

**Class, colour consciousness  
and the search for identity;**

**Blacks at the Kimberley diamond diggings  
1867 - 1893**

**Paul G. Lawrence**

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## TABLE OF CONTENTS

	Page
Abstract	ii
Acknowledgements	iv
Introduction	1
Chapter 1. The growth of a negative stereotype of blacks in Kimberley	17
Chapter 2. Black groups in Kimberley	43
Chapter 3. The estrangement of the black élites	74
Chapter 4. "All blacks are brothers" - the growth of racial segregation in Kimberley	93
Chapter 5. Turbulent times : the 'Black Flag Revolt' and the strikes of 1883 and 1884	122
Chapter 6. Black political activity in the 1870s and 1880s: The Africander League and the Coloured People's Association	147
Conclusion.	162
Bibliography.	168

**ABSTRACT**

**Paul G. Lawrence**

**Class, colour consciousness and the search for identity : blacks at the Kimberley diamond diggings, 1867-1893**

The discovery of diamonds in the Kimberley area was to have far reaching consequences, not only for the region but the entire sub-continent. In addition to the hundreds of individual diggers, mainly white, who converged on this arid corner of southern Africa, there appeared also, in a remarkably short time, a complete infrastructure of urban facilities to serve their needs. Perhaps the most unique component of the otherwise colonial population was the massive influx of migrant Africans in response to the insatiable labour demands of the diamond mines.

We examine the interplay of racial attitudes and conflicts and the ambiguous position of the black élites in the diverse groups of 'colonial' or 'civilised' Africans, 'Cape Coloureds', Muslims and Indians who came to Kimberley to seek their fortune. It is our contention that it was this ambiguity which was to provide a spur to black political activity. We closely consult contemporary accounts, official documentation and local newspapers, all of which faithfully record the ebb and flow of the state of racial relations. Never a typical microcosm of colonial urban society because of the extraneous factor of economic competition for limited employment and resources, social relationships in Kimberley gradually changed until the essential confrontation was not between colonials and the rest, but rather more specifically between blacks and whites.

While the early history of Kimberley was marked by the virulent racism of white diggers resisting black competition, the ensuing years were to witness a more

tranquil period of racial co-existence. This tranquillity proved to be only the calm before the storm. We show how a series of crises strained relations between blacks and whites to breaking point. The failed rebellion by indigenous blacks, the smallpox epidemic during which the Muslim community incurred the wrath of white public opinion by failing to adopt western preventative measures, a revolt - the Black Flag Revolt - by militant white diggers and the effects of the new recruitment policies of the mining companies in the 1880s, which opened jobs to cheap black workers, all resulted in an increasing polarisation of race relations in Kimberley. We argue that where before official documents and newspapers had shown a class discrimination directed against migrant African labourers, this changed over time to become a negative portrayal of blacks in general. The effect of the emergence of this negative stereotype was to separate whites and blacks in many facets of life in the mining centre.

We conclude that the black élites, who had all along fought their exclusion from the white community by affirming 'decent' and 'civilised' values, eventually resorted to assuming the leadership of political organisations, acknowledging the need for blacks to mobilise to address common concerns. These embryonic stirrings led, in time, to the formation of the Coloured People's Association in 1893. A trademark of early black organisations, the affirmation of middle class norms, reflected the leadership role of the élites. Accordingly, the motive behind black political activity was a desire for inclusion in the political process, not a challenge to it.

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## INTRODUCTION

In this thesis we examine the origins of, and motivation for, the forms of black consciousness which emerged at the mining camps in the Kimberley region following the diamond discoveries and which culminated in the formation of political organisations.

One of the consequences of the recession in the Cape Colony during the mid 1860s was a diversification of the economy. Improvements in the wool industry, growth of trade in ostrich feathers and the increase in lucerne farming meant that by the end of the decade the Cape economy appeared set to overcome the trials and rigours which had befallen it only a few years earlier.<sup>1</sup> A further reason for optimism was the discovery of diamonds in the Northern Cape in 1867.<sup>2</sup> While pastoral products continued to make up the bulk of Cape exports until 1875, it was the discovery of diamonds, and later gold, which was ultimately to transform the very nature of the economy of the southern African sub-continent.<sup>3</sup>

The critics who had scoffed at the notion of there being diamondiferous land in the Northern Cape were proved wrong by the increasingly prodigious diamond discoveries in the region south-west of the Orange Free State border. News of the finds spread rapidly. From the dusty highveld, from coastal towns, from farms came

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<sup>1</sup> Mabin, A.: "The Making of Colonial Capitalism : Intensification and Expansion in the Economic Geography of the Cape Colony, South Africa, 1854 - 1899" (Ph.D, Simon Fraser University, 1984) , pp. 106-126 ; de Kock, M.H.: Selected Subjects in the Economic History of South Africa, (Cape Town; Juta and Co., 1924) , pp. 102-107.

<sup>2</sup>Although indigenous people were finding precious stones in the Northern Cape before this date it was the increase in the discoveries between the Orange and the Vaal rivers between 1867 and 1870 that sparked the first rush by white diggers.

<sup>3</sup>Mabin, "The Making of Colonial Capitalism", p. 123 ; De Kock: Selected Subjects , pp. 108-113

a stream of humanity. The bored, the desperate and those seeking adventure descended on what had become known as the 'diamond fields'.<sup>4</sup>

The discovery of diamonds in 1867 in the area later to be renamed Griqualand-West left its impact on the entire sub-continent as the region became the most prolific exporter of diamonds worldwide. The ensuing industrial revolution in southern Africa gained greater momentum with the discovery, in 1884, of gold on the Witwatersrand.<sup>5</sup> These mineral discoveries were to propel first Kimberley, and later Johannesburg, to a position of prominence not only on the sub-continent, but also in the world.<sup>6</sup> The result was a shift in the balance of power from the coastal towns of Port Elizabeth and Cape Town to the interior.

The camps attracted diggers not only from the Cape Colony but also people from Europe, Australia and the Americas.<sup>7</sup> The labour-intensive nature of mining necessitated a large workforce which was made up of Africans from all over the Colony and beyond.<sup>8</sup> Mining-related industries flourished in the camps and also provided employment for increasing numbers of blacks and whites.

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<sup>4</sup>For early accounts of finds and rushes to the diamond diggings see Angove, J.: In the Early Days : The Reminiscences of Pioneer Life on the South African Diamond Fields, (Kimberley ; Handel House Ltd. , 1910) , pp 1-32 Cohen, L.: Reminiscences of Kimberley, (London; Bennet, 1911), pp. 4-30; Payton C.A.: The Diamond Diggings of South Africa , (London; Horace Cox, 1872) , pp 1-60

<sup>5</sup>Houghton, D. H.: The South African Economy , (London ; Oxford University Press , 1967), pp. 12-13 ; De Kock.: Selected Subjects , pp 108-116

<sup>6</sup>Turrell, V.: Capital and Labour on the Kimberley Diamond Fields, 1871-1890 (Cambridge; Cambridge University Press, 1987) , pp 1-18 ; Worger, W.: South Africa's City of Diamonds , (Yale; A.D. Donker, 1987), pp 1-5

<sup>7</sup>Doughty, O.: Early Diamond Days , (London; Longmans, 1963), pp 43-46; Matthews, J. W.: Incwadi Yami; or, Twenty Years' Personal Experience in South Africa, (New York; Rogers and Sherwood, 1887), p. 186 ; Roberts, B.: Kimberley - Turbulent City, (Cape Town; David Philip, 1978), p. 53

<sup>8</sup>Marks, S. and Rathbone, R. (eds): Industrialisation and Social Change in South Africa: African Class Formation, Culture and Consciousness 1870-1930, (London; Longman, 1982), p. 12 ; Turrell: Capital and Labour , p. 18 ; Wilson, F. and Perrot, D. (eds): Outlook on a Century: South Africa 1870-1970 , (Cape Town ; Outlook Publications, Lovedale Press 1973), pp 19-21

Recent research, most notably by Robert Turrell and William Worger, has done much to illuminate this early period in the history of Kimberley.<sup>9</sup> This research forms part of a growing body of literature devoted to the social implications of the diamond rush, an aspect which has hitherto been somewhat neglected. In this thesis we attempt to make further steps towards redressing the imbalance.

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In 1893 the Coloured People's Association was formed in Kimberley. The reason for its establishment was clear. It had come into being to protest the Franchise and Ballot Act of the previous year.<sup>10</sup> This had raised franchise qualifications and reduced substantially the number of colonists, the bulk of them 'Cape Coloureds', Africans and Indians, who were eligible to vote.<sup>11</sup> Less obvious, though, is the constituency which this organisation served. This was not the first body in the region which had purported to represent blacks. A diamond diggers organisation, benefit societies and at least two other political organisations were formed in Kimberley which contained the word 'coloured' in their title<sup>12</sup>

The definition of the term 'coloured' warrants a closer examination. In the modern South African context it has come to describe a group of people on the basis

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<sup>9</sup>Turrell: Capital and Labour; Worger: S.A.'s City of Diamonds

Turrell, R.V.: "Capital, class and monopoly : The Kimberley Diamond Fields, 1871-1889" , (Ph.D , University of London, 1982) ; Worger, W.: "The making of monopoly : Kimberley and the South African diamond industry, 1870-1895" , (Ph.D., Yale University, 1982)

<sup>10</sup>Act of Parliament of the Colony of the Cape of Good Hope :Act No. 9 of 1892 ; Statutes of The Cape of Good Hope , 1652-1895; (Cape Town; W. A. Richards and Son , 1895)

<sup>11</sup>van Huyssteen, J: "The non European franchise, 1872-1892" , (M.A., University of Cape Town, 1952) , pp. 76-100 ;

Odendaal, A.: Vukani Bantu! The Beginnings of Black Protest - Politics in South Africa to 1912 , (Cape Town ; David Philip, 1984) , p. 13. ; Edgecombe, D R.: "The non-racial franchise in Cape politics, 1853-1910" , Kleio ,Vol X, Nos 1 and 2 (June, 1978) , pp. 34-35

<sup>12</sup>See below, chapters three and six.

of their skin colour. In the racially stratified society that still exists in this country 'coloured' people are commonly viewed, by themselves and others, as constituting a population group. However, this categorisation based on colour is rejected by many of the people so labelled.

At the same time, the modern definition of 'coloured' does not reflect accurately the varied applicability of the same term in the nineteenth century. It was regularly employed to describe only people of 'mixed' origins. Alternatively, it was also commonly used as an all-embracing term to describe people who were not specifically white, that is, synonymously with 'black'. Still another usage excluded Muslims. These definitions most frequently occurred in newspapers, official documents and records which were more representative of white middle class perceptions than of those held by black people themselves. All this adds to the confusion surrounding the use of the term 'coloured' in the nineteenth century.<sup>13</sup>

In this thesis we use the term 'coloured' to include 'Cape Coloureds,' Indians and Africans. Therefore, the term will be used interchangeably with 'black' as it more appropriately defines the usage of the term in Southern Africa in the nineteenth century. 'Cape Coloured' is used to denote those people of 'mixed' ancestry who, during the nineteenth century, were being described variously as 'Cape boys,' 'Cape men,' 'Malays,' 'Bastards,' 'half-breeds,' 'off-coloureds,' and 'coloureds.'

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<sup>13</sup>It was only in the latter half of the nineteenth century that the term 'coloured' was used consistently by white newspapers at the Cape to describe people of 'mixed' origins.

Because of the inconsistent use of the term 'coloured' in the nineteenth century, researchers of the growth of an identity amongst people of 'mixed' ancestry either erroneously hold the establishment of the C.P.A. in Kimberley to be an example of early political activity by 'Cape Coloureds' or neglect it entirely.<sup>14</sup> Typically, they present a brief sketch of events leading up to the formation of the African People's Organisation in September 1902 in Cape Town. The launch of the A.P.O. is undoubtedly of great historical significance as it marked the founding of the first national political organisation for 'Cape Coloured' people. However, it is unfortunate that this event has served, to a large extent, to obscure the black political and social organisations which preceded it. We hope that our examination of the events leading up to the formation of black political organisations in the Northern Cape, will focus more academic attention on the significance of the period during which the Cape Colony was granted self rule by Britain.

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The mining community which developed around the diamond diggings in the early 1870s was different in a number of respects to other urban centres in the Cape Colony. While elsewhere in the Colony education, class, language and religion in

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<sup>14</sup>See for example -

Freedburg, J.: "Changing political identity of the 'coloured' people of South Africa : a political history, 1652-1982" (Ph.D, University of California, 1987) ; Goldin, I.: Making Race - The Politics and Economics of Coloured Identity in South Africa, (London; Longman, 1987) ; Hommell, M. W. : "The organisation and evolution of Coloured political movements in South Africa" , (Ph.D, University of York, Canada, 1979) ; Lewis, G.L.M.: Between the Wire and the Wall : A History of South African 'Coloured' Politics , (Cape Town ; David Philip, 1987) ; van der Ross, R.E.: The rise and decline of apartheid; a study of political movements among the Coloured people of South Africa, 1880-1985, (Cape Town ; Tafelberg, 1986), Original manuscript in UCT Archives. (1973)

N.B. In defining our terminology, we acknowledge that the term 'Cape Coloured' is tainted by its common usage in apartheid legislation. We use it only for convenience and to avoid confusion over definitions in this thesis.

varying degrees determined status, in Kimberley this was probably less true.<sup>15</sup> The presence of a large migrant African population and the development of the mining industry ensured that the lines of cleavage in Kimberley society altered with the passage of time to differ markedly from those in the rest of the Colony.

In the Cape Colony, as in other British colonies in the nineteenth century, there was a clear link between race and status with white skin colour being equated to privilege and power. Popular ideologies of dominance sought to lend justification to the unequal and hierarchical societies which were developing. These ideologies were given credibility by the church and were reflected in white middle-class newspaper discourse of the day.

While British law and government was colour-blind, most white settlers, English and Afrikaner alike, clearly were not.<sup>16</sup> English newspaper commentary was unashamedly racist.<sup>17</sup> Africans, Indians and 'Cape Coloureds' who achieved positions of prominence in urban communities faced prejudice from Afrikaner and Briton alike, to whom a brown skin still represented a condition of subservience<sup>18</sup>

However, Cape colonial society did make allowance for a measure of assimilation into the white middle class ranks under certain conditions. Western

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<sup>15</sup>For studies of race and class stratification in Cape Town specifically during the second half of the nineteenth century see for e.g: Bickford-Smith, J. V.: "Commerce, class and ethnicity in Cape Town, 1875-1902", (Ph.D Thesis, University of Cambridge, 1988); van Heyningen, E.B.: "Public health and society in Cape Town, 1880-1910", (Ph.D Thesis, U.C.T., 1989), N.B. These interpretations are not necessarily true for Kimberley, but are invaluable as an indicator of contemporary ideologies and perceptions.

<sup>16</sup>See, for example, Bickford-Smith: "Commerce, class and ethnicity"; van Heyningen: "Public health and society in Cape Town"

<sup>17</sup>Lawrence, P. G.: "Perceptions of Africans and Muslims in the Cape Times and Cape Argus, 1876-1890", (B.A. Hons, U.C.T., 1990)

<sup>18</sup>Lewis: Between the Wire and the Wall, pp. 7-20; Goldin: Making Race, pp. 3-27

civilization presumed to offer some salvation for the indigenous peoples whose own cultures were deemed 'backward and primitive'. While race was still the most important line of cleavage in the Cape Colony this did not exclude a limited degree of social advancement if an 'acceptable level of civilization' was reached.<sup>19</sup> As a result, a few black élites were able to 'pass off' or integrate into the white community, reducing the probability of these groups identifying with each other.<sup>20</sup> In Kimberley, the extent of black and white polarisation during periods of crisis was so great that there was no such safety valve for the black élite. This meant that Africans, Cape Coloureds, and Indians in this mining society became more conscious of their common interests than in the urban centres of the Cape Colony. Yet at the same time, class and ethnic differences between blacks themselves remained insurmountable obstacles to the formation of lasting alliances.

The relative isolation of the diamond mining camps and the stresses associated with the emergence of industry combined to create what were very unique pressures on its inhabitants and the way in which they viewed themselves and others. The enforced nature of interaction between people of different nationality, race, religion, class and language in a confined and isolated stretch of land made Kimberley very atypical of colonial society. Added to this was the fact

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<sup>19</sup>This incorporationist ideology had as its basis the belief that 'Western civilization' was a way of salvation for black races and was best illustrated by the Cape Liberal Tradition. By the late nineteenth century however this ideology was under challenge from the spread of scientific racism and ideas of Social Darwinism which urged segregation, not integration.

For Social Darwinism see e.g. Banton, M.: The Idea of Race, (Cambridge ; Tuvistock Publications, 1976), pp 89-100 ; Marks, S. and Trapido, S. (eds): The Politics of Race, Class and Nationalism in Twentieth Century South Africa, (New York ; Longman, 1987), pp. 1-10 ; Dubow, S.: "Race, civilization and culture : the elaboration of segregationist discourse in the inter-war years", in Marks and Trapido, *Ibid* pp. 71-80.

<sup>20</sup>Lewis: Between the Wire and the Wall, pp. 9 and 13

that the British administration had very little military force with which to effect orderly government in the region. All this was occurring within the broader context of economic and political upheaval unprecedented in the history of the Cape Colony,<sup>21</sup> for one effect of the mineral revolution was to disrupt rural economies. During this period also, control of the affairs of the Colony itself had passed into the hands of the colonists as Britain first granted the Cape Representative and then Responsible government in 1853 and 1872 respectively. The latter half of the century also witnessed the spread, in British colonies, of 'scientific racism' and 'Social Darwinism'. These ideas challenged the incorporation of blacks into colonial structures and urged instead, segregation, arguing that biological differences proved that racial groups should remain apart.<sup>22</sup>

In Kimberley, blacks themselves distinguished between those from the Cape Colony and others, whom many whites labelled 'raw' Africans, from areas as yet uninfluenced by the missionaries and their twin gospels of Christianity and Western civilization.<sup>23</sup> There was already an influential group of Africans in Kimberley during this period whom Brian Willan describes as "...set apart from traditional African society and equipped to take up the promise of common citizenship ... as 'civilized British subjects.'"<sup>24</sup> The second half of the nineteenth century witnessed aggressive expansion by Britain into African chiefdoms in southern Africa. By the 1880s these

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<sup>21</sup>Marks and Rathbone: Industrialisation and Social Change , pp. 1-2

<sup>22</sup>Marks and Trapido: The Politics of Race, Class and Nationalism, pp. 6-7

<sup>23</sup>For British expansion in Southern Africa in the latter half of the nineteenth century see de Kiewiet, C. W. : The Imperial Factor in South Africa: A Study in Politics and Economics ,(Cambridge; Cambridge University Press, 1937)

<sup>24</sup>Karis T. G. and Carter , G. M (eds), From Protest to Challenge, A Documentary History of South Africa, 1882-1964 , (Stanford ; Hoover Institution Press, Stanford University ,1972) , Volume I; Protest and Hope, 1882-1934 ; p. 3

annexed territories had yielded an increasingly large group of mission educated Africans who were "...able to wield the colonist's own weapons of education, propaganda, political organisation and the vote."<sup>25</sup> This class of Africans overcame ethnic distinctions to espouse a common African consciousness, albeit an exclusive group. Many of them were coming to Kimberley, where they formed a highly visible community. Willan comments on this influx that -

Kimberley became, in fact, a focal point for the ambitions and aspirations of hundreds of Africans from different parts of the Cape - who shared common ideas, values, and experiences as a result of education at the hands of Christian missionaries of one denomination or another.<sup>26</sup>

These educated Africans, together with 'Cape Coloured' and Indian élites shared the belief that their education and status would cocoon them from legislation which they perceived as largely directed at 'raw' African labourers, even though, initially at least, couched in colour terms. This was most clearly manifested during the turbulent 1870s and 1880s in Kimberley as the black élites responded to white racism by asserting colonial values, typically emphasising their ownership of property and qualification for the franchise. Educated blacks in Kimberley drew strong distinctions between themselves and those Africans who were classified in colonial discourse as 'raw' or 'blanket Kaffirs'.<sup>27</sup>

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<sup>25</sup>Simons, J. and R: Class and Colour in South Africa 1850-1950 (Harmondsworth 1969 ; Reprinted London, 1983) , p. 48

<sup>26</sup>Willan, B.: "An African in Kimberley : Sol T. Plaatjie, 1894- 1898", in Marks and Rathbone: Industrialisation and Social Change, p. 241

<sup>27</sup>See chapters three to five below.

