strikers on the gold mines had just been sacked, single miners were being evicted from their homes on company property, coal miners on strike were streaming back to work, the Rand was being saturated with armed forces, and the Chamber of Mines had withdrawn its recognition from the South African Industrial Federation. In these circumstances, the impact of class struggle upon non-class human relationships was seismic. The racial attacks on the Rand commenced at the very point when capital turned its most dictatorial face upon the workers. In East St. Louis, likewise, the savage pogrom upon black people began in July, shortly after the complete collapse of the strike at Aluminum Ore and when organized labour had been laid low: the historian of these events refers explicitly to the importance of the 'destruction of unions' and 'the crushing of strikes' to the genesis of the pogrom.⁷⁸

In both cases, white working class communities had begun to witness changes in their neighbourhoods as the level of black proletarianization and urbanization gathered pace during World War One. On the Rand, in the half decade or so before 1922, non-mining industrial concerns more than doubled in number.⁷⁹ Significantly, the kind of black worker likely to be employed in such a concern was not cut off from white communities in the way

the mine compound dwellers were. Even in a mining town like Benoni, the African population outside the mining compounds began to grow significantly: in the decade before 1922 it remained heavily outnumbered by its white counterpart, but it nevertheless still grew approximately five-fold so that, by 1921, Benoni's 'location' - or official black ghetto - was 'full to capacity' and hundreds of black people were living in the town proper.⁸⁰ During the strike itself, 'a new Native Location' was described as 'sorely needed' in the town of Springs.⁸¹ In northern cities of the US such as East St. Louis or Chicago - both sites of bloody battles between the races - there was a dramatic process of black settlement, part of the Great Migration of the war years, and (amongst whites) a perceived change in the residential world.⁸² With our values and vantage-point, we can, should, and do condemn the utterly counter-productive politics of racial victimisation which grew out of this matrix of urban change and industrial despotism. At the same time, we should not lose sight of the circumstances or the despair which produced it. Capital structured these conflicts in important ways, and if the displacements into race of the fears concerning women took place within the psyches of the white workers, it was - in part - the unfettered power of capital which made the sphere outside production so important an area of social autonomy. Blocked from meaningful control over their working lives, on the Rand and in East St. Louis, those waging a class struggle unleashed pogroms against those held to alter the character of the world beyond the overt reach of their employers.

Precisely because of their centrality to that world, women (and a notion of outraged womanhood) found their place within the racial attacks. More research is required to establish the support of white women for the indiscriminate murders of black people on the Rand in 1922, but the circumstantial evidence already points in that direction. Thus the MP for Vrededorp, where the toll from murder was particularly high, felt called upon to justify women's involvement in the outrages in response to another MP, who, in condemning the murders, was said to have 'pointed...to women taking part in the whole thing'.⁸³ Ernest Glanville, apparently a journalist, who had 'witnessed the growth of violence', 'seen...mob defiance of the police' and who likewise 'witnessed the attacks on Natives', 'day by day wondered at this plague of unredeemed tyranny and unredeemed brutality of men and women'.⁸⁴ And the role of women in the outrages in East St. Louis should not be minimized either. Indeed, there are too many examples of women relishing the massacre of black people in East St. Louis in 1917 to deny that the collective persecution fulfilled some deep need for reassurance that the women shared with white men. How else is one to explain the fact that some of the whites who sought to persuade others against the attacks 'were "hissed" and "hushed" by women carrying hat pins and pen knives'; or that white women humiliated and beat black women, or that little girls amused onlookers by bloodying their stockings in kicking black men who had been clubbed to the ground? How, finally, should we explain the place of women in the carnival

atmosphere in the morning after the collective murders: the day when white people displayed mementoes ripped from the clothing of corpses, when they toured morgues to view the remains of victims, and when hundreds of white men and women cheered as corpses were retrieved from burnt out houses and from a local creek? The baying for the extermination of black people which gripped significant numbers of whites in East St. Louis in July 1917 was most certainly not an exclusively male phenomenon. While the gangs who engaged in most of the murders were composed of young men and teenagers, the crowds which egged them on contained distinctively female voices, a fact noted by the St. Louis Republic.⁸⁵