The high moral values espoused by black élites in their quest for acceptance was a trademark of organisations formed by them during this period. Nevertheless, unlike elsewhere in the Cape Colony, class and other distinctions had less of a bearing on social status than the growing chasm between black and white.

The black élites increasingly found themselves being estranged from the white community in Kimberley by intense prejudice which was to flare into anti-black violence.<sup>28</sup> The granting of Responsible government to the Colony was a cause for further anxiety for many blacks who felt that the severing of ties with Britain would deprive them of the rights that they had hitherto enjoyed.<sup>29</sup> As a result of this they assumed leadership of 'coloured' political bodies and ultimately used these organisations as pressure groups to secure what were essentially class interests. The artificial and opportunistic nature of the black consciousness which manifested itself in the Northern Cape became evident as ethnic and class distinctions rapidly surfaced. The time was not yet ripe for a black consciousness movement.

In brief, then, we argue that the various social and ethnic groups which converged on Kimberley with the common interest of self-enrichment did not segregate specifically into socio-economic and cultural groups *per se*. Overriding these groupings was a general distinction between arrivals from the Cape Colony and others, mostly migrant African labourers, from outside its borders. The social distance between colonial and non-colonial gradually gave rise to the expression of a negative stereotype of the latter group in all Kimberley newspapers and in official

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<sup>28</sup>For an account of the riots of 1871/2 see chapter three below

<sup>29</sup>For black fears over the severance of ties with Britain see van der Ross: "Political and Social history of the cape Coloured People," (Manuscript in U.C.T. Archives) , pp. 9-30

reports. As competition for natural resources in the region grew, so prejudice from white diggers towards all blacks, increased, including those from the Cape Colony, who claimed their rights, as British subjects, to own claims. We show that the main line of cleavage in the Kimberley community shifted with time to become a racial rather than class distinction. We contend that the intensification of tension between blacks and whites, which peaked during times of crisis, was such that it precluded the integration of black élites into white middle class social circles. As a result, these élites sought an identity of their own where they expressed their own 'respectability' and affirmation of middle class values. This process led, in due course to the first tentative steps towards black political consciousness and activity.

In Chapter One we examine the growth of a negative stereotype of blacks in Kimberley. The main line of cleavage apparent in the early settlements was the distinction between people from the Cape Colony on one hand and the large African migrant workforce on the other. We show how the negative stereotype of non-colonial Africans in the perceptions of white diggers gradually became less a class discrimination than one which was increasingly racist in character. The shift in portrayal of first, the indigenous Koranna and Griqua and then later, the Cape Muslims by Kimberley newspapers in the region reveals the development of a stereotype of general inferiority applicable to all blacks in the region. This was of special concern to those blacks from the Cape Colony who deemed themselves entitled to equal treatment before the law. The overt manifestation of this anti-black prejudice reflected the racism inherent in the diamond mining community.

The formation of organisations for blacks in Kimberley occurred despite the existence of deep class, religious and cultural divisions. In Chapter Two we look more closely at groups of black people arriving in Kimberley. We examine in particular the influence of colonial blacks who included 'Cape Coloureds', Muslims, Indians and Fingoes. It was primarily from these groups that the élites who were instrumental in the formation of political organisations for blacks were drawn. During this period American blacks were also instrumental in providing an impetus for the formation of black benefit organisations. These bodies were dominated by petty-bourgeois ideals and were dedicated to colonial values. As such, they effectively excluded the vast majority of blacks in Kimberley who were migrant labourers. Many 'Cape Coloured' women also came to the region as prostitutes. They are important as well, as they formed one of the largest groups of 'Cape Coloureds' on the Diamond Fields during the early years.

In Chapter Three we consider the increasing isolation of black élites in Kimberley. Early legislation passed by the new colonial administration of Griqualand-West bowed to white digger demands in the wake of rioting and excluded all blacks from the right to search and dig for diamonds. Educated blacks responded by emphasising their shared colonial heritage with whites and appealed to British justice to uphold the equality of races before the law. The belief that Britain would redress grievances and injustice was common amongst black élites in the town. They maintained a social distance between themselves and other blacks and remained committed to 'passing into' the white community.

While educated blacks were going to great lengths to dissociate themselves from non-colonial Africans and indigent 'Cape Coloureds' the latter were associating with each other to an increasing extent. In Chapter Four we concern ourselves with these 'inarticulate' blacks in Kimberley as well as look at the extent to which Africans and 'Cape Coloureds' in this category identified with each other and shared common experiences. We consider patterns of segregation and association regarding residential settlements, schooling, health care, sport, religion and the utilisation of leisure time. All of these showed an increase in the polarisation of blacks and whites

Chapter Five is devoted to a closer examination of the underlying causes for the escalation of racial tension in Kimberley in the 1870s and 1880s. Previously independent white claimholders suffered a dramatic decline in fortune as a consequence of the growth of the mining industry. The erosion of their positions of privilege contributed to race hatred as they were forced to compete with cheaper black labour in the workplace. Flashpoints in Kimberley during this period were the Black Flag Revolt and the strikes of the early 1880s. Both of these failed to arrest the deterioration of white privilege in the workplace. The period was to mark a heightened hostility between blacks and whites as they came into direct competition with each other for the first time. It was during the 1880s that the black élites realised the extent of their isolation in the broader community as a consequence of their estrangement from white circles.

In the next chapter (six) we examine the emergence of the first political organisations for blacks as the African, Indian and 'Cape Coloured' élites resigned

themselves to their exclusion from the white community and assumed leadership of black associations, the most important of which were the Africander League and the Coloured People's Association. These two black political organisations, formed almost a decade apart, reveal the progression from what was essentially an exclusive ideal to one which was more representative of all blacks in Kimberley.

Leroy Vail<sup>30</sup> has pointed to the connection between the growth of industry and the growth of ethnicity amongst people in that region. The development of the diamond industry, coupled with the socio-economic instability of the late nineteenth century meant that new lines of cleavage were emerging in Kimberley. Certainly, the early mining camps had shown elements of the inequalities prevalent in the rest of the Cape Colony but these gave way to a polarisation into black and white. This kind of society bore only a superficial resemblance to that in the other urban centres of the Colony where it was still at least theoretically possible for the black élites to be acceptable to mainstream white society. There was no such safety mechanism in Kimberley, prompting black élites in that town to use colour consciousness as a platform to regain the social and political status they had enjoyed elsewhere in the Cape Colony.

The diverse and varied organisations being formed on the diamond fields reveal the extent to which other ideologies were emerging during this period. In the 1880s the formation of Africander associations in Kimberley revealed a trend towards severing ties with Britain after Responsible government was granted in

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<sup>30</sup>Vail, L. (ed): The Creation of Tribalism in South Africa (London ; James Curry, 1989)

1872.<sup>31</sup> The 1880s also marked a confrontation which was the first of its kind in southern Africa, that of the struggle between capital and labour, a common enough scenario in Europe.<sup>32</sup> The entire Colony was affected by the granting of Responsible government and, to a greater or lesser degree, by the mineral discoveries. In Kimberley these changes were taking place in a climate of growing working class consciousness and resentment of the increasing power of the mining industry. All this was to impact on the development of race relations in the region.

The mineral revolution, political independence, the increasing group of educated blacks, the disruption of many societies in the sub-continent as a result of the ravages of war and drought and the first confrontation between labour and capital all conspired to create new ideologies which challenged the entrenched lines of cleavage in the Cape Colony. It is in this context that, in the late nineteenth century, new ideologies were being espoused by disadvantaged groupings in Kimberley as they tried to come to terms with the brave new world they themselves had helped to

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<sup>31</sup> According to Pettman, Rev. C.: Africanderisms: A Glossary of South African Colloquial Words and Phrases and of Place and Other Names, (London, Longman's 1913), pp. 22-3, the word 'Africander' originally had three main meanings -

a): African-born descendents of European parents generally

b): African-born offspring of Dutch parents only

c): Coloured people of mixed blood; in the period covered by this thesis its most general usage was to denote people who put the interests of the Cape Colony first. This definition included both whites and blacks. Those singled out for special criticism, however, were Colonists who retired to Europe or America after first amassing a fortune in southern Africa. The 'Afrikaner' nationalism which was showing signs of political manifestation during the second half of the nineteenth century was exclusively white and was an adaptation of the above definitions. However, on the diamond fields the Africander organisations which were formed are more appropriately described by the earlier definitions of the term as being inclusive of all those born in the Cape Colony and with its interests at heart. See also - C.T., 1/6/1877; Daily Independent, 22/12/1883

<sup>32</sup>The first white trade unions in the Cape Colony were formed in Kimberley in the early 1880's. In 1891 the Knights of Labour, claiming both white and black membership, was established to oppose the de Beers monopoly.

create. Despite the great cultural and class diversity across colour lines, the racial distinction emerged as the deepest line of cleavage in Kimberley.

## CHAPTER ONE

### The growth of a negative stereotype of blacks in Kimberley

The emergence of a negative stereotype of non-colonial blacks in Kimberley newspapers and contemporary accounts soon became apparent in the 1870s, reflecting the prejudice of whites towards the migrant African labour force.<sup>1</sup> This discrimination was justified as a being a reaction against 'raw' savages who had no, or very little, exposure to Western civilization. However, it soon became apparent that race and not class differences were underlying white prejudice as educated colonial blacks found out to their cost. The negative stereotype contained in colonial discourse in Britain's newest Crown Colony gradually became a more general one, embracing all blacks.

The most conspicuous division between people arriving at the diamond fields during the early months of settlement was not religion, class or even race. Certainly, these differences did exist and were inherent in the society at the Cape from which many of the new arrivals were drawn; but those coming from the Cape Colony were still substantially outnumbered by the large numbers of African migrant labourers who were drawn from their rural homesteads far beyond the ambit of British rule by the prospect of employment in the diamond mines.<sup>2</sup>

The difference between the two groups was expressed in the local newspapers, official documents and contemporary accounts as a contrast between

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<sup>1</sup>African labourers made up to two-thirds of the inhabitants of the diamond fields See e.g. Worger: "The making of monopoly" , pp. 69-70

<sup>2</sup>For an account of migration to the diamond fields see Marks and Rathbone: Industrialisation and Social Change, pp 1-34.

'civilized' colonials and 'barbaric' non-colonials. The divide was made especially apparent by the close proximity of those congregating around the diamond mines<sup>3</sup>. References to non-colonial Africans as 'blanket Kaffirs' and 'raw Kaffirs' by both whites and blacks from the Cape reveal the extent of their contempt for what they perceived to be a lack of acceptable Western standards of dress and behaviour.<sup>4</sup>

✓  
Social  
Determinism

The term 'non-colonial', loosely applied, embraced those indigenous people of the sub-continent who had not as yet been drawn into the British sphere of influence. These included numerous African migrant labourers from as far afield as Mozambique, Southern Rhodesia and Bechuanaland as well as those from the Transvaal highveld and Basutoland.<sup>5</sup> The labour intensive nature of diamond digging made Kimberley an attractive destination for migrants in search of employment.<sup>6</sup> These migrant workers constituted the majority of the total workforce as the number of colonial blacks and Europeans involved in this aspect of production was negligible.<sup>7</sup> Those to benefit most from the need for manpower were the African kingdoms where the migrant labour system was an established means of income for young males.<sup>8</sup> Making up by far the majority of African migrants to Kimberley were the Pedi from the interior, the Tsonga from the east coast and the Basuto from nearby Basutoland. The interaction between these societies and the emerging diamond

<sup>3</sup>Turrell: Capital and Labour, pp. 55, 94 ; see also plate 5 on p 95. for early accommodation of blacks and whites

<sup>4</sup>See Chapter Three below

<sup>5</sup>Turrell: Capital and Labour, pp. 19-31 ; Worger: S.A.'s City of Diamonds, pp. 64-109

<sup>6</sup>Kimble, J.: "Labour migration in Basutoland, c 1870-1885" in Marks and Rathbone: Industrialisation and Social Change, pp. 122-124 . Harries, P.: "Kinship, ideology and the nature of pre-colonial labour migration from the Delagoa Bay hinterland to South Africa up to 1895", in Marks and Rathbone: op. cit. p. 143.

<sup>7</sup>Worger: S.A.'s City of Diamonds, pp. 74-75, tables 2.1 and 2.2.

<sup>8</sup>Kimble: "Labour migration", pp. 128-137; Harries: "Kinship, ideology", pp. 142-60

industry is well chronicled.<sup>9</sup> Numerous smaller African tribes were also represented around the diamond mines. The extent of the diversity of African labourers is well illustrated by an observer in 1874 who identified some of the groups present -

There are Bushmen, Korannas, Hottentots, Griquas, Batlapin, Damaras, Barolong, Barutse, Bakhatla, Bakwena, Bamangwatu, Bapeli, Magalaka, Batsuetla, Baganana, Basutu, Magwoka, Mazulu, Maswazi, Matswetswa, Matonga, Matabele, Mabaca, Mampondo, Mamfengu, Batembu, Maxosa, etc<sup>10</sup>

Many African labourers came from areas where colonial influences were only just becoming apparent. To most whites they were an unknown and potentially dangerous entity, made all the more threatening because they by far outnumbered the white inhabitants of the diamond fields. The level of hostility and prejudice expressed in the Kimberley newspapers is an indication of the depth of fear and loathing held by many whites towards African labourers, who were portrayed as half witted savages.

This negative stereotyping of the non-colonial African population was perpetuated by colonial blacks who played down their physical similarity to 'raw Africans' while emphasizing the colonial heritage they shared with whites. The following extract, from a mission educated African in Kimberley, is harshly critical of non-colonial Africans in general -

The difference between the so-called colonial Kaffirs and those from the interior, with regard to personal features and habits of life seem greater than

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<sup>9</sup>Delius, P.: "Migrant labour and the Pedi, 1840-1880"; Marks, S. and Atmore, A. (eds) Economy and Society in Pre-industrial South Africa, (London; Longmans, 1980), pp. 293-312 ; Kimble: "Labour Migration", pp. 119-137 ; Harries: "Kinship, ideology", pp. 142-60

<sup>10</sup>Wilson and Perrot: Outlook on a century, pp. 20-21.

might be expected from people of the same nation. I am afraid my friends in the Cape Colony who may be boasting of their nation would not be very proud of it, if they were to see the different tribes by whom they are represented at the Diamond Fields. Instead of the brave and warlike Kaffir, we have the helpless and cowardly Matlaping. Instead of our shrewd and cautious red Kaffir, we have the dull and ignorant Koranna. The very low opinion that Europeans have of the natives of this country is not altogether groundless. With the exception of the warlike Zulus and Basutus, they are all very great cowards, dull, and ignorant. From Bakwenaland, Mangwatuland, Bapeliland, and beyond the Transvaal, there come dwarfed little fellows, three of whom are scarcely able to lift a common bag of meal, and yet they are full grown men.<sup>11</sup>

Numerous letters to the local newspapers attest to the desire of Africans, 'Cape Coloureds' and Indians who arrived in the region from the Cape Colony to be treated separately from 'raw' Africans.<sup>12</sup>

White officials themselves noted a distinction between non-colonial and colonial Africans in their reports and correspondence. One wrote that-

There are many natives, half-castes, and others from the Colony, who are honest, intelligent, and respectable men and these must of course be treated in every way similar to the whites, but the great mass of the labouring coloured population consists of raw Kaffirs, who come from the interior with every element of barbarism, and no touch of civilization among them, in fact they must be treated as children incapable of governing themselves.<sup>13</sup>

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<sup>11</sup>Ibid, p. 21

<sup>12</sup>See Chapter Three

<sup>13</sup>Turrell: Capital and Labour, p. 29

The development of this unfavourable image of non-colonial blacks, in part perpetuated by blacks from the Cape Colony, came to include not only African migrant workers but also other blacks. The negative stereotype of non-colonial blacks in colonial discourse had come about partly as a result of white fears that they would be 'swamped' by the large numbers of uneducated and un-Christianised who came to Kimberley in search of employment. Importantly, though, this portrayal of migrant labourers was becoming a more inclusive stereotyping of all blacks, even those who did show signs of having been exposed to western influences. This blanket condemnation was to be crucial to future developments.

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Among the first black groups to bear the brunt of what was increasingly becoming a racial rather than class discrimination were the indigenous Griqua and Koranna. An examination of these groups in the late 1870s reveals that they were increasingly being categorised in official reports with migrant Africans.<sup>14</sup> This occurred despite the fact that many of the indigenous black population did not conform to the stereotype of non-colonial blacks in a number of respects. Both had lived in close proximity to the borders of the Colony and showed evidence of

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<sup>14</sup>Cape Archive (C.A.), Native Affairs Blue Book , "G20" , (1881), : "Report of Inspector of Locations, Daniels Kuil and Gruitfontein Location"; "Report of Civil Commissioner, Barkly" ; "Report of Civil Commissioner Herbert"

missionary influences in their dress and literacy levels.<sup>15</sup> Many Griqua and Koranna also differed physically from the migrant workers and indigenous Africans. Their complexion was markedly lighter and corresponded to those of groups in which there was evidence of 'mixed' ancestry like the 'Bastards' and 'Cape Coloureds.'

Ultimately, Afrikaner expansion into the region and colonial support for a submissive workforce led to the erosion of the authority of both the Griqua and the Koranna and resulted in their integration, by 1880, with the 'raw' Africans who served the labour needs of Griqualand-West. This occurred in spite of both groups having cultivated identities distinct from surrounding African ethnic groups like the Thlaping and Rolong. Their close links to missionaries and, in the case of the Griqua, a profitable trading network with the Cape Colony had initially resulted in a favourable portrayal of them in colonial newspaper reports. In the years following the establishment of the Crown Colony of Griqualand-West this changed to an increasingly negative depiction in local newspapers.

When disaffected indigenous inhabitants rose in rebellion<sup>16</sup> against their subjection by the colonial authorities, they were further vilified in local white newspapers. Where previously the Koranna and especially the Griqua had been portrayed as being harmless drunks at worst they were now represented by

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<sup>15</sup>For history of Griqua see Ross, R.: Adam Kok's Griqua, A Study in the Development of Stratification in South Africa, (Cambridge; Cambridge University Press, 1976) ; Legassick, M.: "The Griqua, the Sotho-Tswana and the missionaries", (Ph.D Thesis, University of California, 1969) ; Kurtz, M.: "The Albania settlement of Griqualand West", (M.A. Thesis, Rhodes University, 1988) ,  
For history of Koranna see Engelbrecht, J.A.: The Koranna, (Cape Town; Maskew Miller, 1936) ; Maingard, L.F., "Studies in Koranna history, customs and language", in Bantu Studies, vi, (1932) ; Strauss, T.: "War along the Orange, The Koranna and the northern border wars of 1868-9 and 1878-9", (B.A. Hons. Thesis, University of Cape Town, 1979)

<sup>16</sup>The main cause of dissatisfaction amongst indigenous blacks was the land question. Only those who could prove occupation were granted land while others were dispossessed.

newspapers as being unscrupulous and murderous, despite the fact that only a small majority actually took part in the hostilities.<sup>17</sup> Once the uprising had been crushed by military force, the further oppression of the remaining Griqua and Koranna was justified by the British administration as a necessary measure to prevent a recurrence. The local newspapers took up where colonial soldiers had left off and ensured that the image of a westernised, friendly indigenous populace was replaced by an image of people whom the best intentions of missionaries could not save from their own folly.

As late as the 1860s, the decade of the first diamond rush in Griqualand-West, the Griqua were the most powerful and dominant of the indigenous inhabitants. A contributor to the Cape Monthly Magazine describes the state of Griqua development in 1860 in glowing terms -

...they had their titles to their farms, on which they had built substantial cottages and out-buildings; orchards, stocked with good fruit trees, garden grounds and lands for cultivation, were in many cases enclosed with stone walls; good stone kraals and one or two dams were to be found on most farms, troops of from twenty to one hundred horses, about the same number of cattle, and hundreds of well-bred woollen sheep, were running on these farms, and many a man brought his ten, fifteen, twenty and twenty-five bales of wool at once for sale; while the shopkeepers found them as good customers for clothing, groceries, guns, saddelry, carts and furniture as any of the Boers.<sup>18</sup>

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<sup>17</sup>Worger: S.A.'s City of Diamonds, p. 95

<sup>18</sup>Anon: "The Griquas and their exodus", in Cape Monthly Magazine (vol 5), (July - December 1872), pp. 334-335

They were clearly distinct from surrounding African tribes in the region in part because of their colonial links and lengthy exposure to missionary teaching and education. Of all the indigenous people in Griqualand-West they espoused what resembled most closely a form of colour consciousness.<sup>19</sup> Yet the Griqua did not seek to make common cause with other black indigenous groups but instead remained aloof from them, fiercely proud of their part-European ancestry.

The Griqua had originally consisted of a mixture of runaway slaves, remnants of various Khoi tribes and 'Bastards'. This diverse group had drifted towards the Frontier of the Cape Colony and by the nineteenth century reached the banks of the Orange river in the northern Cape. European clothing and the Dutch names of many still bore testament to their colonial heritage.

The Griqua settlement in the Northern Cape had developed, in some ways, into a mirror image of the Colonial society they had fled. Kurtz comments on the Griqua community that -

It was a heterogenous society with marked differences in wealth, status and culture. The Bastard families had the highest status, they were the 'swarthy Hollanders', while the !Kora had the lowest.<sup>20</sup>

Family and kinship ties were also very important to the Griqua, with clans being linked to each other loosely. Those Griqua who had European ancestry kept aloof from the newer arrivals and those descended from San and Khoi groups.<sup>21</sup> As

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<sup>19</sup>Ross: Adam Kok's Griqua, p. 11

<sup>20</sup>Kurtz: "The Albania settlement", pp. 46-47

<sup>21</sup>Ross: Adam Kok's Griqua, p. 15

in the Colony skin colour determined status and often decided leadership. All these influences further intensified the distinctions between the Griqua and indigenous African tribes of the region whom they regarded as being heathen hordes.

The boundary of the Cape Colony had been extended to the Orange River in 1823 and the Griqua were once more being drawn into the Colonial sphere of influence they had once tried to flee. At the same time there were obvious advantages in being close neighbours with the Colony. The Griqua were ideally situated for trading purposes and engaged in commercial activities with Boer and Briton alike. They were also in a position to act as middlemen between colonial traders and African tribes and this proved to be a rich source of income. The expansion of British influence northwards held important political ramifications for the Griqua. They were perceived by successive Governors at the Cape during this period as being an ideal buffer between the African tribes of the interior and the Cape Colony itself.<sup>22</sup>

Because of their strong ties with the Cape Colony, and their long exposure to missionary teaching, the Griqua had always considered themselves to be the standard-bearers of colonial values in the region they had entered. British support only served to reinforce this myth. This illusion was shattered by the establishment of a powerful Afrikaner presence in the Orange Free State. The new Boer state claimed vast areas of Griqua territory. The Griqua in Griquatown and Campbell similarly found themselves being forced off their land by the new powers in the

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<sup>22</sup>Legassick: "The Griqua, the Sotho-Tswana", pp. 532-583

region. The drying of the fountain of the Griquatown forced many of the Griqua in the area to move away so that by 1855 its population of 8-10 000 were mostly non-Griqua.<sup>23</sup> When Andries Waterboer, son of Nicholas who had died in 1852, invited annexation by Britain in 1870 it was a last desperate attempt to put an end to the continued splintering of Griqua society in the face of land seizure by white settlers in the Transvaal Republic, the Orange Free State and the new settlement of Albania. It was to be to no avail as Britain was not prepared further to alienate the powerful Boer forces in the region. Faced with drought and starvation the main body of Griqua elected to trek *en masse* to the Eastern Cape to rebuild what was left of their community. Many remained, but they were a shattered shell of what had once been the most powerful force in the region.

The land commission of 1876 and its sequel, the rebellion of disaffected Griqua and Koranna in 1878 highlighted the extent of the decline of the former.<sup>24</sup> By the early 1880s the two main remaining Griqua centres, Griquatown and Campbell, were desolate and practically deserted. The same Griqua chief, Andries Waterboer, who had invited the British annexation had disappeared and was mocked by the Kimberley newspapers -

So completely has the ex-Chief Waterboer sunk into significance and retired into 'private life,' that, at the moment, his precise whereabouts are not known for certain. His last domicile was Hope Town, to which place he was virtually exiled at the instigation of the Magistrate of Griquatown, who threatened 'to treat him as he would any other drunken old Hottentot', where he was kept

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<sup>23</sup>Kurtz: "The Albania settlement", p. 65

<sup>24</sup>The land commission granted only a minimum of land to indigenous blacks while recognizing most of the Orange Free State claims

under surveillance as a suspected rebel, and living as a Government prisoner up to the period of Annexation. The Commissioners have, no doubt, received information where to find him : but, if the poor old Chief has sunk into the depths of degradation which, as a rule, characterise the Hottentot race, the value of his testimony on the subject in hand will be nothing. The probability is, his memory has quite gone from him in regard to matters affecting his former domain...<sup>25</sup>

This then was what Ross called the 'tragedy of the Griqua'.<sup>26</sup> The disintegration of their society has been explained by Kurtz as being the result of 'years of progressive demoralisation' exacerbated by alcohol abuse.<sup>27</sup> Marais blames what he calls the 'hopelessly improvident' nature of the Griqua.<sup>28</sup> A more realistic assessment is made by Ross who points to their inability to make common cause with the Boers on the Frontier and their consequent reliance on Britain, whose policies were inconsistent and ultimately damaging, as the reason for the breakup of Griqua society.<sup>29</sup> There was probably an element of all three.

The disintegration of the remaining Griqua communities in the Northern Cape continued as the region became a theatre for confrontation between Britain and the Boer republics. A white observer does not disguise his contempt for these Griqua remnants -

A more humiliating picture of a waste of energy and total failure of missionary enterprise could not be found than that shown in the present state

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<sup>25</sup>*Diamond Fields Advertiser*, 13/06/1883

<sup>26</sup>Ross: *Adam Kok's Griqua*, p. 11

<sup>27</sup>Kurtz: "The Albania settlement", p. 62

<sup>28</sup>Marais, J.S.: *The Cape Coloured People, 1652 - 1937*, (Johannesburg; Witwatersrand University Press, 1957), p. 45

<sup>29</sup>Ross: *Adam Kok's Griqua*

of these people...The pure Griqua, with all the teaching he has received, is at the present moment one of the most insolent and degraded of all the races found in the southern portion of Africa. He possesses a smattering of religious jargon, while he only speaks the truth by accident; and lives in a state of filth until he and his offspring are eaten up with disease<sup>30</sup>

The whole point, of course, is that whereas the Griqua had once been praised as an example of the success of the fruits of Western civilization, in the eyes of many whites they had become living proof of the failure to civilize blacks, no matter what their hue. The failed rebellion as the last straw in a chapter of disastrous episodes for the Griqua polity in the Northern Cape. Boer expansionism, the drying up of their springs and the subsequent trek of many of their number to the east saw the disintegration of the strong Griqua nation that dominated the region before the late 1860s<sup>31</sup>. Griqua pride and identity had been eroded to such an extent in Griqualand-West after 1870 that, together with Koranna and San remnants, they were becoming indistinguishable, socially at least, from the African tribes in the region. They were defined by officials of the new British administration as one of the 'native' tribes of the hinterland. Accordingly, along with African people from the area, they were relocated in 'native' locations. Besides the Griqua, Koranna and San these locations were home to Tlhaping, Basuto and others simply labelled 'Kafir'.<sup>32</sup> Those who went to work on the diamond mines also settled with African people in the municipal locations.<sup>33</sup>

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<sup>30</sup>Stow, G.W.: "Griqualand West", *Cape Monthly Magazine*, (vol 5), (July-December 1872), p. 76

<sup>31</sup>Kurtz: "The Albania settlement", p. 65

<sup>32</sup>C.A., N.A.B.B., "G 20", "Danielskuil and Gruisfontein Location Report", (1881), See Ref. 14 also.

<sup>33</sup>Turrell: *Capital and Labour*, p. 55, quoting the Reverend Meyer of the Berlin Missionary Society, 1875

While the latter half of the century witnessed a breakup of Griqua society in the Northern Cape it was to be a time of revitalisation for another indigenous people - the Koranna. After having been dominated by the Griqua for so long the Koranna once more emerged as a significant force in the region. This was due in no small part to the increased missionary activity among the Koranna by the Berlin Missionary Society.<sup>34</sup>

The Koranna were a Khoi people in the region who had been joined by Oorlams groups - Khoi from the Colony who had been in European employ - and by "Bastards" in the course of the nineteenth century. Partly as a consequence of their heterogenous composition the Koranna were widely spread into scattered, mutually hostile groups. It was because of their inability to present a united front that, despite being in possession of firearms and ammunition, they were easily overcome by the Griqua.<sup>35</sup>

The Berlin Missionary Society had stepped up its activities in the region during the latter half of the century and many Koranna flocked to the mission stations to take advantage of protection they afforded. The B.M.S. missions at Bethany, Saron, Pniel and Bloemhof all reported ministering to large numbers of Koranna.<sup>36</sup> The following description of Pniel is typical.<sup>37</sup>

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<sup>34</sup>Maingard: *Bantu Studies* vi, p. 126, During the latter half of the nineteenth century the B.M.S. was establishing numerous stations in the Northern Cape.

<sup>35</sup>Maingard: op. cit. pp. 103-133 ; Engelbrecht: *The Koranna*, pp. 1-79

<sup>36</sup>Ibid

<sup>37</sup>This is not to be confused with Pniel in the Western Cape near Stellenbosch. This Pniel was located in the Kimberley hinterland.

At this time Pniel had 40 to 50 church members and a fair number of school children, but it is estimated that there were from three to four hundred Koranna scattered over different werfs just across the river.<sup>38</sup>

The Koranna, though more fragmented than the Griqua, found themselves in a more favourable position than the latter at the start of the diamond rush as a result of their close links to the missionaries of the B.M.S. Worger observes that -

The Kora...amounting to some two thousand people, retained access to relatively well-watered lands (claimed by the Berlin Missionary Society) abutting the river diggings along the Vaal. Therefore they could supply perishable goods, such as milk from their large herds of goats, to the local market and re-invest the profit in further livestock purchases. They too acquired wagons so that they could participate in the highly profitable firewood trade and had better access to supplies than did the Griqua.<sup>39</sup>

This favourable state of affairs did not last. After having many of their land claims rejected, some Koranna had joined the ill-fated 1878 rebellion. The increase in diamond discoveries made competition for land even more fierce. A proclamation by two Koranna chiefs in the Diamond Fields Advertiser in 1882 asserted - <sup>40</sup>

...the Koranna nation had the most lawful and the oldest territorial rights to the ground situated to the north and north-west of the Vaal and Hart's rivers, and the land is still to a certain extent, occupied by them.

They continued by claiming that a rival chief had been -

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<sup>38</sup>Engelbrecht: The Koranna, p. 65

<sup>39</sup>Worger: S.A.'s City of Diamonds, pp.80-81

<sup>40</sup>D.F.A., 31/07/1882

... urged on and assisted by speculators and fortune seekers to try and rob us of our lawful rights and freedom, and by force of arms to force us to subjection, and with the help of white volunteers attacked us, and our villages were partially burnt down, our cattle stolen, and our children murdered.

The newspaper responded to the proclamation in the same issue by being sharply critical of the Koranna - "These men want more 'grond' - and 'grond' they will have by hook or by crook." The rest of the editorial reflects the widespread white opposition to the land grants to the Koranna -

To Griqualand West and Kimberley the subject is a vital one, for the territory and town is totally protected, and we have to face the contingency of having as our immediate neighbours a population which may be dangerous to the public peace.

Even Koranna on B.M.S. ground were not safe. Engelbrecht, commenting on the station at Pniel writes that -

The advent of the diamond diggers temporarily disorganized the mission in its activities, especially when the diggers crossed the river into what the mission claimed as its own property.<sup>41</sup>

Those clashes which did occur between diggers and Koranna on land owned by the B.M.S. were regarded by the white press as the result of Koranna aggression. Typically -

The disturbances amongst the Korannes...show that the state of mind of our native population is dangerous. They are clearly ready for an outbreak at any moment, and only need a pretext to break out into open war again.<sup>42</sup>

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<sup>41</sup>Engelbrecht: The Koranna, p. 65

<sup>42</sup>D.F.A., 29/01/1879

Action by the missionaries in support of the Koranna on their land was severely criticised by the Kimberley newspapers -

...the sooner the Berlin missionaries alter their course of action the safer it will be for themselves, and the better for their surroundings. It certainly is very remarkable that gentlemen who come out to this country for the purpose of teeing the way to that 'peace which passeth all understanding,' should be instrumental in encouraging the Korannas to defy the authorities, and provoke bloodshed. The account before us can lead to no other inference than that the missionaries have been at the bottom of all the mischief...<sup>43</sup>

The period of relative prosperity the Koranna experienced after the disintegration of the Griqua proved to be short lived. By the end of the 1870s large numbers of Koranna were in Kimberley itself, captured in the course of the rebellion or forced to the city in search of work. The following notice in the Diamond Fields Advertiser almost certainly refers to Koranna captured in the course of the uprising:

A number of Hottentots suitable for wagon drivers and handlers are now in the Prison, and Mr. Maxwell invites employers needing such hands to apply there.<sup>44</sup>

The English newspapers regarded the Koranna as alien and primitive and their articles which refer to them reflect this -

A lady in Kimberley who obtained one of the destitute women brought in by the Volunteers, as a house help, trusting to be able to model the raw material into a good servant, finds that the untutored savage is not so plastic as she would desire. In the first place the language of jerky clicks is not easily learnt,

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<sup>43</sup>Ibid

<sup>44</sup>Ibid, 12/03/1879

and the help is entirely innocent of Dutch or English. In the second place the lady's husband has several times had to get out of bed to expel fancied burglars, only to find that 3 a.m. is considered by the Koranna mind the proper time to rise and light the fire. Further, the woman has upwards of a hundred relations who visit her persistently, and their talk is something like the rattling of machinery out of repair. When the husband drives them out by one gate they come in by another, and fancy themselves entitled to bread and meat every day. Even profanity proves useless.<sup>45</sup>

To many whites the demise of the indigenous Griqua and Koranna, some of whom were literate, served only to emphasise the gulf between the races. Those who had urged the segregation of blacks and whites pointed to the disintegration of the remaining Griqua and Koranna communities in Griqualand-West as proof of the failure of incorporationist ideals.

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Initially the local black population stood to gain much from the discovery of diamonds in the Kimberley area. The fast growing town provided a market for produce and the indigenous peoples in the Kimberley hinterland identified and supplied its requirements.

The Koranna produced and sold milk and the Griqua and the Thlaping sold firewood in what was initially a lucrative and beneficial trading arrangement with the town. However short-term gains were rapidly overtaken by the ultimate disintegration of the lifestyle of these indigenous people as Kimberley hungrily devoured the hand that fed it. Worger notes that -

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<sup>45</sup>Ibid, 11/10/1878.

A swath of extermination and deforestation swept outward from Kimberley as the town's meat and fuel markets consumed the game and trees of Griqualand West and beyond at a rate faster than they could be reproduced.<sup>46</sup>

With their habitat destroyed the Griqua, Koranna and other indigenous groups went rapidly from independent and self sustaining suppliers of Kimberley to being heavily dependent on the town for their own survival.

Increasing numbers of indigenous people were forced to turn to the mines themselves as a means of employment. This played into the hands of the mine-owners as the shortage of African labour had emerged as a serious problem in the 1870s. Many others left the area to attempt to rebuild their lives elsewhere. The assimilation of large numbers of indigenous inhabitants by the encroaching town was not achieved entirely without resistance, albeit token. Even as late as 1880 the Griqua, Koranna and Thlaping, despite a general lack of other sources of income, constituted less than four percent of the labour in the mines.<sup>47</sup> A more graphic and obvious indication of the resentment felt by the indigenous inhabitants towards the disintegration of their lifestyle came in 1878 when large numbers of Koranna, Griqua and Thlaping rose in rebellion against British rule just eight years after the Griqua leader, Andries Waterboer, had invited annexation by them.

The uprising was rapidly put down and the last vestiges of traditional life crushed as the prisoners and their belongings were transported to Kimberley and forced to work as mine labourers and domestic servants. Even those who had not

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<sup>46</sup>Worger: *S.A.'s City of Diamonds*, p. 88

<sup>47</sup>*Ibid*, p. 96

participated in the rebellion found themselves dependent on work in Kimberley to such an extent that Worger comments with some justification that -

Migrant labour, carried out under the surveillance and control of location inspectors and local magistrates, had thus become an integral part of the rural life of Griqualand West's black inhabitants within a decade of the establishment of the Kimberley diamond industry.<sup>48</sup>

By the 1880s the Griqualand West authorities had effectively rounded up the remnants of the indigenous black population into a number of these rural locations which were to serve as labour pools for the diamond mines.<sup>49</sup>

On the few occasions the white middle class newspapers refer to the Koranna or Griqua they reveal a desperate struggle for survival.-

The woman appeared to be one of the Griqua prisoners, and enquiry proved that after having been hired by a person in the town, was subsequently dismissed entirely destitute. She hung about the outskirts of the camp, living on such scraps as she could pick up, and...while doing this, her child died.<sup>50</sup>

During the 1870s and 1880s the Griqua and Koranna who were still in Griqualand-West were regarded by both colonial whites and blacks as being backward and primitive. They were increasingly identified with the indigenous African people whom they themselves had once regarded as uneducated heathens.

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<sup>48</sup>Ibid

<sup>49</sup>Ibid, p. 95

<sup>50</sup>D.F.A, 09/12/1878

It is clear from all this that a negative stereotype of blacks in newspapers was becoming commonplace in Kimberley in the 1870's. Initially colonial blacks had managed to remain aloof from this stereotype by re-affirming, by way of correspondence to local newspapers, their commitment to British ideals and values. However, there already existed a strong view among the vast majority of white diggers, that all blacks should be barred from the right to search or dig for diamonds, as had been the case under the rule of the Orange Free State which had preceded British annexation.<sup>51</sup> The negative stereotype of blacks which emerged in the early Kimberley newspapers was propagated by white editors who had just arrived from the Cape Colony and who were reacting against the lack of Western standards among 'raw' African migrants. It gradually became inclusive of colonial blacks and the Griqua and Koranna, after their rebellion.

This negative black stereotype came to manifest white fears of blacks in general, not merely the non-colonials. It was perpetuated by white diggers on the ground who saw it as a means of eliminating competition from black claimowners, almost all of whom had come from the Cape. Many of these white diggers had been in the region before British annexation and resented having to compete with black diggers. The negative stereotype of non-colonial blacks in particular and then of indigenous blacks in general shows the development of a white prejudice which was to culminate in demands for all blacks to be barred from owning claims on the grounds that they could never approach an acceptable level of civilisation, no matter how Westernised they were. The justification for a negative stereotyping of blacks

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<sup>51</sup>See Chapter Three

had undergone a complete transformation. While the initial stereotype was based on class differences and bemoaned the lack of Western standards among African migrants it became one which reflected the blind racial prejudice of rank and file white diggers against black diggers, irrespective of their social status. These white diggers pointed to the Griqua and Koranna as an example of the incapacity of blacks to improve themselves. This was a far cry from that essentially liberal Cape Colonial view which had formerly prevailed of non-colonial Africans being able to improve themselves only with the benefit of Western teaching. This was supplanted by the view of the majority of white diggers which manifested itself in local newspapers in the form of race discrimination against all blacks.

It was only a small step from the assumption that blacks were incapable of reaching Western standards to the one that soon became popular in the camps, that 'all blacks were brothers', the frantic efforts by colonial blacks in the local newspapers to dissociate themselves from migrant Africans notwithstanding.