The mutilations and emotions of the white onlookers remind us that racial outrages fulfill certain psychic needs within their perpetrators and supporters, a point well made by David Roediger with respect to the New York City Draft Riot of 1863.⁸⁶ While there were clear elements on the Rand in 1922, and in East St. Louis in 1917, of a desire to extirpate black people in the midst of white communities, this should not be reduced merely to the idea of competition over scarce urban resources. It becomes difficult to describe the hunting down of human beings by strikers and those supporting them which occurred on the South African Rand in March 1922 - the forcing up of an iron roof, for example, and firing upon black people within it⁸⁷ - as a form of jockeying for position within the labour market. This is particularly so since the victims generally were not employed by the mineowners. What needs to be emphasized is that racial consciousness is profoundly concerned with mortality, a quality which Benedict Anderson has insightfully discerned within nationalism as well.⁸⁸ In some respects, the racial violence which extinguishes the lives of one grouping of people may be linked to a belief in the persecutor that such actions assure a certain immortality: the liquidation of perceived difference ensures that the generations to come will follow in the image of the present one. And thus death gives life.

For those who fear that the analysis is taking a mystical turn, and who doubt the centrality of mortality to racial consciousness, consider the sentiments expressed at the mass meetings of the white working class in 1922. On 8 January, at a meeting 'packed to the doors' of the Tivoli theatre in Johannesburg, the vice-president of the major trade union federation of the day, called upon 'the general public of the country who belong to the white races of the world to join us in this fight. If you fail to do so you fail to establish the recognition that the white races shall exist and shall remain in South Africa.' At a 'packed' meeting in Benoni a few days later, a parliamentary representative of white workers declared that 'They were...called upon to prevent race suicide.' In Jeppestown, Johannesburg, where such large numbers of people arrived at the Oddfellows Hall that 'an overflow meeting' composed of 'a still larger crowd' had to be held, it was said that 'the white workers on the Reef were fighting for life. They were out to guarantee a

white South Africa for future generations.' And not long after this a Labour Party politician was warning that if the employers policy was forced through it would mean the termination 'of the white men on the Rand': all that would remain of them would be their graves, which would be no more than a playground for black children.⁸⁹

This repetition of the facts of mortality - another leitmotif concerned the fate of succeeding generations, which were frequently referred to during the strike - helps us to understand that the earlier references to white women being taken in marriage by black men, and to the issuing forth of the 'bastard race', must be interpreted not merely in terms of the loss of women per se, but also in terms of a fear of losing the ability to forge new links in the chain of human generations. With the most vital force of their lives squandered by capital in conditions which bred a high rate of death through rock bursts and pthisis, with their life's labour siphoned away from them so that they left all too little of permanence behind them, the white mining communities of the Rand appear to have developed a desperate need for the generations which followed them to be stamped - literally - in their own image. This need, along with those pertaining to the desire to control the elements of life beyond the direct reach of capital (i.e. the world of love, gender relations and neighbourhood) was displaced into racial consciousness. When, therefore, the mineowners attempted an alteration of the racial composition of the workforce, they touched off not only class struggle but triggered a set of fears which turned about the most intimate concerns of the white working class. Within these concerns, women had a particular place because of their fundamental place within reproduction broadly (and narrowly) defined. Precisely because this racial consciousness constituted a confused and crazed grappling with profound human concerns, it was able to heighten a potentially limited battle between labour and capital to the heights of a life-and-death conflict. The employers did not know what they were initiating when they proposed to alter the ratio of black workers to white in the mining industry. An early belief that the strike would be over within a few weeks foundered upon the astonishing militancy and solidarity of the white working class. Once the mineowners' plans trenched upon the racial consciousness of this class, all that the latter displaced into race - questions pertaining to relations between the genders, issues concerned with the sphere of community and leisure, the inescapability of mortality - surfaced. Thankfully - and given the experience of East St. Louis this is something to be thankful for - the militants of the Rand kept their fire overwhelmingly concentrated upon their class enemy and its armed allies. The mortality rate amongst the armed personnel of the state was at least as high as among the strikers, with scores of soldiers and policemen killed in the brief but bloody uprising of March 1922. Workers gave blow for blow against forces incomparably more powerful than themselves until aircraft, artillery and the storming of their strongholds forced them back to work on

capital's terms, and rooted out forever a particular proletarian tradition within South Africa.