So far we have tried to show that there was a very visible social distinction maintained in Kimberley between African migrant workers and those of colonial origin. This did not yet translate into a straightforward racial distinction between whites and blacks as many of the latter were diggers and entrepreneurs from the Cape Colony who had little in common with the migrant labourers. The negative stereotype of migrant African workers in newspapers and official reports was one which thrived on the perceived lack of 'Westernisation' and 'civilisation' among migrants. Derogatory terms referring to non-colonial Africans included 'raw' and

'blanket', both emphasising unacceptable standards of behaviour and dress, at least to whites and many colonial blacks.

This negative stereotype gradually spread to encompass all blacks in Kimberley. The indigenous Griqua and Koranna were demonised and dehumanised in the wake of the failed 1878 rebellion, despite the close links these groups had enjoyed both with the Cape Colony and Kimberley itself. The extent of racial prejudice in Kimberley is reflected by the growth of this negative stereotyping of all blacks. It may be argued that the emergence of a negative stereotype of African migrants and the indigenous black population can be ascribed to class, rather than colour, differences. However, as we shall illustrate, it was race and not class prejudice which had as its result the negative stereotyping of black people in Kimberley. ✓

The smallpox epidemic which struck Kimberley in 1883 was to show how close to the surface racial prejudice lay.<sup>52</sup> Fear of the dreaded disease was not the only reason for an increasingly negative stereotyping of Muslims. There was an increase in prejudice towards all blacks. This was taking place against the backdrop of the substitution of white workers in the diamond industry by cheap black labour. Both the new recruitment policies of the mining companies and the hysteria over the rapid spread of smallpox in the poorer neighbourhoods of Kimberley combined to create a heightened sense of fear and mistrust between the racial groups there.

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<sup>52</sup>See Chapter two for a detailed analysis.

The fight against Illicit Diamond Buying or I.D.B. provides another illustration of the extent of racial prejudice harboured by many whites in Kimberley.

I.D.B. afforded a number of people involved at different stages of the diamond mining process an opportunity to acquire wealth quickly.<sup>53</sup> Despite the strict controls implemented by the diamond companies and the Griqualand-West government to regulate the buying and selling of diamonds, many of the stones were being lost in this way to illegal operators. While I.D.B. adversely affected the profit margins of companies, it was the already endangered small diggers who were worst hit by the illegal diamond trade. To men working with a limited labour resource and even more limited capital each diamond lost to I.D.B. was a body blow and brought them a step nearer to destitution and ruin. Revenue lost because of I.D.B. could never be fully accounted for as the various cases of theft only came to light when offenders were caught. I.D.B. was used as a convenient scapegoat by those seeking justification for not making a success of their claims. Roberts comments that -

Such things as barren claims, unstable markets, business incompetence and sheer bad luck, did not exist as far as Kimberley bankrupts were concerned.<sup>54</sup>

Enraged diggers meted out their own brand of justice: the flogging of suspected labourers and the burning down of canteens of those owners implicated were commonplace in Kimberley in the early 1870s. Doughty attempts to justify the readiness of the digger community to punish I.D.B. offenders --

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<sup>53</sup>Doughty: Early Diamond Days, pp. 144-145 ; Cohen: Reminiscences of Kimberley, pp. 141-158

<sup>54</sup>Roberts: Kimberley, p. 201

The low price the thieves must accept for the stolen stones also affected the diamond sales by lowering prices, and, if not prevented, might destroy the whole diamond field. In these circumstances the diggers fight against I.D.B. was a fight for survival.<sup>55</sup>

All too often though, the crusade against I.D.B. operatives was a thinly veiled witchhunt against marginalised groups, the most common targets being Jews and blacks.

While some blacks did profit by I.D.B. the trade in stolen stones was by no means restricted to any one community. Even so, many whites believed that most stolen stones were smuggled out of the region *via* a network of black operatives which extended from African labourers through Muslim transport riders to rich black merchants in the Cape Colony. This kind of rumour was consistent with the widely held belief among many whites in Kimberley that 'all blacks were in collusion'.<sup>56</sup> Often this sentiment was mirrored in official dispatches. A report before Parliament by the Commissioner for Police in 1887 described the Malay Camp as -

...the Alsatia of Kimberley. It is inhabited entirely by illicit diamond buyers and other habitual criminals, and the impossibility of obtaining cover for the officers of the law therein enables them to carry on their nefarious occupations almost unchecked.<sup>57</sup>

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<sup>55</sup>Doughty: *Early Diamond Days*, p. 147

<sup>56</sup>Turrell: *Capital and Labour*, p. 29

<sup>57</sup>C.A., Cape of Good Hope : Appendix I to *Votes and Proceedings of Parliament, 1888* (vol ii), "Report of Commissioners of Police for the year 1887", p. 9

By this time the Malay Camp had become home to various blacks, Africans as well as 'Cape Coloureds'.<sup>58</sup> This stereotyping of blacks as criminals in official documents was reflected in the Kimberley newspapers and added further fuel to the racial hatred in the town.

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In summary, we have tried to show that the most visible social distinction on the diamond fields was primarily between the 'non-colonial' or 'raw' Africans, who formed the majority of the population and the rest. The creation and perpetuation of a negative stereotype of non-colonial people in official documents and newspapers in the region was essentially a reflection of the adverse reaction of whites to being in the midst of people who were being exposed to western influences for the first time. Gradually, though, the negative image reflected in the contemporary newspapers and official documents came to include all those not white; in other words, the gap was increasingly seen as racial *per se* rather than cultural or socio-economic.

The Griqua, Koranna, 'Cape Coloureds', Muslim and Indian groups were all on the receiving end of this increasing racial discrimination. Attempted rebellion by the Griqua and Koranna was of no avail and led merely to the destruction and scattering of these communities. Compounding the problem was an outbreak of smallpox for which the religious attitudes of the Muslims were partly blamed.<sup>59</sup>

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<sup>58</sup>Kimberley Public Library, (K.P.L.), United Society for the propagation of the Gospel, *Reports*, 1886, Sister Catherine

<sup>59</sup>See Chapter Two

In consequence, of these developments, by the early 1880s the various groups of colonial blacks in Kimberley had been consigned by white public opinion to the same social status as that accorded the 'raw' Africans.

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## CHAPTER TWO

### Black groups in Kimberley

The impetus for the formation of black political organisations in Kimberley, arose primarily as a reaction by various groups of black people from the Cape Colony to an increasing prejudice against them on the part of whites. An examination of the earliest groups of colonial blacks coming to Kimberley reveals little or no consciousness of shared identity. Those who were to be prominent in espousing a colour consciousness were drawn mainly from the diverse groups of educated blacks who came to Griqualand-West from the Cape Colony. These included the élite among Cape Muslims, Indians, Fingoes and a range of people described in the official terminology of the day as 'Cape Boys', 'Colonial Kaffirs', 'coloureds' and 'Bastards'. The organisations established for blacks in the 1870s and 1880s were exclusive, in terms both of racial exclusivity and social status. The 'coloured' consciousness emerging in Kimberley in the 1870s and 1880s represented the efforts of educated blacks who saw the need to mobilise to protect what had become their common interests. So, while this group included educated Africans from the Eastern Cape it did not make common cause with people like the Griqua and Koranna who, because of their relative isolation and lack of education, were regarded as barbaric and backward.<sup>1</sup>

The vast majority of the groups of colonial blacks who came to Kimberley in the 1870s came from the urban centres where their black skins did not necessarily

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<sup>1</sup>By the 1870s the remaining Griqua in Griqualand - West were scattered and disorganised, C.A., Native Affairs Blue Book, "G20", (1881), "Report of Inspector of Locations, Daniels Kuil and Gruisfontein Location"; "Report of Civil Commissioner, Barkly" ; "Report of Civil Commissioner, Herbert"

preclude the opportunity for social mobility. By contrast, at the diamond fields, white monopoly of claim ownership had been the order of the day under Orange Free State rule. To the many white diggers, who had grown accustomed to a submissive black workforce, the appearance of blacks at the fields in the capacity of claimholders and competitors was an untenable situation.<sup>2</sup>

By the early 1870s Kimberley had become far more than a mining site; it was a burgeoning town which attracted not only prospectors but also those eager to take advantage of the many employment opportunities created by the various secondary industries which developed there.<sup>3</sup> The Diamond Fields Advertiser reveals one such activity, contracting, as being popular amongst 'people of colour' -

A low set Hottentot, barefoot and somewhat 'dishevelled' in appearance, but speaking good English, appeared yesterday in the Beaconsfield Resident Magistrate's Court as prosecutor in a case in which five natives were charged with absenting themselves from their employment. The complainant, Stephen Springhaan by name, said he was a contractor in the Bultfontein Mine and the prisoners were employed as his labourers in loading up trucks. They had all been properly registered and their passes handed to the Magistrate. Prisoners were each fined two pounds, the alternative being one month's hard labour, and their contract was cancelled. We suppose that the Bultfontein diggers find that the employment of coloured contractors, native overseers, and in some cases allowing boys of 14 years of age to act in the latter of important capacity, a satisfactory arrangement; but we should hardly consider it a paying one.<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>2</sup>Turrell: Capital and Labour, p. 56

<sup>3</sup>Ibid., pp. 89, 102 ; Payton: The Diamond Diggings, pp.47-50

<sup>4</sup>D.F.A., 30/01/1885

In fact, the newcomers included numerous black people from the Colony. Indeed, as early as 1835 the Civil Commissioner for Albany had complained that 'coloured men' were moving through his district, en route to Griqualand from the Kat River settlement.<sup>5</sup> Numerous 'Bastards' also moved into Griqualand-West, entering the area from Gordonia where many of them had settled.<sup>6</sup> Many ex- slaves and colonial Khoi, who were becoming indistinguishable by the 1870s, moved from the urban centres, especially Cape Town, Port Elizabeth and Grahamstown, to the diamond fields to escape the recession in the Colony.<sup>7</sup> Those colonial blacks not interested in digging found employment in a host of other occupations. This group included, -

...well-owners, standholders, eating-house keepers, hotel keepers, cart owners, cab owners, wood riders, transport riders, produce sellers, hawkers, ginger-beer makers, debris-washers, milk vendors, fruit sellers, bottle sellers, masons, brick makers, carpenters, painters, tailors, harness-makers, tinsmiths, well-sinkers, jewellers, and rug makers.<sup>8</sup>

The early mining settlement at first incorporated many of the social inequalities that were prevalent in the Cape Colony.<sup>9</sup> A white skin was associated with status in the community while African labourers were viewed with contempt.

✓ 'Cape Coloureds,' by virtue of their lighter skin colour and colonial background were

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<sup>5</sup>Ross: Adam Kok's Griqua, p. 43

<sup>6</sup>Marais: The Cape Coloured People, pp.74-96 ; Strauss: "War along the Orange", pp. 23-27, 34

<sup>7</sup>See Adhikari, M.: "The sons of Ham : slavery and the making of Coloured identity", Paper presented at the 'Cape slavery and after' conference held at the University of Cape Town, (10-11 August, 1989), p. 21 ; C.A. , Griqualand-West Archive (GLW) 73 , "John Salem to the Commissioners", Dutoitspan , (24 July , 1872)

<sup>8</sup>Turrell: "Capital, class and monopoly", p. 150

<sup>9</sup>For an examination of stratification at the Cape during the nineteenth century see Bickford-Smith:

"Commerce, class, ethnicity", pp. 71-95

accorded an intermediate status in this society.<sup>10</sup> Yet, as we showed in the previous chapter, the most visible distinction between the early inhabitants of Kimberley was rather that between the 'raw' African migrant workers, who made up the vast majority of the population, and those who had come to the region from the Cape Colony. Those in the latter grouping, both black and white, bore the trappings of Western civilization while the African workforce were for the most part unchristian and uneducated.<sup>11</sup> The distinction between non-colonial and colonial was accentuated by the sudden proximity of thousands of people, many of whom came from entirely different backgrounds, in a comparatively small region. We have shown that early settlements around the diamond diggings were characterised by the emergence of a negative stereotyping of non-colonial blacks in newspapers and contemporary accounts of the period. They were to become a more general stereotype towards all blacks during the ensuing years, especially hostile during periods of heightened racial tension. However, during the earliest period of settlement the divide between black and white was not yet as absolute as it later became and 'Cape Coloureds' were accorded a higher status than non-colonial blacks. The attitude displayed towards black women at the diamond diggings by its white inhabitants provides a good illustration of this.

The growing town of Kimberley contained within its limits much diversity. Different religions, languages, classes and nationalities co-existed as best they could around the ever deepening diamond mines. However, this diverse population of

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<sup>10</sup>Turrell: Capital and Labour, pp. 103, 128

<sup>11</sup>Wilson and Perrot: Outlook on a Century, pp. 19-21 ; Delius: "Migrant labour", in Marks and Atmore: Economy and Society; also Harries: "Kinship, ideology" and Kimble: "Labour migration", both in Marks and Rathbone: Industrialisation and Social Change

Kimberley was overwhelmingly male. The scarcity of women in Kimberley during this early period was so marked that Turrell noted, "... the overall ratio of [white] women to [white] men was the lowest in the whole of South Africa."<sup>12</sup>

It was not difficult to see why so few white women were prepared to travel the long journey to Griqualand-West. For those who accompanied their husbands it was "a wretched, bleak and above all, lonely existence.":

Many of the women came from good Colonial families and were totally unprepared for the primitive conditions with which they had to cope. Though they were accustomed to efficiently run households with plenty of servants, they found it practically impossible to get domestic help at the diggings.<sup>13</sup>

Long before the arrival of white women in significant numbers in Kimberley there had been numerous black women in the camps, mostly Koranna, Griqua and Tlhaping from the hinterland.<sup>14</sup> As their traditional lifestyle was being eroded so many of these women were forced to move to the diggings where they worked as washerwomen and servants in an effort to survive. Many more who were not fortunate enough to get other work prostituted themselves.<sup>15</sup> The often repeated lament in many traveller and digger accounts of the period bemoaning the lack of women on the fields would seem to reflect rather the shortage of, as one white writer put it, 'respectable femininity'.<sup>16</sup> More often than not when indigenous women were

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<sup>12</sup>Turrell: "Capital, class and monopoly", p. 47

<sup>13</sup>Roberts: Kimberley, p. 78

<sup>14</sup>These women were forced to move to Kimberley because of poverty in the rural locations. After the failed rebellion of 1878 the numbers of Koranna and Griqua moving to Kimberley in search of work and food increased.

<sup>15</sup>Payton: The Diamond Diggings, p. 146 ; Ellis, A.B.: South African Sketches, (London; Chapman and Hall, 1867), p. 63

<sup>16</sup>Doughty: Early Diamond Days, p. 123

alluded to in accounts they were dehumanised and portrayed as being barbaric. Charles Payton, in a comment typical of the chauvinistic and racist attitudes of the white diggers wrote -

*Color + sexuality.*

Women innumerable, black, brown, and yellow, are to be seen in our camps. Nevertheless there are far more Korannas and Hottentots amongst them than Kaffir women...it must be added that a great many of them are too lazy to work, and prefer to get money more quickly and easily, as is soon apparent, by their bolder and richer apparel, their constant promenading about the camp, and their impudent looks.<sup>17</sup>

A digger at one of the early camps, Gong-Gong, reveals the disgust towards indigenous women felt by many of his peers -

In the early days of the diggings, a few ladies, predatory in habit, animal in instinct, uncleanly in person, and scanty in attire, had honoured the camp with their presence. These ladies had been representatives of the 'noble savage' as exemplified in the Koranna tribe of Hottentots, and their knowledge of the English language had been confined to a number of expressions which were, in the strictest sense of the word, unparliamentary. On the decadence of Gong-gong they had shifted the scene of their depredations to other camps, where men and money were more abundant.<sup>18</sup>

This negative stereotyping of indigenous black women was perpetuated in official reports and local newspapers.

The diggings soon started to attract women from further afield. Many 'Cape Coloured' women arrived as the camps provided a burgeoning market for

<sup>17</sup>Payton: The Diamond Diggings, p. 146

<sup>18</sup>Ellis: S.A. Sketches, p. 63

prostitutes.<sup>19</sup> Roberts quotes a digger who wistfully bemoaned the lack of single females commenting that, "A shipment of these would command extreme rates."<sup>20</sup> While there is evidence of Koranna, Thlaping and native women earning meagre payments for prostituting themselves, many white males regarded them to be little more than animals.<sup>21</sup> The arrival of 'Cape Coloured' women was greeted with much enthusiasm. Hahn described a report in a local newspaper -

The social column reported... on a digger's party at which, after the customary toast 'To the ladies!', one guest leaped up and proposed 'Three cheers for the off-coloured ones!' According to the paper the cheers were vociferous.<sup>22</sup>

White prostitutes were generally more discreet, often working as part-time barmaids in the more seedy taverns.<sup>23</sup>

The 'Cape Coloured' arrivals represented an example of 'respectable femininity' to the white diggers not only because of their colonial background but also because physically they were lighter skinned than indigenous African women. One digger, in Gong-gong, Ellis, relates a story which illustrates the importance of this distinction to white diggers. Gong-gong was one of the early camps of the river diggings which were later to be abandoned as news of more prolific finds at the dry diggings became known. Even in 1871 the year in which Ellis wrote his account, the small settlement was in danger of becoming a ghost-town. Ellis tells of how there

<sup>19</sup>Doughty: Early Diamond Days, pp. 124-125 ; Roberts: Kimberley, pp. 84-85

<sup>20</sup>Roberts: Kimberley, p. 84

<sup>21</sup>Payton: The Diamond Diggings, p. 146 ; Ellis: S.A. Sketches, p. 63

<sup>22</sup>Hahn, E.: Diamond, (London; Shenvall Press, 1956) , p. 31

<sup>23</sup>Doughty: Early Diamond Days, p. 124 ; Roberts: Kimberley, p. 84

existed an intense rivalry between the proprietors of the only two canteens in town to attract the remaining clientele. The tactic of one of the owners in hiring a Muslim woman from Cape Town as barmaid resulted in his canteen becoming the more popular almost overnight. The arrival of a woman of light complexion obviously provoked great excitement. Ellis relates how one digger who had seen the woman was trying to persuade his sceptical friend of her merits -

...But she aint nigger, Stokes, she's very nigh white, and what colour there is I take to be Malay.<sup>24</sup>

Many Griqua and Koranna women had 'mixed' ancestry and would have been of similar complexion to 'Cape Coloured' women arriving in the region.<sup>25</sup> Yet from the evidence there is little doubt that white diggers were differentiating between black women from the region like the Griqua and Koranna, and those coming from further afield, further confirmation that the main line of cleavage in the early settlements was not a simple one between black and white but rather that between 'civilized' colonial and 'barbaric' non-colonial.

Sexuality  
&  
Colour

.....

African labourers who came into the mining camps in the early 1870s tended to settle with others from the same ethnic group.. This is reflected in the composition of the eight informal locations in Kimberley during this period. Even the names of the locations were drawn from the main groupings inhabiting them.<sup>26</sup> However, a

<sup>24</sup>Ellis: *S.A. Sketches*, p. 66

<sup>25</sup>Many Griqua, like 'Cape Coloureds' could trace back to 'mixed' parentage

<sup>26</sup>*Diamond News*, 29/03/1879

growing number of African residents, essentially the mission educated, had begun to espouse a common African consciousness which transcended tribal differences.<sup>27</sup>

By the 1880s this group constituted a compact and highly visible component of Kimberley's inhabitants. They were

...a growing and increasingly coherent class of educated Africans who had been drawn to Kimberley because of the opportunities that it provided for employment and for the utilisation of the skills associated with literacy which they possessed.<sup>28</sup>

Many of them joined various departments of the Civil Service. Because of the impact of missionaries in their lives, many of these educated Africans assimilated what Willan terms the "...values and standards of behaviour appropriate to the workings of the dominant institutions of the Colony."<sup>29</sup> They formed and maintained a network of contacts in Kimberley and were prominent in a range of activities, from their attendance and influence in 'native' and 'coloured' churches to the sporting arena where they established clubs.<sup>30</sup> The African élites played an important role in the formation of the early political associations for black people in Kimberley.