One cannot immerse oneself in the historical records of this moment of militancy without sadness. It possessed many elements of heroism and martyrdom: the armed formations of strikers battling against an army and airforce; the coffins swathed in red flags and accompanied by a two mile procession in which marched the thousands - every person with a red rosette proclaiming the wearer 'a striker or a striker's friend' - mourning workers killed in confrontations with police; strikers taken to the gallows singing the anthem of their labour movement.⁹⁰ At the same time, this epic of resistance and defiance was sullied by the virulent racism of so many of the strikers and their leaders, a racism which found a brutal expression in the racial murders of March 1922 when many black people were literally hunted down along the Rand. What emerges from these events is that class politics, even of a revolutionary kind, does not necessarily deal with the complex of concerns to which race pertains. The strong socialist strain within the white working class in 1922 did not diminish its racism; indeed, the Communist Party of this time - a time before the Stalinization of the Comintern - found itself compromising with racism.⁹¹ Hence this Revolt reminds us that the politics of class - without which no challenge can be offered to the arbitrary power of those who control the means of livelihood - must be combined with a politics that rationally addresses the concerns, some of which turn about gender, which hitherto have found their delirious expression in race. That, perhaps, is the chief theoretical point to be drawn out of the tragic paradox of the militants who displayed such revolutionary elan, and such phobia.

Notes

1 See B. Nairn Civilizing Capitalism: the Beginnings of the Australian Labour Party (Melbourne, 1989 ed.), 154, 160-2, 174-5, 209, 260, 286 and R. N. Ebbels The Australian Labour Movement 1850-1907 (Melbourne, 1965), 12, 13, 23, 32, 73-4, 76, 95, 98, 104-5, 114, 115, 118, 162-3, 234-5. It is notable that Nairn who attempts to deny that racism was integral to the Australian labour movement (see 160, 161 and the epilogue of his book), nevertheless provides the evidence that it was in the pages cited above.

2. E. Foner, 'Why is there no socialism in the United States?', History Workshop Journal, 17, Spring 1984, p. 66.

3. A. Saxton The Indispensable Enemy (Berkeley, 1971), pp. 113-15; and E. M. Rudwick Race Riot at East St. Louis July 2, 1917 (Southern Illinois University Press, 1964).

4. See, for example, Frederick Johnstone Class, Race and Gold: A Study of Class Relations and Racial Discrimination in South Africa (UPA and Dalhousie Univ. Press reprint of the London, 1976 ed.), esp. 49-75 and ch. 3; or R. Davies Capital, State and White Labour in South Africa 1900-1960: An Historical Materialist Analysis of Class Formation and Class Relations (Brighton, 1979)

5. Nairn Civilizing Capitalism, 160-1, 259-60; G. M. Fredrickson White Supremacy: A Comparative Study in American and South African History (Oxford, 1982), pp. 221-2, 223-7, 228-33. Fredrickson's argument hinges upon the theory of the 'split labour market', a discussion of which he provides on p. 212.

6. E. M. Rudwick Race Riot at East St. Louis July 2, 1917 pp. 16-19, 27-8, 36-7.

7. J. R. Barrett Work and Community in the Jungle: Chicago's Packinghouse Workers (Urbana and Chicago, 1990), pp. 202-24. I am aware that Barrett is framing his analysis, in part, as a critique of William Tuttle's thesis that the growth of class consciousness amongst packinghouse workers led to a rise in racism. However, Barrett does not deny "the real [racial] tension that existed over the question of union membership", while much of his analysis deals with the role of the companies in promoting racial divisions amongst workers "and creating an atmosphere ripe for racial conflict". Quotations from p. 203.

8. Johnstone Class, Race and Gold, ch. 3 offers a comprehensive analysis of the factors leading to the strike of 1922. The movement of the colour bar - which during World War One had become somewhat porous - so that semi-skilled jobs such as drill sharpening or winch driving were declared to be occupations for blacks alone was fundamental to the strike.

9. Most of the miners on the Rand were Afrikaners. Prior to their proletarianization, a great many had been landowners in the countryside, or tenants with strong familial links to landowners. Moreover, many of the English-speaking miners had taken a "small master" road into the proletariat. Prior to having certain crucial functions (recruitment and payment of black workers) annexed by companies, they had been contractors commanding small groups of black workers. Once directly under company employ, the pattern of the white miner controlling a "gang" of black workers remained. J. and R. Simons' Class and Colour in South Africa 1850-1950 (IDAF [London], 1983 ed.), p.277 is suggestive on what I dub the "small master" road to the proletariat.

10. Johnstone Class, Race and Gold, 25, 48, 56; and Simons and Simons Class and Colour in South Africa, 277.

11. See Rudwick Race Riot at East St. Louis, 146, 147.

12. For the Labour Union's protest, and for the link between white plebeian attacks upon black people and actions (and a

place) associated with the labour movement, see Rudwick Race Riot at East St. Louis, pp. 27-9, 41, 44 and ch. 11-12.

13 See Barrett Work and Community, 203-6, 221-4.

14. Vron Ware Beyond the Pale; White Women, Racism and History (London, 1992). 4-5, 32-3, 38, 40, 232, 234.

15. Ware deals with these issues in Beyond the Pale, part iv.

16. See Roberta Senechal The Sociogenesis of a Race Riot: Springfield, Illinois, in 1908 (Urbana and Chicago, 1990), 1 and 25ff.

17. Rudwick Race Riot at East St. Louis, 27-8, 146.

18. Rand Daily Mail, 9 Jan. 1922, p. 7, "Miners and the Burghers". The pamphlet had been translated by the newspaper.

19. Rand Daily Mail, 5 Jan. 1922, p. 8, "Urged to Fight".

20. Rand Daily Mail, 10 March 1922, p. 5, "Attacks on Natives".

21. Rand Daily Mail, 3 March 1922, p. 4, "Violence on the Rand"; and 9 March 1922, p. 6, "Left Naked on the Veld". The genitals were coyly referred to in the report thus: "Mrs. Webster tried to knock him on a portion of his body with her fists, but witness [a striker] advised her not to do so."

22. Rand Daily Mail, 9 March 1922, p. 6, "Left Naked on the Veld".

23. Rand Daily Mail, 2 March 1922, p. 5, "Sjamboks and Hosepipes".

24. Archives of the Library of the University of the Witwatersrand, AH646 (Records of the Trade Union Council of South Africa), South African Industrial Federation papers, Bd6. 2. 15, File 69, case concerning Johanna Olivier et. al of Randfontein, Statement (with cross-examination) of Mary Devenish, 2 March 1922; and Statement (with cross-examination) of Simon Du Toit, 1 March 1922. Men did, however, take some part in the fracas - for example they prevented a strikebreaker from taking a whip from a female assailant: see the Statement and cross-examination of James Devenish, 1 March 1922. The case, however, proves women to have been the overwhelmingly prominent parties to the assaults.

25. TUCSA Records, S. A. Industrial Federation papers, Bd6.2.34, File 139, Case concerning Beatrice Gallagher et al, Statement (with cross examination) of Ethel Fifer.