Arguably the most conspicuous African in Kimberley during the 1880s was J.S. Moss, a Fingo, the High Court Interpreter. He was prominent in the formation of both the Africander League and the Coloured People's Association despite being

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<sup>27</sup>Karis and Carter: Protest and Hope, p. 3 ; G.M. Gerhart: Black Power in South Africa : The Evolution of an Ideology, (California ; University of California, 1978), pp. 33-34 ;

Willan: "An African in Kimberley", pp. 238-255

<sup>28</sup>Willan: "An African in Kimberley", p. 241

<sup>29</sup>Ibid, p. 240

<sup>30</sup>Ibid, pp. 238-255 ;, C.T. 9/12/1892; D.I. 27/11/1890

barred from direct involvement in politics by virtue of the nature of his employment.<sup>31</sup> He was in many ways a visionary and his views were not always the same as those of other African leaders. Moss was scathing in his criticism of colonial Africans who kept aloof from 'raw' Africans. He encouraged an alliance of all blacks, irrespective of class differences.<sup>32</sup>

Other members of the African petty bourgeoisie, espoused a form of African or black consciousness in which class distinctions remained an important determinant of membership<sup>33</sup>. The vast majority of Africans in Kimberley were still uneducated migrant labourers from beyond the borders of the Colony,<sup>34</sup> with whom mission educated Africans found it difficult to make common cause because of ethnic and class differences. Non-colonial African societies, especially the Pedi, Basuto and Tsonga had a tradition of migrant labour even before the discovery of precious minerals.<sup>35</sup> By contrast the educated Africans who were arriving in ever increasing numbers in Kimberley in the 1870s almost all sought employment in the secondary industries in the towns.<sup>36</sup> Others, encouraged by British policies of non-racialism, took out claim licenses to search and dig for diamonds, and formed part of a growing number of black diggers in the region.<sup>37</sup> Educated Africans were becoming uncomfortably aware of the growing trend by white newspapers to criminalise blacks and blame all those with dark skins for the increase in illicit diamond buying.

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<sup>31</sup>See also Chapter Six

<sup>32</sup>D.I., 13/12/1883

<sup>33</sup>Willan: "An African in Kimberley", pp. 238-255 ; Gerhart: Black Power, pp. 33-34 ; Karis and Carter: Protest and Hope, p. 3

<sup>34</sup>Worger: S.A.'s City of Diamonds, p. 75 , see table 2.2

<sup>35</sup>Kimble: "Labour migration", pp. 128-137 ; Harries: "Kinship, ideology", pp. 142-160

<sup>36</sup>Turrell: Capital and Labour p. 150

<sup>37</sup>Turrell: "Capital, class and monopoly", p. 47

Their response was to react as a group self conscious of middle class English values so further setting them apart from non-colonial blacks. A petition from a large group of Fingo diggers gives an indication of the anxiety of colonial Africans about the negative stereotyping of all blacks by the newspapers of the region.<sup>38</sup>

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Two groups of black people at the diamond diggings who were even more insular were the Cape Muslims and Indians. Because they practiced 'foreign' religions these groups remained isolated from the majority of other colonists. Perhaps the most visible group of colonial blacks in Kimberley during the 1870s were the Cape Muslims, commonly called 'Malays' by other colonists. They were bound together by Islam which shaped and informed various aspects of their lives. Education, culture and their entire way of living all differed from that of other inhabitants of the Cape Colony, black and white, as a result of their religion. Because of the extent of their exclusion from mainstream colonial society the Muslim community was close knit and its members were mutually supportive. Those making the long trip to the Diamond Fields in the 1870s retained links with their fellow Muslims by virtue of their shared religion. The community itself served as a support group for newly displaced Muslims arriving from the Colony.<sup>39</sup>

Not many Muslims participated in the first diamond rush to the Northern Cape. In January 1872 a 'Malay' correspondent to the Diamond News estimated that

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<sup>38</sup>C.A. , GLW 53, "Memorial of Coloured diggers", (22/03/1872)

<sup>39</sup>D.F.A., 13/04/1878 ; Matthews, Incwadi Yami, pp. 403-408

there were only two Muslims on the Fields.<sup>40</sup> However, as the settlement around Kimberley grew larger during the mid-1870s people other than diggers began arriving in the region.<sup>41</sup> Making up a considerable proportion of this group were Muslims from Cape Town and Port Elizabeth.<sup>42</sup> Muslim men soon dominated the transport network in Kimberley, serving as Cart drivers and owners, a trade many had been involved with in the Cape Colony. Many women worked as domestic servants or as laundresses for the largely male population at the Fields.<sup>43</sup> These Muslim arrivals formed a close knit community and settled in an area close to the centre of Kimberley commonly referred to later as the Malay Camp.

The rapid influx of Muslims from the Colony had not gone unnoticed by whites in Kimberley. The Diamond Fields Advertiser commented in 1878 that

It is exceedingly strange that whilst the Malays have seldom emigrated from Capetown to settle in any part of the Eastern Province, except Port Elizabeth, that they are swarming to the Fields. There is quite a Colony of them here. They have a little town of their own in No. 2 ward, Kimberley, and in the midst of that town they have erected a Mosque, where they perform their devotions with an apparent earnestness which Christian communities might emulate with advantage. There are two things to be said in their favour, and it is that they are a sober and industrious people, and they are vastly superior to the Coolies here who live in filth and squalor. The lady part of the Malays are great patrons of the haberdasher and linen-drapeer, and a Malay man is never seen dirty or ill-dressed.<sup>44</sup>

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<sup>40</sup>D.N., 24/01/1872

<sup>41</sup>See Roberts: Kimberley, pp. 53-91

<sup>42</sup>D.F.A., 13/04/1878

<sup>43</sup>K.P.L., U.S.P.G., REPORTS, 1886, Sister Catherine

<sup>44</sup>D.F.A., 13/04/1878

Not only were Muslims the most coherent group of colonial blacks on the Fields, they were also the most visible. Numerous references were made in newspaper and traveller accounts about their colourful dress and distinctive headgear - the turban or fez worn by men and scarves worn by the women. An article on the latter commented that -

The Malay women flutter to-and-fro like summer butterflies, and their balloon-skirts are a sight in themselves. These ladies are not artistic in their arrangement of colour. They go in for brilliant effect; and in this line they are peculiarly successful. What with yellow bandannas, red shawls, blue bodices, and the 'balloons', before-mentioned - with sundry tasty additions in green, pink, mauve, brown, and even black they quite resemble a party of erratic rainbows out on the loose.<sup>45</sup>

Careful observance was made of Muslim festivals and celebrations by adherents of Islam in Kimberley. These colourful events attracted much attention from curious whites. One such festival, the 'Kurban Bairam', was celebrated with such zeal in 1889 that a white observer wrote -

The picturesque costumes displayed by our Mohammedan community on the occasion of their feast of Kurban Beiram, may be said to have given the Malay Camp quite the appearance of an eastern city, and on no previous anniversary has the festival been celebrated with greater observance..<sup>46</sup>

Muslims had their places of worship, festivals and could buy meat from Muslim *halaal* butchers.<sup>47</sup> Islam was the glue which held this community together

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<sup>45</sup>Ibid, 23/06/1883

<sup>46</sup>C.A., 16/08/1889

<sup>47</sup>D.I., 27/06/1890

and provided a common point of reference for all Muslims in Kimberley in the face of wider socio-economic changes in the region.

The strong sense of identity evident in the Muslim community enabled them to present a united front when seeking redress from the colonial authorities for perceived grievances. Vivian Bickford-Smith has shown how a characteristic of Muslim leadership in Cape Town before 1880 was their adherence to British rule and the Crown.<sup>48</sup> The Muslim élite which constituted this leadership reflected colonial value standards of the day by their near obsession with 'decent' and 'respectable' behaviour.

The leaders of the Muslim community in Kimberley showed the same tendency to emphasise the importance of English middle class values. Salie Kralle, one of the first 'Malays' to arrive at the Diamond Fields, reflected Muslim belief in the justice of British law in his appeal against proposed legislation to bar blacks from owning claims.<sup>49</sup> Almost twenty years later the then sizable Muslim community in Kimberley echoed Kralle's sentiments in their address to the visiting Governor of the Cape Colony, Sir Henry Loch -

We take this opportunity of expressing the gratification we feel for the freedom and privileges enjoyed by our class under the laws of this portion of the British Empire, for which we are indebted in no small degree to the kind offices of your Excellency's predecessors.<sup>50</sup>

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<sup>48</sup>Bickford-Smith, V.: "The emergence of Coloured political organisations and the question of Coloured identity in Cape Town, 1875-1902", Paper presented at the 'Cape slavery and after' conference held at the University of Cape Town, (10-11 August, 1989), pp. 4-5

<sup>49</sup>*D.N.*, 24/01/1872

<sup>50</sup>*D.L.*, 18/04/1890

Probably the most prominent and influential Muslim leader of the time in the Cape Colony and head of the Islamic school in Kimberley, Ahmed Effendi, reiterated the same views a few years later in an address to fellow Muslims in the town -

...I am sure, in common with me, you estimate (highly) the advantages you derive from the protection afforded to you by the wise and liberal Government of Her Majesty the Queen of England under which you live in peace as loyal subjects.<sup>51</sup>

A further example of the adoption of colonial values by Muslims throughout the Colony was their enthusiastic participation in the celebrations commemorating the Jubilee of Queen Victoria. In Kimberley this was marked by Muslims with a special celebrations amidst the other festivities.<sup>52</sup>

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The spread of the smallpox epidemic throughout the Colony in the 1880s and the Muslim refusal, on religious grounds, to implement certain of the proposed preventative measures brought to the surface simmering tensions between English speaking white colonists and Muslims.<sup>53</sup> The full extent of white middle class prejudice soon became apparent in the colonial newspapers. However, the tone of public white comment was initially patronising rather than hostile. The close-knit nature of the Muslim community and its tendency to lend support to individuals suffering hardship meant that there were but few indigents among them. High moral

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<sup>51</sup>*D.F.A.*, 23/18/1895

<sup>52</sup>*D.L.*, 22/06/1887

<sup>53</sup>For smallpox in Cape Town and its effect on race relations see Bickford-Smith: "Commerce, class, ethnicity", pp. 150-163 ; van Heyningen: "Public health and society", pp. 104-166 ; Lawrence: "Perceptions", pp. 53-65

values, such as abstinence from alcoholic drinks, gave further cause for the positive portrayal of this section of Kimberley's black inhabitants in the local press.

Prejudice never lay far below the surface in spite of all this and the spread of the smallpox epidemic to Kimberley in the early 1880s revealed the depth of white racism. Many Muslims refused on religious grounds to take measures to prevent the spread of the disease. Not surprisingly, there was a growth of negative stereotyping of Muslims, which persisted long after the epidemic itself had passed.

By the end of 1882 the smallpox epidemic which had struck Cape Town was sweeping towards Kimberley. Newspaper reports from the city painted a grim picture of suffering and lingering death for the unfortunate victims. Smallpox did not discriminate and counted among its victims men and women from all classes, religions and races. However, it was especially prevalent among the poorer sections of the community, where inadequate housing and cramped living conditions allowed the disease to spread more quickly. Inadequate precautionary measures gave the epidemic a head start and it spread rapidly through Cape Town.<sup>54</sup> Muslims were particularly susceptible to infection they rejected many of the precautionary measures taken by the colonial authorities.<sup>55</sup> Islam informed and shaped the lives of Muslim people and set them apart as a distinct minority group in all the main urban centres in the Colony. Many Muslims regarded colonial medicine as an intrusion into their lives and preferred to seek within their own community for solutions to

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<sup>54</sup>van Heyningen, E.: "Public health and society" pp. 104-66

<sup>55</sup>Ibid. See also Bickford-Smith, "The emergence of Coloured political organisations" pp. 8-9; Lawrence, P.G.: "Perceptions of Muslims and Africans in Cape Town in the *Cape Argus* and *Cape Times*, 1875-1890" (BA Hons Thesis, University of Cape Town, 1990), pp. 53-65

ailments. The refusal by most Muslims to observe the quarantine and vaccination measures brought down the wrath of middle class Cape Town on them.<sup>56</sup> Newspapers there came to see this refusal as the reason for the rapid spread of the disease.

Long before the epidemic reached Kimberley, the local newspapers had seized on this theme -

...we can only say that our Cape-town friends have employed throughout a most long-suffering and Christian frame of mind towards their Mohammedan fellow-citizens, and have had their reward. Kimberley is not noted for its virtues, and we fear that the same forbearance and loving kindness which has so long distinguished our brethren at the capital will be found sadly lacking if the small-pox becomes epidemic here.<sup>57</sup>

The extent of racial suspicion and paranoia in Kimberley which followed the reports from Cape Town is well illustrated by the attitude of the Diamond Field Advertiser, of 30 September 1882, which mused -

...the question will...have to be faced, if the laundry work of the camp can be allowed to be performed by any Malay who, reckless of their own lives, take systematic means to infect the white population with a loathsome and deadly disease.<sup>58</sup>

There was also an increase in the volume of correspondence on the topic, with most letters reflecting white fears that coloured people would accelerate the spread

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<sup>56</sup>van Heyningen: "Public health and society"; Bickford-Smith: "Commerce, class and ethnicity"

<sup>57</sup>D.F.A., 10/10/1882

<sup>58</sup>Ibid, 30/09/82

of smallpox. Many letters called for the relocation of, not only Muslims, but all black people, to an area far removed from middle-class habitation. "The Standholders of Selby-Street and Bultfontein Road" were quite clear -

*Start of group area*

Every day rumours are spread that a case of small-pox has broken out in the Malay Camp, but without foundation. In that Camp live not only Malays, but Kaffirs, Coolies, Hottentots, Korannas and etc. It would, we consider, be far better if the Malays were located on one spot on the stands, and the whole of the other lot cleared out of the Camp to the other locations. Once they let this disease get into the Malay Camp...it will be with the greatest difficulty eradicated for an inspection of the houses will show that they are the worst in Camp. We therefore, through the medium of the press, would beg the Manager of the London and South African Exploration Company to shift these black and coloured people from near proximity to Europeans, and let them be placed in positions more in keeping with their habits.<sup>59</sup>

The extent to which the spread of the disease was associated with the Muslim community is revealed by preventive measures taken by the Smallpox Committee meeting in Kimberley in August 1882, some months before any cases were reported in the town itself. It was resolved that vaccination posts be established outside the town. J.B. Robinson, reflecting mining interests, proposed that all new or 'strange' Muslims should be barred from entering the municipal limits. The Board further resolved to monitor 'Malays' who left Cape Town for the interior.<sup>60</sup> A Kimberley newspaper report reflects the fear with which travelling Muslims were viewed -

Some eight to ten days ago, we are informed, a large number of Malays left infected houses in Cape Town to come to the Fields...They are now travelling

<sup>59</sup>Ibid, 28/09/82

<sup>60</sup>Ibid, 21/08/82

en route here, with eight wagons. The authorities, however, are prepared for them, and hearing that the intention of the Malays is to enter the district by some or other drift, they have sent men to be stationed at every entrance, where they will intercept their progress towards the Fields.<sup>61</sup>

Mining interests had much to lose if smallpox reached the camps and took all measures in their power, including influence in the media and town council, first to prevent the disease from spreading to Kimberley and then, later, to attempt to deny its existence in the camps because of the magnitude of what was at stake. A speaker at a public meeting held to discuss the implications of the approaching epidemic articulated the grievous dangers the disease held for the mining industry and the town -

I am afraid that if it is once known that we have smallpox in our midst we will have very few woodwagons in our markets, and then what will become of the companies without labourers, for without fuel for the machinery, companies cannot employ the labour, which would have to find its way home as best it could. And then look at the number of overseers who will be thrown out of employment. Let us take the storekeepers and others who live by the trade of this place...This would be a loss to the inhabitants, and a serious loss, too. It is needless to point out the serious consequences that must ensue if it is known in the surrounding districts that small-pox is in Kimberley; and, therefore, I think it is our bounden duty, one and all, to join together and do our utmost to prevent this introduction.<sup>62</sup>

In the eyes of many, then, the very survival of Kimberley and the fledgling diamond industry was at stake and it is small wonder that the municipal authorities were determined to learn from the experiences of Cape Town in battling the disease.

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<sup>61</sup> Ibid, 05/09/82

<sup>62</sup>Ibid, 03/10/82

The quarantine and vaccination posts on the outskirts of the mining villages were only a first line of defence. Once smallpox was detected in the camps, infected houses were fumigated and, in some cases, burnt down.<sup>63</sup> However, many mistakes were repeated. As had been the case in Cape Town, little deference was paid to religious scruples in the exercise of the preventive measures.

The communal identity of Muslims in Kimberley and their ability to articulate their own grievances set them apart from the broad masses of the poor.<sup>64</sup> For those far from loved ones in Cape Town and Port Elizabeth, Islam provided a support system and sustained a sense of community with other Muslims. But deep-rooted religious beliefs held by Muslims impeded the medical authorities as the latter tried to impose unwelcome sanitary measures on the community. The Muslim apathy towards the practices of colonial medicine coupled with their inward-looking approach meant that when the epidemic did finally strike many Muslims were incapable of dealing with it.<sup>65</sup>

Editorial opinion in the mining camp newspapers had reflected a growing unease among whites at the reluctance of Muslims to follow guidelines set out by the medical authorities in Kimberley. As the Diamond Fields Advertiser put it -

We have no desire to unnecessarily raise public feeling against the Malay population, but stern facts compel us to suggest that their peculiar customs,

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<sup>63</sup>Ibid, 26/09/82

<sup>64</sup>For an examination of the coherence of Muslims in Cape Town see Bickford-Smith: "The emergence of Coloured political organisations", pp. 1-22

<sup>65</sup>For a study of the Cape Town situation specifically, see van Heyningen: "Public health and society", pp. 104-66 ; Lawrence: "Perceptions", pp. 53-65

which tend so greatly to the propagation of the disease, should be speedily altered.<sup>66</sup>

Other reports were more belligerent in tone -

A telegram yesterday stated that it is feared that a riot will ensue if compulsory sanitary measures are resorted to...We don't fear a riot and will put it down sharp if it were attempted.<sup>67</sup>

When the disease did show itself on the diamond fields it was prevalent especially among poorer diggers at the river diggings and around the smaller mines of Dutoitspan and Bultfontein.<sup>68</sup> Kimberley itself was less affected initially as the preventive measures taken were successful in restricting and isolating the sporadic cases which occurred.<sup>69</sup> On the spread of smallpox at the smaller mines, the Diamond Fields Advertiser commented -

It appears that the dreaded epidemic is fast making its way among the Malays and coloured people and that instead of being glad to have medical assistance, these people refuse to be moved to the Hospital, hide cases of sickness amongst them, and object to being vaccinated.<sup>70</sup>

Typically, the blame for any fresh outbreak was blamed on uncooperative blacks at the fields, with Muslims in particular bearing the brunt of white criticism. Often, these charges were thinly veiled attacks on all blacks.

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<sup>66</sup>D.F.A., 10/10/82

<sup>67</sup> Ibid, 03/08/82

<sup>68</sup>D.F.A., 18/08/1882

<sup>69</sup>Ibid, 26/19/1882 ; 30/09/1882

<sup>70</sup>D.F.A., 03/08/82

When smallpox showed signs of developing in the main centre of the diamond industry, Kimberley itself, criticism of Muslims and other black people became even more hysterical. -

In de Beer's yesterday another case was discovered, and two Malays in the Malay camp. There is no knowing to what extent the disease may spread if it gets a hold of this class of people, who are notorious for adopting means, however base, to disseminate the dire infection among the whites.<sup>71</sup>

Other articles echoed similar sentiments -

...out of mere rage because Europeans are not equally stricken, they try by every means in their power, to communicate the germs of disease to others.<sup>72</sup>

On the other hand, the Muslim community in Kimberley constituted an important voting bloc which was able to mobilise in its own interest. One editorial grumbled -

Many would say that there has been a most mischievous deference to them, unaccountable on any other ground than that of recognition of their voting power, under a franchise which they would enjoy in scarcely any other Empire in the world, but when their prejudices stand in the way of the most urgent provisions for the public safety, they will have to give way; and the sooner they know it the better. It is obvious that deference to religious scruples must end at some point.<sup>73</sup>

When the authorities attempted forcibly to remove suspected Muslim smallpox sufferers, the community rallied to obstruct them. One such attempt by

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<sup>71</sup>Ibid.