26. See SAB, K4, Unpublished evidence of the Martial Law Commission, pp. 30-4.

27. Ibid, p. , evidence of Lt. Col. Godley.
28. TUCSA Records, S. A. Industrial Federation papers, Bd 6. 2. 34, File 139, case concerning Beatrice Gallagher et al, Statement (with cross examination) of Mack Fifer, n. d; and Statement of Ethel Fifer.
29. Hessian, 'Labour Agitation on the Witwatersrand,' 144 and n. a5; D. Humphriss and D. G. Thomas Benoni: Son of My Sorrow: The Social, Political and Economic History of a South African Gold Mining Town (Benoni, 1968), 202.
30. TUCSA Records, S. A. Industrial Federation papers, Bd6. 2. 34, File 139, case concerning Beatrice Gallagher et al, Statement of B. Gallagher, n.d.
31. SAB, K4, Unpubd evidence of MLC, pp. 1460-1.
32. Ibid, pp. 38, 103.
33. See TUCSA Records, SAIF Papers, Bd6.2.17, Case concerning A. Potgieter, undated typescript statement of M. Morrison; and, for the incident involving the army officer, see generally Bd6.2.50, Case concerning T. Spence: quotation from undated typescript statement of D. Ryan.
34. B. Campbell, 'Politics Old & New,' New Statesman, 8 March 1985, p. 24.
35. Rand Daily Mail, 9 March 1922, p. 6, "Left Naked on the Veld".
36. Humphriss and Thomas Benoni , p. 201. A local archbishop described the faces of the attacked strikebreakers thus.
37. Rand Daily Mail, 2 March 1922, p. 5, 'Sjamboks and Hosepipes'.
38. AH646 (TUCSA Records), S. A. Industrial Federation papers, Bd6. 2. 15, File 69, case concerning Johanna Olivier et. al., Statement (with cross examination) of Simon Du Toit, 1 March 1922.
39. Humphriss and Thomas Benoni, Son of my Sorrow, 197.
40. TUCSA Records, SAIF Papers, Bd6.2.26, Case concerning J. Bayman, undated typescript statement of A. van Niekerk
41. Ibid, Bd6. 2. 34, File 139, case concerning Beatrice May Gallagher et. al, Statement of Phyllis Clements, n.d., and Statement of H. Day, n.d. The cover of this file discloses Clements' conviction. Paradoxically, she appears - from this file - to have been sentenced for attacking a strikebreaker in his home.

42. Material pertaining to the Primrose Mine battle may be found in AH646 (TUCSA Records), S. A. Industrial Federation papers, Bd6. 2. 1, File 3, case concerning Primrose Mine Shooting. For the accusations of cowardice, see the Declaration of George Clifford Roberts. Gabriel Mare's statement in the same file reveals that he did go to the Primrose mine but that he had missed the actual combat there. A journalist could confirm Mare's presence at Primrose, but also the restraining influence which he exercised there: see Statement of W. Britton.

43. Ware Beyond the Pale, xiv

44. See B. Hessian, 'An Investigation into the Causes of the Labour Agitation on the Witwatersrand, January to March, 1922' (Unpublished MA dissertation, University of the Witwatersrand, 1957), 20 n.3.

45. Rand Daily Mail, 7 March 1922, p. 2, 'Johannesburg Courts'. Although neither men nor women are specified as providing the description - merely 'twenty or thirty people' - the police gave women pride of place in their general evidence pertaining to this incident.

46. This view of a member of the Krugersdorp Women's Active League, an organisation supporting the strike, is quoted in Hessian, 'Labour Agitation on the Witwatersrand', 39

47. See AH646 (TUCSA Records), S. A. Industrial Federation papers, Bd6. 2. 1, File 3, case concerning Primrose Mine Shooting, Statement of Gabriel Mare. This interpretation is certainly suggested by Mare's formulation: 'die vrouens het ons uitgeskel en die mans ook' - literally 'the women cursed/abused us[,] and the men too'.

48. Quoted in Iris Berger Threads of Solidarity: Women in South African Industry, 1900-1980 (London, 1992), p. 40.

49. AH646 [TUCSA Records], S. A. Industrial Federation papers, Bd6. 2. 15, File 69, case concerning Johanna Olivier et al, Statement (with cross examination) of Mary Devenish, 2 March 1922; and Statement (with cross examination) of Simon Du Toit, 1 March 1922.

50. Simons and Simons Class and Colour in South Africa, 285.

51. Michael Omi and Howard Winant, 'By the Rivers of Babylon: Race in the United States, Part One', Socialist Review No. 71, Vol. 13 No. 5, Sept./Oct. 1983, 38-9. These writers include political rights in their list.

52. Rudwick Race Riot at East St. Louis, p. 28.

53. Rand Daily Mail, 4 January 1922, p. 7, '“Fight For It”'. In referring to Benoni as 'predominantly white', I am obviously referring to its permanently-settled population. I am not here including the black migrant workers held in compounds in the category of municipal resident.
54. Hessian, 'Labour Agitation on the Witwatersrand', p.19.
55. This contention is based upon my research into the court cases arising from the strike, but I shall seek to test it against other records in due course. A good example of the legal records disclosing this social phenomenon can be found in TUCSA Records, S. A. I. F papers, Bd6.2.15, File 69, Case concerning Johanna Olivier et al. All but one of the people charged with public violence in this case were women; all of these women lived on mining property, hence they were clearly linked to miners; and when their occupation was given - as it was in the majority of cases - it was always designated as 'Housewife'. See the frontpiece of Annexure 'A' in the Case of Rex vs Johanna Olivier et al in this file. The file generally makes clear the nature of the charges against the women.
56. Omi and Winant 'By the Rivers of Babylon', part 1, 59, 35, 36. These writers usefully stress the centrality of identity to questions of race: see 49
57. TUCSA Records, SAIF Papers, Bd6.2.28, Case concerning J. Swanevelder and A. P. de Jager; typescript statements of A. de Jager (quotations), D. Putter and P. Putter.
58. For the facts concerning the Primrose affair, see Ibid, Bd6.2.1, Case concerning Primrose Mine Shooting. Quotations from typescript statement of M. C. Erasmus, n.d.
59. Ibid, typescript statement of William Hobson, n. d. (quotation). For the role of the mine captain and manager, see typescript statements of P. Herbst, J. Dreyer and M. Olivier, all undated.
60. See TUCSA Records, SAIF Papers, Bd6.2.33, Case concerning John Wales. Quotations from typescript statement of J. Hardman, n.d.
61. Ibid, Bd6.2.40, Case concerning Daniel van Zyl et al, holograph statement of A. Kleinsmith, n. d.
62. SAB, K4, Unpublished evidence of the Martial Law Commission, 59, 62-5: testimony of Lt. Col. R. S. Godley, Deputy Commissioner of Police, Witwatersrand Division. Godley referred to incident reports etc. made at the time.
63. TUCSA Records, SAIF Papers, Bd6.2.40, Case concerning D. P. van Zyl et al, undated holograph statements of A. Kleinsmith, and

J. Schonveldt (quotations); and undated typescript statements of A. Maritz and P. Venter.

64. TUCSA Records, SAIF Papers, Bd6.2.49, Case concerning J. van Wyk et al, holograph statements of J. Terblanche, 10 Aug. 1922; H. Pelser, 8 Aug. 1922; J. Hurter, n.d; H. van Vuuren, n. d.; J. van Heerden; J. Badenhorst, n. d.; F. Koekemoer, n. d.

65. Ibid, Bd6.2.2, Case concerning M. Smith, typescript statements of J. Middleton and H. Porter, n. d. Both of the latter appear to have been Newlands commando members. For the quotation, and the flight of women and children, see Bd6.2.49, Case concerning J. van Wyk, typescript statement of G. Kay, n.d., and holograph statement of J. Terblanche, 10 Aug. 1922.

66. Ibid, Bd6.2.9, Case concerning G. van Wyk and J. Brussouw, Memo. re Rex v. Van Wyk and Brussow, n.d.; and Bd6.2.31, Case concerning J. J. Marais, typescript statement of J. Nagel, n. d.; and holograph statement of L. B. Webster, 8 Sept. 1922. The testimony regarding the murder can be followed well in Bd6.2.9.

67. For this case, see generally TUCSA Records, SAIF Papers, Bd6.2.28, Case concerning J. A. Swanevelder and A. P. de Jager, esp. typescript statements of the two men, n.d. Quotations from Swanevelder's statement.

68. Ibid, Bd6.2.1, Case concerning Primrose Mine shooting, undated typescript statements of Johanna Ferreira, M. Thesner, J. McCrate, G. Baker, E. Murray, and Benjamin Esterhuizen.