<sup>72</sup>Ibid, 30/09/82

<sup>73</sup>Ibid, 10/10/82

officers of the Board of health to remove a patient from the Malay Camp to a quarantined hospital was met with a show of force from the locals to the extent that -

...The whole of the Malay population - including men, women and children to the number of about 300 - turned out and resisted the attempt to take the sick man away...their principal objection being that in case of his death there, the friends of the deceased would not be able to attend his funeral and carry out their religious rites in regard to the burial.<sup>74</sup>

In this instance, the action of the Muslim community was successful in postponing the removal of the victim until the appropriate religious ceremonies could be performed. But the actions of the Muslim community alone were not always sufficient to prevent similar removals from taking place. The case of the Muslim patient who was saved from being forcibly removed by Dr Josiah Wright Matthews, a much respected Kimberley medical practitioner, is a popular anecdote in histories of the town. After he had happened on a forced removal of a Muslim patient, he had it stopped on a legal technicality. He was later awarded a trophy for his efforts by -

...the Mussulmans of this town...as a mark of our respect and admiration for your courageous and outspoken defence of our rights and liberties during the late epidemic...<sup>75</sup>

A ceremony was held in Dr Matthews' honour by the Muslim community for the purpose of this presentation.

While Muslims had been the target for some prejudice before and during the smallpox epidemic in Kimberley, they had been generally seen as a law-abiding and

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<sup>74</sup>D.L. 11/10/84

<sup>75</sup>Ibid, 14/01/85 ; See also, Matthews: Incwadi Yami, pp. 407-8

loyal section of the community. Subsequently, though, the religious, racial and class distinctions between them and middle class whites were often accentuated by the Kimberley newspapers, making it more difficult that ever for those among the élite among the Muslims to be accepted in white circles.

For their part Muslims in Cape Town were becoming increasingly disillusioned with British intrusion in their lives after 1880, culminating in the *Cemetery Riots* of 1886 and the unsuccessful attempt at election of a Muslim to the Cape Parliament in 1894.<sup>76</sup> None of this passed unnoticed in Kimberley, where Muslims also suffered increased prejudice in the wake of the smallpox epidemic of 1884. Many were suspected by white diggers of participating in the Illicit Diamond trade because of their domination of the transport network in Kimberley.<sup>77</sup>

The high degree of organisation and education in the Muslim community in Kimberley meant that this sector of the colonial blacks played a prominent role in espousing a 'coloured' consciousness among blacks in Kimberley during the 1870s and 1880s. This is perhaps best reflected by the fact that the first chairman of the Coloured People's Association, H. O. Ally, was a Muslim Indian.<sup>78</sup> Ultimately while the Muslim contribution to 'coloured' consciousness in Kimberley was substantial (arising in part from their alienation from the white community in Kimberley in the wake of the smallpox epidemic), the nature of their involvement was still influenced by their belief in the tenets of non racialism as embodied in Cape Liberalism.

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<sup>76</sup>Bickford-Smith: "Class, commerce, ethnicity", pp 301-302; van Heyningen: "Public health and society", pp. 167-225

<sup>77</sup>See Chapter 1 above pp. 41-42

<sup>78</sup>D.L., 02/03/1893

Kimberley was also one of the most popular cities of settlement for immigrants from India. By the 1870s the indenture system in Natal had ended, freeing thousands of Indians to travel where they wished. While many returned to India, others decided to settle in southern Africa. Many moved to <sup>Kimberley</sup> where they numbered almost one thousand on the diamond fields by the early 1880s.<sup>79</sup> Many became successful traders in the camps, sometimes to such an extent that jealous white rivals campaigned, through local newspapers, for their removal from the produce market.<sup>80</sup> Others found employment in a variety of occupations, ranging from canteen owners to bankers, cooks, convict guards, tailors and waiters. In the 1880s with travel to Kimberley made easier by the completion of the railway to the coast many more Indians arrived on the diamond fields, where they formed close knit communities albeit with a distinction between Hindu and Muslim elements. In 1885 there was a request from "...a community of 100 people, who described themselves as 'a nation from India, and belonging to Bombay' " for a site on which they could build a mosque. The erection of a Hindu Temple also served as a focal point for local adherents to that faith. By the 1880s Indian teams were competing in sport leagues in Kimberley against Muslim, African and 'coloured' teams.<sup>81</sup>

That Indians formed an important part of the *Coloured People's Association* is evident by the presence of an 'interpreter of Indian languages' at its inaugural meeting<sup>82</sup>. Several others also spoke in 'an Indian language.' They showed the same

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<sup>79</sup>For an account of Indians in Kimberley see Bhana, S. and Brain, J.B.: Setting Down Roots: Indian Migrants in South Africa, 1860-1911, (Johannesburg; Witwatersrand University Press, 1990), pp. 99-108

<sup>80</sup>Turrell: Capital and Labour, pp. 103-104

<sup>81</sup>Bhana and Brain: Setting down roots, p. 106 ; Willan: "An African in Kimberley", pp. 251-252

<sup>82</sup>D.L., 02/03/1893

faith as Muslims in the British constitution to protect them from any form of discrimination. This is best illustrated by M. Dorosammy, a prominent speaker at C.P.A. meetings, who addressed the following correspondence to a local newspaper -

We ... are determined to press our rights to the bitter end - aye even to appealing to the great British nation for the justice that is ours by right.<sup>83</sup>

A characteristic of the articulate section of colonial black arrivals in Kimberley was to emphasise their standing as 'respectable' British subjects. The views of Moss, who called for all a grand alliance of all blacks, without class or socio-economic distinction among themselves, were not those of the majority of educated Africans. The informal alliances being formed between the various groups of black élites excluded the indigent and the uneducated, both from the Cape Colony and beyond.<sup>84</sup>

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While skilled workers from Europe had been instrumental in starting the first trade union in Kimberley, those from a different continent were to have a considerable influence in shaping the form of black consciousness that was surfacing in Kimberley in the latter half of the nineteenth century. The discovery of diamonds in Griqualand-West prompted a flood of people into the region, not only from the Cape Colony but also from Europe, Australia and the American continent. Among those coming from the United States were a number of black Americans, many of whom came to search and dig for diamonds. Others brought with them considerable assets and had earmarked the diamond fields as a being a potentially lucrative region.

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<sup>83</sup>Ibid

<sup>84</sup>See Chapter Three

for business ventures. An example of the latter group was the black American whose tender of two hundred pounds entitled him to operate the bar in the grandstand of the race-course.<sup>85</sup> Many of these black Americans had some experience in the fight against racist legislation in the United States and had considerable influence in early 'coloured' organisations in Kimberley.<sup>86</sup>

The first organisation purporting to represent black interests was a body for diamond diggers. This had been formed as a reaction to white demands during the disturbances of 1871-2 that all black claimholder licences be suspended. The 'Coloured Diggers Association' revealed both its constituency and its inclination by its claim to represent "... four hundred Americans and Colonial respectable diggers."<sup>87</sup> The alliance between 'respectable' colonial blacks and black Americans owed much to their shared belief in British justice and fairness of its laws.

During the 1870s white demands for the regulation of African labour in Kimberley led to the promulgation of the first pass laws in southern Africa. These stipulated that African labourers carry pass tickets while they worked at the diggings. While the main intention of these laws were to control migrant Africans in mining camps, other blacks were occasionally arrested on pass infringements by the over-zealous local constabulary. American blacks who were arrested showed their indignation by an outrage which found expression in local newspapers and drew attention to the arrest of other colonial blacks simply because their skins were dark.<sup>88</sup>

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<sup>85</sup>Angove: *In the Early Days*, p. 44

<sup>86</sup>*D.N.*, 15/12/1883 ; *D.L.*, 13/12/1883

<sup>87</sup>*D.N.*, 11/09/1872

<sup>88</sup>*D.F.A.*, 18/05/1878 ; 16/08/1878;

The earliest benefit societies for 'coloured' people showed a strong American influence. Indeed, one of the earliest of these was called The American Independent Order of Working Men's Benefit Society and was established on American Independence Day, the 4th July, in 1881. The Society identified the constituency it catered for in its manifesto -

We beg to notify that the above named Society has been organised for the future good of the Public at Large and the Welfare of the Coloured Working People of Kimberley, and their Special Benefit

Once again there was an emphasis on respectability, with an invitation extended to - "... every decent married man, and...every civilized one with a Christian heart and hand." This organisation clearly aimed at attracting blacks from the Colony while excluding Africans from the interior who they considered to be neither 'civilized' nor 'Christian'. The Manifesto was signed by the Secretary, James H. Murphy, a black American.<sup>89</sup>

This was presumably the same gentleman who spoke at the first meeting of the Africander Political Association in 1883 who was named as Jim Murphy, a 'coloured American schoolmaster'.<sup>90</sup> He spoke about the 'progress' made by black people in America, and held those who had become judges and members of parliament as prime examples. This influence by black Americans provided a model of black success and participation in politics on a scale which was unprecedented in the Cape Colony. The intention of the A.P.A. to take an active interest in the

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<sup>89</sup>Ibid. 18/08/1881  
<sup>90</sup>D.I. 13/12/1883

forthcoming House of Assembly elections of 1884 was presumably affected in no small part by those black Americans in Kimberley who were fully aware of the importance of participation in the political process.<sup>91</sup>

Politics was only one area in which black Americans were prominent in advocating a black or 'coloured' identity. Their impact in promoting a form of colour consciousness in other spheres of life was as considerable. One example was the Jubilee Singers, one of a number of black American troupes to visit Kimberley during the early years. Brian Willan comments on their significance -

They held a particular fascination for black South Africans, in part because they represented an area of cultural achievement admired as much by whites as blacks, in part because they exemplified the message of educational self-help expressed in the Jubilee Singer's connection with Fisk University in the United States, for which they raised funds.<sup>92</sup>

The growth of an anti-black prejudice during the early years of settlement at the diamond fields forced colonial blacks to realise the importance of forming associations to protest the passage of racist legislation which barred them from owning or dealing in diamonds and to cultivate an image which would facilitate their acceptance by the white community in Kimberley. The influence of American blacks was instrumental in shaping the form and agenda of the early black organisations on the fields, which almost exclusively catered for colonial blacks while

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<sup>91</sup>Ibid, The Africander political Association, or Africander League, as it was also known, was a black political organisation formed to canvas support for selected candidates in the 1884 elections, See below, Chapter Six.

<sup>92</sup>B. Willan: Sol Plaatjie : A Biography, (Johannesburg; Ravan Press, 1984), p 44

excluding non-colonial African migrants and indigent blacks. These organisations were characterised, for the most part, by their adherence to English middle class values and a belief in the equality of all races under British rule.

From the above it should be clear that the black people who arrived in Kimberley, both from the Cape Colony and beyond were deeply divided. Among the African labourers tribal loyalties ran deep and remained a stumbling block to closer relations for those within this vast grouping.<sup>93</sup> The educated African élites did not make common cause with African labourers and espoused only a narrow petty bourgeois consciousness.<sup>94</sup> Other black groups in Kimberley, notably the 'Malays' and Indians remained in tight knit communities where their respective religions shaped their way of life.<sup>95</sup> In addition, we contend that the most important and divisive distinction between black arrivals at the diamond camps during the early months of settlement was that between colonial and non-colonial. The difference in white perception of non-colonial and colonial blacks is apparent by their very different attitudes towards 'Cape Coloured' women on the one hand and indigenous women on the other, despite the physical similarity between the two groups. Black people in early Kimberley society then, far from acting in concert, were fragmented into various interest groups which differed from each other in terms of religion, class, ethnicity and social status. However, to an increasing degree, white prejudice was

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<sup>93</sup>*D.N.*, 29/03/1879

<sup>94</sup>See Willan: "An African in Kimberley", pp. 238-255

<sup>95</sup>For racism against Indians in particular see Turrell: "Capital, class and monopoly", pp. 156-157

forcing blacks from different backgrounds to realise that they shared common concerns.

## CHAPTER THREE

### The estrangement of the black élites

Cape society in the nineteenth century was characterised by a social hierarchy in which both class and colour distinctions played an important role in determining status. While the laws of the Colony avoided making distinctions based on skin colour the social reality was that racial prejudice did exist. However, this was not the sole determinant of social standing, since a minority of blacks succeeded in gaining acceptance to white middle class circles. Although racial inequalities were part of the way of life in the Colony, there was still scope for social mobility;<sup>1</sup> while a few educated and wealthy blacks were visible in the white community, poor whites were forced by economic necessity to settle in the same areas as the largely indigent black populace.<sup>2</sup> Historians have shown that many black inhabitants of Cape Town, to a great extent, shared a belief in Cape Liberalism and its non-racist tenets.<sup>3</sup> The political organisations for blacks which did emerge in this city towards the end of the century were formed as a consequence of the desire for inclusion into the political process and not as an attempt to reform it.<sup>4</sup>

Many of the colonial blacks who settled in Kimberley after 1870 shared these views of the justice inherent in British rule.<sup>5</sup> But the make up of the mining society differed in important respects from that of urban centres in the Cape Colony. The

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<sup>1</sup>Lewis: Between the Wire and the Wall, pp. 9, 13 ; Bickford-Smith: "Commerce, class, ethnicity" pp. 77, 95

<sup>2</sup>Bickford-Smith: *Ibid*, p. 194

<sup>3</sup>Bickford-Smith: "The emergence of Coloured political organisations", pp. 4-7 ; Lewis: Between the Wire and the Wall, pp. 12-14

<sup>4</sup>For black political organisations in Cape Town at the turn of the century see Lewis: *Ibid*, pp. 7-28

<sup>5</sup>Willan: "An African in Kimberley", pp. 238-255 ; Karis and Carter: From Protest to Challenge, p. 3

labour intensive nature of the diamond mining process resulted, as we have pointed out in Chapter One, in the influx of a large number of Africans from and beyond the frontiers of the Cape Colony.<sup>6</sup> By contrast, the number of Africans in Cape Town during this time was negligible.<sup>7</sup>

Because of the pressure from the diamond-mining industry that 'raw' Africans be regulated, they became the target of legislation that became increasingly restrictive.<sup>8</sup> In turn, this had repercussions for educated blacks in the region, almost all of whom had come from the Cape Colony where they had become accustomed to equality before the law, notwithstanding their skin colour.

Turrell and Worger have chronicled the systematic degradation of African labour in what was becoming one of Southern Africa's major centres of industry.<sup>9</sup> This was not achieved without resistance, the battle to secure a stable and submissive African workforce in Kimberley being drawn out and bitter. Newspaper discourse of the day reflected the views of white officials and diggers who sought to justify the increasing controls over the movement and freedom of African workers as part of the installation of a 'work ethic'. This they perceived as being part of a broader framework for the control of people most commonly referred to in white editorials as 'half clothed savages' and 'barbarians'.<sup>10</sup>

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<sup>6</sup>See Chapter One

<sup>7</sup>C.C. Saunders: "Africans in Cape Town in the nineteenth century: An outline", in Cape Town History Workshop, held at the University of Cape Town, (14-16 September, 1979), pp. 1-18

<sup>8</sup>See Worger: S.A.'s City of Diamonds, pp. 105-107, 110-111

<sup>9</sup>Turrell: Capital and Labour ; Worger: S.A.'s City of Diamonds

<sup>10</sup>for the spread of Social Darwinism in Southern Africa during this period see Footnote 19 of the Introduction

It was in the interests of the business community, diggers and the administration alike to support regulations which would ensure a cheap, efficient and reliable supply of labour to the diamond mines.<sup>11</sup> Class and cultural differences provided the justification for legislation which became increasingly restrictive towards migrant Africans.<sup>12</sup> Faced by prejudice based on skin colour and fettered by laws emanating from the white administration, African labourers were effectively prevented from forming class alliances with white workers. As Worger puts it -

...white employers sought to discipline their work force through legislative means and did so with such thoroughness and success that they created a pervasive ideological equation of black workers with criminals, which effectively split an emergent white working class from the black.<sup>13</sup>

In fact the consequences of the negative stereotype of the African migrant labourer in Kimberley went much further than the alienation of white workers. This latter group in any case needed little motivation other than their own prejudice to ensure that worker unity remained a pipe-dream. It was to be the colonial blacks coming to Kimberley, intent on carving out a living for themselves as literate and enfranchised British citizens, who had most cause for alarm at the anti-black sentiment in the mining camps.

While the cleavage between blacks and whites was not absolute during the early stages of settlement, there was nonetheless a strong undercurrent of racism

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<sup>11</sup>The early diamond industry was almost wholly dependent on the availability of manual labour while the later introduction of machinery only eased this need slightly

<sup>12</sup>For relevant legislation see Worger: *S.A.'s City of Diamonds*, pp. 110-146

<sup>13</sup>*Ibid*, pp. 110-111

evident in a least one component of the population. To many white diggers the most important distinction to make in ascertaining the character of men on the diamond fields was colour.<sup>14</sup> They considered not only African workers to be socially inferior to whites but blacks in general, irrespective of what their social standing in the Cape Colony had been.<sup>15</sup> During the first years of the diamond rush the fields had been under the jurisdiction of the Orange Free State. Under this government, these white settlers had become accustomed to minimal interference in what they deemed to be 'digger affairs.'<sup>16</sup> The period which marked the transition from Free State to British rule proved to be a turbulent one as the new administration came under severe pressure from white diggers to maintain the *status quo* of white privilege at the diamond mines.<sup>17</sup>

Under British law, black diggers were able to compete with whites for the few remaining available claims after 1870.<sup>18</sup> By the second half of 1871 the focus of the diamond rush had shifted away from the river diggings to the relatively unexplored area inland. Prolific finds were made in the vicinity of Colesburg Kopje, causing a great deal of excitement and an influx of diggers into that area.<sup>19</sup> This optimism was short lived. News reports from Kimberley just a few years after the initial discoveries gradually became more sombre, a far cry from the early articles which had

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<sup>14</sup>*Standard and Mail*, 03/08/1872 ; Turrell: *Capital and Labour*, pp. 29-30

<sup>15</sup>These views were informed by the spread of scientific racism and Social Darwinism

<sup>16</sup>University of Cape Town (U.C.T.) Archives, Smalberger Collection (B.C. 635), B 4.1, "Diggers Associations 1871-1875"

<sup>17</sup>This was to culminate in the 'Black Flag' Revolt - see Chapter Five..

<sup>18</sup>Ibid

<sup>19</sup>Doughty: *Early Diamond Days*, p. 106, gives an estimate of the population of the diamond fields during this time at being between 40 000 and 60 000 .

romanticised life on the diamond fields. The following account captures the pessimism of the period -

It was to be expected that as the population of the camps increased and poverty became known crime would be the result. In the early days of the diggings, when each party was well supplied with the necessities of life, crime was unknown for the cravings of hunger were not felt. Now, however, when the streets of the camps have more poor than rich in them, and the shoeless and the destitute are seen by the hundred, the property of others is more coveted than it used to be.<sup>20</sup>

The passage continues -

...no effort has been made for the good government of the large masses of people gathered at these camps; sanitary laws have been neglected, and the confusion has been permitted to grow in strength without a bold and energetic effort being made to meet the difficulties of the situation.

Local newspapers summed up the grim mood prevailing in the early 1870s -

A walk through the town portions of the great camp at the Colesburg after dark does not give one a very cheerful idea of the prosperity of the place at this present moment.<sup>21</sup>

.....

In December 1871 there occurred a sign of the trouble to come as attitudes hardened. White diggers went on the rampage and burned canteens whose owners were suspected of illicit dealings with African diamond smugglers. 1872 was to be a still more turbulent year. It was especially significant in that it was a time of

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<sup>20</sup>*S and M*, 10/08/1872

<sup>21</sup>*Ibid*, 23/07/1872

consolidation of British authority in the region after the annexation of Griqualand-West as a Crown Colony in 1871.<sup>22</sup> Accordingly, three commissioners were appointed by the colonial authorities to take charge of the affairs in the region.<sup>23</sup> The appointees soon found themselves in conflict with the diggers committees, the established structures of authority in the mining camps.