69. Ibid, Bd6.2.49, Case concerning J. van Wyk et al, holograph statement of J. Terblanche, 10 Aug. 1922.

70. Ibid, Bd6.2.9, Case concerning G. van Wyk and J. Brussouw, typescript statements of Bessie Tshonie (first quotation), John Mandoyie, W. Ellis, T. Garner, J. Blaine (13 April 1922), J. Fraser, D. Birch, J. Fidler, J. McCarthy. All statements are undated, except for Blaine's.

71. TUCSA Records, SAIF papers, Bd6.2.31, Case concerning J. Marais, holograph statement of L. Webster, 8 Sept. 1922.

72. See SAB, K4, Unpubd evidence of MLC, pp. 824, 826 (evidence of J. Baynes: the date provided in the text has been gleaned from my general research); and pp. 803-8, 851-4 (for the retaliatory killings and their context). For assertive black crowds in Sophiatown/Newlands, see also TUCSA Records, SAIF papers, generally Bd6.2.6, Case concerning C. Stassen.

73. SAB, K4, unpubd evidence of MLC, pp. 62, 59.

74. TUCSA Records, SAIF Papers, Bd.6.2.19, Case concerning H. Shaw, typescript statement of T. Bowen, 2 May 1922; and Bd6.2.26,

Case concerning J. Bayman, statement of F. van der Walt, 9 May 1922.

75. Ibid, Bd6.2.28, Case concerning J. Swanevelder and A. de Jager, undated typescript statement of J. Swanevelder; Bd6.2.40, Case concerning D. van Zyl et al, undated typescript statement of D. van Zyl, and undated holograph statement of A. Kleinsmith.

76. Ibid, Bd6.2.49, Case concerning J. van Wyk, holograph statement of J. Terblanche, 10 Aug. 1922.

77. For the facts and context of the Langlaagte case, see SAB, K4, Unpubd evidence of the MLC, pp.1654-8; for the offer of commandos, see p. 66.

78. Rudwick Race Riot at East St. Louis, 36-7, 148-9

79 P. Bonner, 'The Transvaal Native Congress, 1917-1920: the radicalization of the black petty bourgeoisie on the Rand' in Marks S. and Rathbone R. Industrialization and Social Change in South Africa: African class formation, culture and consciousness 1870-1930 (London, 1982), p. 272

80. Humphriss and Thomas Benoni, 96.

81. Rand Daily Mail, 12 Jan. 1922, p. 10, "Springs' New Location".

82. In the seven years before the violence of 1917, East St. Louis' black population may have more than doubled: see Rudwick Race Riot, 217.

83. See Rand Daily Mail, 10 March 1922, p. 5, 'Attacks on Natives'. Six people - including two women - had been murdered in Vrededorp by the end of 9 March: see '16 Killed: 55 Wounded' on p. 5 of the same issue of the newspaper.

84. Humphriss and Thomas Benoni, 191. My emphasis.

85. Rudwick Race Riot at East St. Louis, 44, 45, 46, 67, 225.

86. See D. Roediger The Wages of Whiteness: Race and the Making of the American Working Class (London, 1991), 150 ff.

87. See the photograph and caption in the Rand Daily Mail, 10 March 1922, p. 3.

88. Benedict Anderson Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Spread and Origins of Nationalism (London, 1983), 17-19.

89 Rand Daily Mail, 9 January 1922, p. 7, 'Labour War Declared'; 11 January 1922, p. 7, "'Going To Win At Any Cost"'; 20 January 1922, p. 7, 'An Appeal for Arbitration'; 24 January 1922, p. 2, letter from M. Kentridge. Morris Kentridge, then a former parliamentarian, ran as a Labour Party candidate in a council

election held during the Rand strike. He was soon to be re-elected to parliament. He was, in fact, quoting sentiments which General Smuts had once expressed. Smuts's words were to be used against the Chamber of Mines later: see Rand Daily Mail, 26 January 1922, p. 7, 'Debate on Status Quo'.

90. Rand Daily Mail, 3 March 1922, p. 5, 'A Day of Mourning' and Simons and Simons Class and Colour in South Africa, 297.

91. See Simons and Simons Class and Colour in South Africa, 282, 285, 289-90, 297-9.