To the white diggers who were used to having a free hand in the running of their own affairs under Orange Free State rule, the interference of the new administration was an unnecessary irritation.<sup>24</sup> When it became obvious that the British authorities would not allow laws which were blatantly racist, such as the barring of all blacks from claim ownership, many white diggers held protest meetings and drew up petitions agitating for the return of the pre-annexation *status quo*. Many whites attributed their misfortune to the improved status of blacks under British rule. White fears were revealed by their three main demands, namely, that the movement of all blacks, their place of work and their access to diamonds be restricted and regulated.<sup>25</sup> Colonial blacks who had come to Kimberley with high hopes of a new start in life found themselves being made the target of racial legislation against which they had believed British law safeguarded them.

Events rapidly took a turn for the worse with virtual anarchy reigning in the camps as many white diggers considered constitutional attempts at redress to be time-consuming and ultimately fruitless. Where previously there had been sporadic

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<sup>22</sup>For an account of British consolidation in the region see Turrell: Capital and Labour, pp. 32-48

<sup>23</sup>They were R.W.H. Giddy, J. Campbell and J.C. Thompson

<sup>24</sup>U.C.T. Archives, Smalberger Collection, B 4.1

<sup>25</sup>C.T., 27/07/1872

and isolated acts of civil disobedience by some of the white inhabitants of the mining camps challenging colonial authority, there was now a popular ground swell of support for the concept of 'diggers rights'. The fledgling administration was ill-prepared to counter it. A newspaper article explained -

The diggers are in the heart of the desert, removed from many of the restraints of civilization, and the centre of public authority and public force, and their position as a community must very largely depend on their own exertions and resolution.<sup>26</sup>

In July 1872 the camps erupted and mob rule rapidly became the order of the day. Prime targets were canteen owners suspected of buying stolen diamonds from black servants and labourers. Tents were razed, canteens destroyed and those blacks who fell foul of the mob were flogged.<sup>27</sup> Colonial newspapers contained numerous reports of African labourers being assaulted by the mob on the slightest pretext. The Standard and Mail relates a typical incident involving an African labourer suspected of stealing diamonds because, "...he was too decently dressed for a black man." The mob proceeded to strip and beat him and turned him over to the police who kept him overnight in jail before the Magistrate released him, in rags, for lack of evidence the next day.<sup>28</sup>

Africans were not the only target of racist attacks. Another report noted that Indians, "...who, because they are black, are dealt with as 'Natives' ", being

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<sup>26</sup>Ibid.

<sup>27</sup>S and M, 03/08/1872

<sup>28</sup>Ibid

manhandled and then expelled from the camp.<sup>29</sup> All inhabitants who were not white were at risk in the frenzy of racial hatred and prejudice unleashed by the mob. Turrell writes of the belief prevalent amongst white diggers -

that all blacks were 'brothers', irrespective of whether they owned a claim or worked in one, and would happily conspire to defraud white masters of the fruits of exploitation.<sup>30</sup>

While the incidents of tent burning and beatings were instigated by the unemployed and the marginalised who had been hardest hit by worsening conditions on the fields there was a great deal of support for the mob from 'respectable' white middle-class quarters. R.W.H. Giddy, one of the Commissioners, lamenting the widespread nature of the unrest reported that -

... the hitherto orderly well-conducted, and respectable community of these camps has lately permitted itself to be influenced by the ill-advised counsel of certain political agitators, who, most of them having nothing to lose in a state of anarchy and confusion, seek to establish instead of an organized and civilized Government, the reign of Judge Lynch and Rowdyism.<sup>31</sup>

A newspaper correspondent sympathetic to the white diggers wrote indignantly -

It is not a rough disorderly mob that requires these things from the Government, but the first and second class of men whose delight it is not in burning tents, but a thoroughly good-natured free-thinking race, who are determined to have, what they consider, proper justice, and not to be put upon by their 'niggers'.<sup>32</sup>

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<sup>29</sup>Ibid

<sup>30</sup>Turrell: Capital and Labour, p. 29

<sup>31</sup>C.A., 27/07/1872

<sup>32</sup>Ibid, 03/08/1872

This was especially worrying to colonial blacks. The anti-black sentiment was not confined to a few poor white diggers who found themselves pushed off the claims by wealthier blacks. Instead, it permeated all levels of the white community, and was prevalent among those 'first and second' class of men whom colonial blacks regarded as their social equals. The days immediately following the riots of late July witnessed numerous attempts by the British Commissioners to placate the diggers. The colonial authorities were asked not only to recognise the racial inequalities which had existed in the camps under the rule of the Orange Free State but to expand upon and to pass legislation giving them legal force.<sup>33</sup>

A public meeting between the Commissioners and dissatisfied diggers was arranged. Three thousand people attended, giving some indication of the extent of public interest. It was fully reported in the Standard and Mail, from which the following account is gleaned.<sup>34</sup> The issues raised by the white diggers at the meeting clearly indicate the misgivings and insecurities of many at the change in administration of the diamond fields. What started out as an appeal for legislation to restrict and monitor African labour movement in Kimberley soon gave way to the main cause of white digger discontent. This was that "...the great fault of the Government was, that it gave too many privileges to the coloured people." Mr. Ling, a prominent and vocal member of the Diggers' Committee, took Mr. Thompson, one of the Commissioners, to task over this issue. He argued that -

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<sup>33</sup>U.C.T. Archives, Smalberger Collection, B 4.8

<sup>34</sup>S and M, 03/08/1872

When the Fields became British territory there were no licences issued to coloured persons. Mr. Thompson then stated, or led us to infer, that no such licences would be granted, at least for two years ... That promise has not been kept. May I ask, Mr. Thompson, why you granted licences to coloured people against the expressed wish of the whole of the white people on the Fields? [tremendous cheering] ... At the time this was declared a British territory there was not a single coloured person holding a licence.

Mr Owens, a white digger, spoke for many in the audience when he complained that-

...they had all come to the Fields, and had sacrificed their lives and property in coming; they were heavily taxed; and wanted protection against native pilfering on which almost a premium was put by the issue of licences to coloured men."

At the conclusion of the meeting a committee was elected by the audience with the purpose of presenting a set of demands to the Commissioners. Most of these demands were directed against non-colonial Africans and called for a restriction on their movement on the Fields and for more powers to be given to employers. What alarmed other blacks in the mining camps, who did not consider themselves as mere labourers and did not want to be classified as such, was the wording of the first two clauses in the list of demands. The first was that "...no Kafir or any other coloured person shall be entitled to hold a licence or search for diamonds." The second contained the same qualification "That no Kafir or other coloured person shall be entitled to hold a licence to buy, sell or otherwise deal in diamonds."

The Commissioners met on the 23rd July to discuss the memorandum from the Diggers' Committee. The result was an approval of most of the demands in the

form of two notices. The first made provision for the establishment of a Registry Office for servants and laid out regulations for tighter control of African labour on the diamond fields. The second, more controversial, notification was signed by only two of the Commissioners, Commissioner Thompson having declined. It laid down that -

...all digging licences now held by natives and other coloured persons shall be suspended, and shall thenceforth be issued or renewed only upon production to the Inspector of claims, of a certificate of character and fitness either from the Diggers' Committee, or, in a digging where there is no such committee, from a Board consisting of seven *bona fide* white claimholders, to be elected by white claimholders for that purpose.<sup>35</sup>

In effect, this proclamation translated the negative stereotype of blacks in the region into a legal discrimination against those who were not white.

Clearly, the intention of the second notice was to appease white diggers. The Commissioners ensured that the only way black diggers could obtain licences was via the very Diggers' Committees which had agitated for their suspension. They submitted to white demands and opted to retain the *status quo* which gave the white diggers an edge over their black counterparts at all stages of production. The proclamations were celebrated by white inhabitants and local newspapers alike. Further afield, however, colonial newspapers were expressing grave reservations. Even the conservative Standard and Mail noted the extent of the injustice reporting that -

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<sup>35</sup>Ibid

We are not advocating the cause of the coloured digger, but we say that under the existing constitution, wherever the coloured digger is not excluded by a prior contract made and entered into with private proprietors on ground which has not been declared public property, then the deprivation is illegal.<sup>36</sup>

The Cape Argus, under the influence of the philanthropic Saul Solomon, was even more forthright in its criticism of the actions of the Commissioners-

...it is well known that a great number of these coloured claimholders are quiet, respectable men of industrious habits, who no more deserve to have their property confiscated than the white diggers. In our opinion, no circumstance whatever could justify the step taken by the Commissioners.<sup>37</sup>

Another Argus editorial was still more scathing -

Numbers of these men are acquiring property in the country, and are giving the best guarantee for the peace of the Colony by consuming its produce and having a stake in its affairs. Is it to be endured that when they cross the Orange River to another portion of the empire, they should be treated as slaves and thieves, and refused the liberty to try their fortunes with the rest of the colonists?<sup>38</sup>

Numerous colonial blacks were affected by the proclamation. Forty-seven African, 'Cape Coloured' and Muslim diggers in Du Toit's Pan and Bultfontein alone found their licences suspended as a direct result of it.<sup>39</sup> Numerous letters and reports in local and colonial newspapers give an indication of the extent of the unease of black diggers preceding the proclamation and reflect their dismay subsequent to it.<sup>40</sup>

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<sup>36</sup>Ibid, 20/08/1872

<sup>37</sup>C.A., 03/08/1872

<sup>38</sup>Ibid, 13/08/1872

<sup>39</sup>C.A. , GLW 62, "Miscellaneous" ; Turrell, Capital and Labour, p. 30

<sup>40</sup>See below, pp. 89-92

A sentiment common to the numerous letters written by blacks was the belief that their grievances would be redressed by the colonial authorities. There existed a strong conviction that the constitution and liberal policies of the British administration would not ignore what amounted to an injustice to British citizens.

The Cape Argus relates a typical case -

We know of more than one respectable coloured man who was permitted to dig under the Free State régime: and we have before us a letter from a coloured youth; who has been fairly successful, complaining that he is treated far worse under the rule of the Commissioners than under Mr. Truter (who had been the Free State official responsible for the area before British annexation). Stung with the indignity of being refused to sell his diamonds, and being practically treated as a thief, he is already on his way to Cape Town to seek redress.<sup>41</sup>

Reaction from blacks in Kimberley itself was soon forthcoming. Their belief in British justice to redress all grievances remained unwavering even after the capitulation of the Commissioners to the white diggers. Correspondence from 'Coloured Diggers' to the Diamond News set out these sentiments -<sup>42</sup>

We throw ourselves entirely in the hands of Her Majesty's Government, and will ever have a great respect for the British flag. We do not think that the colour of a man's skin should render him liable to insult, or unfit him to obtain that accommodation for which he is able and willing to pay.

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<sup>41</sup>C.A., 09/12/1871

<sup>42</sup>D.N., 27/01/1872

Despite their plea for equal treatment 'Coloured Diggers' themselves were at pains to emphasise their colonial status and in so doing set their 'respectable' group apart from 'raw' African labour -

We are of those coloured men who have estates or immovable property in the Colony, and have hitherto paid all dues or taxes which became due on the same, such as house tax, road rates, quitrents and etc. We have come from the various parts of the Colony of the Cape of Good Hope, on our own account and expense, to the Diamond-fields, in order to dig and search respectively for diamonds, which we consider we have as much right to do as any man on the Fields. Since our arrival on the Diamond-fields as diggers, we have honestly and justly paid for all our own rights and privileges, and are still willing to pay for them, such as claim licences, water rights, and the forty feet of ground for stands or tent rights as claimed by the proprietors of the respective farms.

The social distance 'Coloured Diggers' sought to maintain between themselves and other blacks is obvious from the tone of the next section of the letter, "We do not speak about the Kafir and Hottentot servants who are under masters." 'Coloured Diggers' clearly regarded themselves as much entitled to own claims as any white man by virtue of their financial independence. The racial rhetoric clearly unsettled this 'class of coloured men'. The letter continues, "We further hope that the authorities will prevent the present frequent meetings, as they will only create disturbance on the Fields." From the letter it is also evident that 'Coloured Diggers' were beginning to appreciate the importance of political mobility to represent their own interests, rather than relying on a white candidate to do so, "We are registered voters in the Colony, and therefore have a right to send a respectable gentleman to the Cape Parliament as our representative to watch our interests."

There was a flood of other letters and petitions from colonial blacks as they protested the racist nature of the proclamations. Salie Kralle, writing to the Diamond News,<sup>43</sup> queried -

A meeting of diggers, held on the Market-Square, Du Toit's Pan set forth that Kafirs, Hottentots, Griquas, Maquatese, or in fact, all people of dark colour, should be prevented from having claims of their own. May I ask, are the Malays in the same category?

He was at pains to establish his credentials as a 'decent' man assuring readers that, "I can produce all the confidates and testimonials if required." He concluded -

It would be very hard indeed, after coming all the way from Cape Town on foot, and after all the expenses consequent to so long a journey, then to be excluded from the very object for which he came.

Africans who had come to Kimberley from the Cape Colony as diggers in their own right also stressed the differences between themselves and those 'raw' Africans from beyond the borders of the Colony. A petition to John Campbell, one of the Commissioners, reveal the anxiety of a group of Fingoes. They state their place of residence as being 'the Colony of the Cape of Good Hope' and emphasise that, ".your petitioners are loyal subjects of Her Majesty the Queen and have served the British Government in the Colony of the Cape of Good Hope." Their application for a licence to dig and search for diamonds had just been refused and they requested that the Commissioners address their grievances as taxpayers and owners of immovable property in the Cape Colony so that "...we may be able to procure for us a honest and

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<sup>43</sup>Ibid, 24/01/1872

just living." The letter concludes with an assurance that "...your petitioners are willing to pay all our rights and privileges whilst residing at the diamond field."<sup>44</sup>

Educated blacks in Kimberley revealed by the nature of their correspondence and petitions that they protested, not so much the restrictive legislation itself, but rather that it was being applied to colonial as well as non-colonial blacks. They emphasised that, as British subjects, many of whom owned property in the Colony, they should be exempt from laws which had been framed to control Africans from the frontier regions. The fear of white diggers at being 'swamped' by migrant Africans was rapidly translated into blind prejudice and heightened racial tension.<sup>45</sup>

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Sir Henry Barkly, Governor of Griqualand West, bowed to pressure both locally and from London and moved to repeal the proclamations of the Commissioners. He replaced them with proclamations of his own which went a long way towards meeting white digger demands of a pass system for non-colonial blacks on the fields. Those words which alluded to colour were substituted and instead the Act was couched in the neutral terms of Masters and Servants. His proclamation gave masters increased powers over their servants and also enabled police to arrest those servants found travelling without a 'Ticket' or pass. The second notification of the Commissioners concerning black claimholders was repealed and not replaced.<sup>46</sup> On a visit to Kimberley in September he gave his reasons in an address to the crowd

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<sup>44</sup>C.A. , GLW 53, "Memorial of Coloured diggers", (22/03/1872)

<sup>45</sup>See also Turrell: Capital and Labour, p. 99, quoting Rev. Bevan

<sup>46</sup>For a full text of the repeals see the C.A., 17/08/1872.

I am sure you will agree with me that the colour of a man's skin is a very imperfect test of his moral and intellectual qualities I have known highly educated, clever and amiable men holding positions who were, to use the Diamond-fields phrase, very considerably off-colour. You have here on the Fields a wide range; from the Griquas, the original lords of the soil, the industrious Malay from Cape Town, and the civilized Kafir from the Colony, down to the Bechuanas and Mahows who flock hither from the remote interior to offer their services in working the claims. I do not think that it is just to confound all these men, and place them under a common banner. I think you may safely trust to the discretion of your Magistrates to issue digging licences to any such as them as are known to be of good character and industrious habits.<sup>47</sup>

To 'respectable coloured men' for this is what blacks from the Colony were beginning to call themselves, the repeal of the proclamations of the Commissioners was further proof of British justice and commitment to colour-blind administration. This was reflected in a memorial of welcome to Governor Barkly which stated that -

We think it a great honour to see your Excellency amongst us, as the only recognised head of Government, at the time when our welfare was in danger, like an angel you have come to shield us with your Mighty wings.<sup>48</sup>

The newspaper labelled the insertion 'The Native Claimholders' Question' while the correspondents themselves sought to dissociate 'Colonial respectable coloured' from 'native'. A later paragraph in the address emphasises the difference

We doubt not that there are native servants of thieving propensities, for we suffer also by our native servants, but your Excellency will see that we do not

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<sup>47</sup>*S and M*, 24/09/1872

<sup>48</sup>*D.N.*, 11/09/1872

class ourselves among native servants, all that we claim is the right and privileges of European diggers.

While the repeal of the Commissioners' proclamations was hailed in many quarters as a positive step towards eliminating racial prejudice, it was to be ultimately an empty gesture. The proclamations were replaced by laws which, although ostensibly colour-blind, were to restrict and control black labour movement on the fields and give white employers more power. Increased police vigilance resulted in the arrest of many 'coloured' people who were travelling without a pass. The resultant outcry in local newspapers by 'respectable coloureds' gives an indication of the depth of outrage by this group at being treated in the same manner as African labourers.<sup>49</sup> It must be emphasised that 'coloured' people who described themselves by this term included not only 'Cape Coloureds' but also educated Africans and Indians from the Colony. The increase in police activity simply made educated blacks more determined to assert an identity of their own, one which would not be tainted by association with the 'native' labourers who were bearing the brunt of the restrictive regulations. The apparent support by Barkly for a non-racial constitution gave many blacks hope that 'respectability', and not colour would determine social acceptability in the new era of British rule of Griqualand-West. The realisation that a non-racial order on the fields was an illusion soon became painfully apparent to 'respectable' black people in the ensuing years. The heightened tension and mutual antagonism between white employers and African labourers over this period impacted on other blacks, who were forced to re-evaluate their standing in the

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<sup>49</sup> C.A., 19/02/1876; D.F.A., 18/05/1878 and 16/08/1878

community and to be more aware of the necessity for joint action to defend what had become common interests.

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## CHAPTER FOUR

### "All blacks are brothers" -the growth of racial segregation in Kimberley

Correspondence and records of the period reveal that articulate colonial blacks in Kimberley were united in their opposition to being classified along with 'raw' Africans.<sup>1</sup> What remains unclear is the extent to which African migrant labourers and 'inarticulate' blacks from the Colony made common cause with each other.<sup>2</sup> Here we examine residential patterns, religious activities, schooling, utilisation of leisure time and the provision of health care all of which reveal the progression of a de facto racial segregation in the everyday lives of people in Kimberley.

Early patterns of settlement in Kimberley were to determine residential boundaries between people of different classes and races. The mining camps became a bustling town which developed into one of the biggest urban centres in southern Africa. The origins of modern Kimberley and the extent of residential and social segregation of people in and around the mining camps was influenced in part by the desire of the colonial administration to extend the localisation policy of 'natives' from the countryside into Kimberley.<sup>3</sup> We consider the nature of early settlement around Kimberley and the social implications of the establishment, in the town itself, of locations for African migrant workers who were being increasingly

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<sup>1</sup>See Chapter Three

<sup>2</sup>See Goldin: *Making Race*, page xv of Introduction. He uses the term 'inarticulate' to describe those people who were non-literate and indigent. He calls them the hidden sector of a population as a result of the lack of source material pertaining to them.

<sup>3</sup>A. Mabin: "Labour, Capital, Class Struggle and the origins of residential segregation in Kimberley, 1880-1920", *Journal of Historical Geography*, 12, (1986), pp. 11-12

segregated in both the work-place and place of residence. The selective segregation of non-colonial blacks, ostensibly to create a labour resource, was gradually to give way to a desire, shared by the majority of white inhabitants and some officials in the administration, to isolate all blacks from the mainstream Kimberley community.<sup>4</sup>

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In its modern form Kimberley originated from four main mining sites. These grew into mining camps around which villages were formed. These villages eventually merged to form Kimberley as we know it today.<sup>5</sup>

During the latter half of 1870 there was a movement of people from the river diggings to farms inland where diamonds were being found in increasing numbers. In the course of the next year mining sites were established at Dutoitspan on the farm Dorstfontein, Bultfontein on the farm of the same name and Old de Beers and New Rush on the farm Vooruitzicht. While Dutoitspan and Bultfontein mines did attract a considerable number of diggers initially, interest in them began to wane after it became evident that finds on the neighbouring Vooruitzicht farm were more plentiful. The early villages which had sprung up around these mines gradually declined and many of their inhabitants moved to the new township of Beaconsfield in 1883. While the majority of white diggers moved to more profitable sites, these early mines were never abandoned altogether. They became a refuge for many black claim-owners who were driven out of Kimberley by the prejudice of white diggers.<sup>6</sup>

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<sup>4</sup>Turrell: Capital and Labour, p. 99

<sup>5</sup>K.P.L., Dux and Edna van der Walt: "Early morning lectures", from a pamphlet based on a series of lectures

<sup>6</sup>Worger: S.A.'s City of Diamonds, p. 72

Of the two mining sites, Old de Beers and New Rush, on the Vooruitzicht farm, the latter was to yield more diamonds. It soon became the focus of the latest 'rush' by diggers - hence its name, 'New Rush'. Because of the relatively poor finds at Old de Beers this settlement did not become as haphazard and concentrated as the one at New Rush. Consequently the area around Old de Beers was settled by the wealthy and those in positions of power as it was removed from the hustle and bustle of the main mining camp. An anonymous writer describes Old de Beers in 1874 -

Here are the prettiest of the private residences, neatly enclosed in reed fences. The Governor's House is here and he boasts a large thorn tree within his encampment. There are several trees round Old de Beers, but nearly all are enclosed in private camps now.<sup>7</sup>

Soon after this was written, in 1875, a white residential area was established close to the de Beers mine. Belgravia, as it was called, contained a number of fashionable houses "...built in brick and furnished with all the trappings and comfort of Victorian bourgeois elegance..."<sup>8</sup> In 1883 another white suburb, Gladstone, was laid out on the opposite side of the mine. In the meantime a race course which was frequented by many leading citizens, including the Governor himself, was developed in the area. Already the mining camps were mirroring settlement patterns in the Cape Colony where, while there was no law stipulating racial segregation, this nonetheless occurred with white middle class English-speaking colonists claiming prime residential areas.

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<sup>7</sup>K.P.L., D. and E. van der Walt, "Early morning lectures"

<sup>8</sup>Turrell: Capital and Labour, p. 95

Meanwhile, the growth of New Rush camp was phenomenal. Within three months of its discovery the settlement had grown to such an extent that over 5000 diggers were working on the site.<sup>9</sup> When it became obvious that the soil was richer in mineral deposits than at previous sites early tents were replaced by more permanent structures and patterns of settlement became more ordered with merchants and their stores soon putting in an appearance.

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Already, in this early phase of settlement, people were congregating along ethnic lines. A so-called 'Malay Camp' sprang up during this period close to the middle of Kimberley. One distinguishing feature of the Malay Camp was that "there were more stables in this part of Kimberley than any other," reflecting the high proportion of Muslims in the town who were cab-owners or drivers.<sup>10</sup> Informal locations or 'native camps' in the town itself were also dominated by one or more ethnic groups; Fingo, Bechuana and Koranna to name a few<sup>11</sup> Nevertheless, there were some areas where the inhabitants were racially mixed. The central part of Kimberley, Newton suburb, , providing as it did easy and convenient access to the Kimberley mine, was inhabited by both white and black.<sup>12</sup>

The divide between colonial and non-colonial also emerged as important in determining settlement patterns in Griqualand West. The establishment of a location system in the hinterland set a precedent for the segregation of African migrants in the fledgling Crown Colony. An immediate consequence of the Griqua-led rebellion

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<sup>9</sup>K.P.L., D. and E. van der Walt, "Early morning lectures"

<sup>10</sup>Turrell: Capital and Labour, p. 100

<sup>11</sup>D.N., 29/03/1879

<sup>12</sup>Mabin, "Labour, Capital, Class Struggle", pp. 18-22

of 1878 was the infiltration of rural Griqualand-West by white farmers and the establishment of locations for the vanquished indigenous population.<sup>13</sup> The principle of reserving tracts of land for the use of people of specific races was later applied within the municipal limits of Kimberley.<sup>14</sup> The motives for and application of this policy of selective segregation affect our analysis and, therefore, merit brief attention.

Lieutenant-Governor Southey's successor in Griqualand-West, Major Lanyon, was appointed as Administrator of the Crown Colony in 1875. One of his first tasks was to select sites suitable for the eventual establishment of 'native' locations in the rural areas of Griqualand-West.<sup>15</sup> This was done to create a labour pool in the Crown Colony itself, to augment the fluctuating supply of Africans to Kimberley from their homesteads further afield.<sup>16</sup> While the Keate award of 1871 had recognised the Griqua land titles, subsequent rulings on land disputes placed more and more Griqua territory into the hands of successful white claimants, mostly Free State farmers.<sup>17</sup> The unsuccessful rebellion by the indigenous people in the region only served to speed this trend. The 'Location Laws' which existed in the Cape were extended to Griqualand-West in June 1879<sup>18</sup> and resulted in the further reduction of land and restriction of movement of the indigenous people in rural Griqualand-West.

Lanyon's desire to establish 'native' locations and settle land disputes in the hinterland was motivated in part by the impending incorporation of the territory

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<sup>13</sup>Worger: *S.A.'s City of Diamonds*, p. 95

<sup>14</sup>Mabin: "Labour, Capital, Class Struggle", pp. 11-12 ; Turrell: *Capital and Labour*, p. 99

<sup>15</sup>C.A. , Colonial Office (C.O.), "Records", CO (m) 107/2, (15277), (22 November 1876)

<sup>16</sup>C.A. , CO (m) 107/4, (4452), "Lanyon to Orpen", (15 February 1877)

<sup>17</sup> Turrell: *Capital and Labour*, p. 99

<sup>18</sup>Ibid

into the Cape Colony.<sup>19</sup> A pre-requisite for this process was the speedy resolution of the contentious land issue in the region. Reports from the various districts of Griqualand-West in the ensuing years attest to the success of the localisation policy of the indigenous people who were supervised by an Inspector who answered directly to Lanyon.<sup>20</sup> The main purpose of these locations - to serve as labour pools - was attained as numbers of their inhabitants were forced by drought and poor agricultural yields to offer their labour to white masters outside the reservations.<sup>21</sup> Yet there always remained those, especially amongst the Griqua and Koranna who resisted the pull of the mining companies. Many preferred to live in destitution on the locations, rather than serve under masters.<sup>22</sup> Inspectors ensured that only 'natives' were allowed in the locations and ejected those, often Boer farmers, who had settled in the area due to the scarcity of land.<sup>23</sup> Those permitted to live in 'native' locations included Griqua, Koranna, Batlapin, Basuto, Bushmen and those listed under the label 'Kaffir'.<sup>24</sup> The localising policy was restricted to blacks and was applied equally to all the indigenous people regardless of cultural differences. In effect, this was providing a precedent in the region for the selective segregation of people purely on skin colour. That this flew in the face of ostensibly colour blind British rule mattered little to the administrators who saw the locations laws as a means to settle the land issue and at the same time provide a much needed labour resource.

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<sup>19</sup>C.A., *The Statute Law of Griqualand-West Comprising Government Notices, Proclamations and Ordinances*, (Cape Town; 1882)

<sup>20</sup>C.A., N.A.B.B., 'G 20', "Report of Inspector of Locations, Daniels Kuil and Gruisfontein Location"; "Report of Civil Commissioner, Barkly"; "Report of Civil Commissioner, Herbert", (1881)

<sup>21</sup>C.A., GLW 160 (1992), "Green to Marshall", (12 July 1880)

<sup>22</sup>C.A., N.A.B.B., 'G 20', "Report"; Worger: *S.A.'s City of Diamonds*, p. 96

<sup>23</sup>C.A., GLW 160 (1992), "Green to Marshall"

In Kimberley informal 'locations' had existed from as early as 1874.<sup>25</sup> The extension of the Cape Location Acts to Griqualand-West allowed the state to attend to one of the most enduring grievances of the mine owners, that of the irregularity of the African labour supply to the camps. At this time these locations were still not being supervised even though the Kimberley Town Council byelaws of 1878 had made provision for a superintendent to regulate those people deemed to be residing in municipal 'native' locations.<sup>26</sup> A report on the sanitary condition of Kimberley in March 1879 revealed the existence of eight locations on Company and Government property in the town.<sup>27</sup> In the same year, Sir Charles Warren became the new Administrator of Griqualand-West and applied the Location Acts vigorously, both in the rural areas and in Kimberley itself. Stringent checks on those living in municipal locations were carried out and six hundred and forty three Africans were arrested in the first six months of 1880 for various offences, ranging from loitering to pass law infringements.<sup>28</sup>

A Government notice was published in September 1880 which defined a municipal location as -

...any number of huts or dwellings exceeding five within an area of one square mile occupied by any one of the native races such as Kaffirs, Fingoes, Basutos, Hottentots, Bushmen and the like...<sup>29</sup>

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<sup>24</sup>C.A , N.A.B.B , 'G 20', "Report"

<sup>25</sup>Mabin: "Labour, Capital, Class Struggle", pp. 18,19

<sup>26</sup>Worger: S.A.'s City of Diamonds, p. 130

<sup>27</sup>D.N., 29/03/1879; Turrell: Capital and Labour, p. 98

<sup>28</sup>Worger: S.A.'s City of Diamonds, pp. 130-131; D.N., 24/12/1881

<sup>29</sup>Turrell: Capital and Labour, p. 100

This made no distinction between colonial and non-colonial blacks and served only to alarm the former group, many of whom took exception to being classified with migrant labourers.

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While ethnic divisions were pronounced and were reflected by where people chose to live, other differences were becoming apparent in the growing mining society. The distinction between colonial and non-colonial blacks was proving important in establishing settlement patterns. We have seen that the Griqua and Koranna who had always lived just beyond the borders of the Cape Colony were classified as non-colonial and herded into locations.<sup>30</sup> That they themselves were beginning to accept this definition is revealed by where they were settling in the town itself. One such area was the West End, which was separated from the rest of the town by the mine itself. It was a desolate area, described by a contemporary observer as being -

...almost exclusively inhabited by Blacks and Coloureds. The Blacks are mainly Basuto...the vast majority...are migrant labourers. The Coloureds are Koranna and Griqua from this area. Zulus as other Black tribes and Bastards, are scarcely represented.<sup>31</sup>

This was one indication of the growing alignment, at least among blacks in Kimberley, into non-colonial and colonial camps.

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<sup>30</sup>C.A., N.A.B.B., 'G 20', "Report"

<sup>31</sup>Turrell: Capital and Labour, p. 55, quoting Reverend Meyer B.M.S., 1875

When the Cape Location Acts were extended to Griqualand-West they were applied only to 'natives' as defined above. With the segregation of non-colonial blacks in both the hinterland and the town proper serving as a precedent, there was a call by many whites for this to be extended to include other blacks. In his report for 1882, the manager of the Vooruitzicht Estate, Henry Hutton, demanded that a separate location for Indians be established -

In the town of Kimberley many coolie families are occupying licenced stands, to the great annoyance of their white neighbours, to whom their dirty and noisy habits render them obnoxious. A separate location for coolies is to be desired, and when all boundary disputes have been arranged and railway requirements provided for, I hope to submit a proposal for a coolie location to the Honourable the Commissioner.<sup>32</sup>

A Bill passed in 1883 to "Explain and alter certain provisions of Kimberley Borough Act, No. 11 of 1883" made provision for the establishment of an Indian Location.<sup>33</sup> Despite the support for Indian and Malay locations by white officials in the administration, it was never realised largely due to racial equality being guaranteed, in theory at least, if not in practice, by British law.

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The early settlement patterns in Kimberley mirrored those in the main urban centres in the Cape Colony, Cape Town and Port Elizabeth. Religion, ethnicity, class, and language to a greater or lesser extent, were all important considerations in determining where, and with whom, people chose to live. We have shown that in

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<sup>32</sup>South African Library (S.A.L.), Cape Parliamentary Papers (C.P.P.), "Report by the Manager of Vooruitzicht for 1882"

<sup>33</sup>C.A. , Lands Department Archive, (LND), 1/222, No. 11 of 1883, (6 February 1883)

Kimberley there existed a further distinction - between 'raw' non-colonial African migrants and diggers, black and white, who had their origins within the Cape Colony. Clearly, on the surface this was not a racial distinction but was based rather on class differences. Turrell emphasises this point -

What little evidence there has come to light suggests some fluid lines of racial association. Colonial Africans, 'people of colour' and Europeans who lived in Newton, the Malay Camp and the locations had more in common with each other than the Africans from the interior. Most of the former spoke English, wore European clothes and were well acquainted with colonial capitalism.<sup>34</sup>

However, while blacks from the Cape Colony entering Kimberley shared much in common with whites in terms of exposure to 'colonial capitalism' this hardly translated into the 'fluid lines of racial association' that Turrell suggests. on the contrary, that racist white diggers were able successfully to campaign for all blacks to be deprived of claim ownership, purely on the basis of skin colour.<sup>35</sup> When this decision was later overturned the issue of the right of blacks to be claimholders remained a source of extreme discontent among white diggers. The underlying racial tensions simmered and were an important contributory factor to the Black Flag Revolt. It also proved a stumbling block to worker unity in the 1880s and remained throughout a divisive factor in the Kimberley community.<sup>36</sup>

The attitudes of whites showed the extent to which the class distinctions between non-colonial and colonial in Kimberley had given way to racial polarity as

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<sup>34</sup>Turrell: Capital and Labour, p. 103

<sup>35</sup>See Chapter Three

<sup>36</sup>See Chapter Five

the main line of cleavage in the community by the 1880s. There was an increase in letters to the press calling for a segregation of all blacks in the town. In 1883 a white resident of Beaconsfield, the township with which Kimberley gradually merged, complained to the Diamond Fields Advertiser -

It has always been stated by the officers of the London and South African Exploration Company that no Kafir houses, Malay Camps, and etc., would be allowed to be established above the road passing in front of the Good Templars Hall and Wesleyan Chapel, but in spite of this a Kafir house has been made by turning a Blacksmith's shop into one a good distance above the roadway mentioned, and in a place surrounded by houses inhabited solely by Europeans, for whom accordingly Saturday, Sunday and Monday nights are made hideous by the drunken riots and quarrels of these black gentry, to say nothing of the detestable sights which the neighbours are compelled to witness.<sup>37</sup>

Evidently, informal segregation did indeed exist in early Kimberley and there were residential areas which were inhabited exclusively by specific groups of people. This can be attributed partly to the efforts of the authorities in the province and partly to the inclination of the inhabitants of Kimberley themselves. We have seen that the Griqualand-West Government, responding to pressure from employers, extended the policy of the localisation of African people in the countryside to the town, albeit without very much success until the implementation of the compound system. The early locations which were ethnically based, the wealthy suburbs of Belgravia and Gladstone, the spontaneous concentration of Muslims in the Malay Camp, the settlement of the West End by coloured and African groups and the

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<sup>37</sup>D.F.A., 10/01/1883

existence of racially mixed areas like Newton, where blacks and whites worked and lived side by side show that no single factor determined early settlement. However, this situation of ethnic, religious and class diversity in Kimberley was rapidly being overtaken by the primacy of racial divisions into black and white.

When formal locations were declared within the municipal limits of Kimberley they rapidly lost their ethnic character because of the eagerness of the authorities to shunt into them all African migrants, regardless of where they had come from.<sup>38</sup> The Malay Camp became home to many coloured Christians as well as Africans.<sup>39</sup> While there were those whites who moved to the Malay Camp and into the locations as squatters they were treated as outcasts by the mainstream white community for whom a black skin was increasingly identified negatively, regardless of its shade. Poverty forced many 'Cape Coloureds' into the ostensibly 'native' locations. Many managed to evade paying taxes in these badly supervised areas.<sup>40</sup> This contributed to the blurring of distinctions between migrant Africans and poor colonial blacks.

Clearly, despite black-white polarisation this had not yet translated into the emergence of a common black consciousness. Instead, what was occurring was an increase in co-operation among the black élites, 'Cape Coloured', African and Indian as they realised the extent of their exclusion from mainstream middle-class Kimberley. Despite this, wealth was still able to secure at least a degree of privilege.

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<sup>38</sup>Turrell: Capital and Labour, p. 101

<sup>39</sup>K.P.L., U.S.P.G., Reports, 1886, Sister Catherine

<sup>40</sup>Turrell: Capital and Labour, p. 101

This allowed the black élites to enjoy a limited degree of acceptability within certain aspects, such as church membership, of what was, largely, a hostile white community. On the other hand the non-colonial versus colonial divide was far less evident among migrant workers and the poorer blacks from the Colony. At this level of society poverty and the overwhelming desire for survival forced poor 'Cape Coloureds' and migrant Africans to live side by side in both the locations and in the suburbs of Kimberley.

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Patterns of settlement gradually changed over time with the racial line of cleavage supplanting the early divisions of class, language, religion and colonial status; but these divisions did not simply disappear, remaining a stumbling block to the realisation of a more general black consciousness against white prejudice. This is borne out by the relationships between the inhabitants of Kimberley, black and white, within other spheres of everyday life in the community.

Further proof of the extent to which indigent colonial and non-colonial blacks were associating is to be found in the numerous accounts of 'Cape Coloureds,' frequenting 'Kafir' eating-houses and bars.<sup>41</sup> These were established close to the mines and were geared to serve African labourers. Their prices were invariably cheaper than at bars and eating houses in the town and they attracted a large clientele from the poorer neighbourhoods. While some white people may have also been drawn by the lower prices they were few and far between because of existing ideologies of inequality between black and white.

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<sup>41</sup>S.A.L., C.P.P., "Report of the Liquor Laws Commission", Q. 6646, G 1-'90'

An activity popular among the inhabitants of Kimberley before the authorities moved to prohibit it, was gambling. As one observer put it, "That gambling should be popular on the Fields where all life itself was a gamble, was to be expected".<sup>42</sup> In the early months of diamond mining at the dry diggings gambling dens flourished and many canteens often added a special gambling area. With gambling, as with so many other activities on the Fields, there was a distinct difference in the way the majority of blacks and the black élite perceived the pastime. While there were those establishments which maintained an air of respectability and counted among their patrons, "doctors and the more successful diggers," other 'gambling hells' soon sprang up in the "low shacks where Malays, Cape 'Boys', Natives and Chinese quarreled and killed one another over a worn and dirty pack of cards".<sup>43</sup>

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The provision of health care provides another example of how black élites were afforded preferential treatment if they were prepared to pay for the privilege. The 'General' or Kimberley Hospital had a single 'native' ward which was deemed to be sufficient to cope with the medical needs of the over twenty thousand African labourers on the Fields in the 1880s.<sup>44</sup> This state of affairs existed despite Africans paying a hospital levy out of their wages. Often employers did not even bother to send sick labourers to the hospital at all or sent them to 'recuperate' in the local jail where the bare minimum of health care was provided.<sup>45</sup>

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<sup>42</sup>Doughty: Early Diamond Days, p. 133

<sup>43</sup>Ibid, p. 134

<sup>44</sup>K.P.L., *Hawthorne Manuscript*, p. 10

<sup>45</sup>Turrell: Capital and Labour, p. 162

The native ward was usually overcrowded and in a filthy state and unhygienic condition. A white inhabitant of Kimberley described its "...utter inadequacy to meet the wants of the poorer classes of Kimberley".<sup>46</sup> While the vast majority of the patients in the ward were African labourers, it did contain some 'Cape Coloured' inmates who were too poor to afford health care elsewhere. A white female visitor to the 'native' ward described how an unfortunate 'Cape Coloured' man who had died in this section of the hospital was buried by a 'native' minister. His mourning relatives were too poor to afford a hearse and had to hire a cart to transport the body to the cemetery. Their grief was further compounded when the bottom of the coffin fell out as it was lifted.<sup>47</sup>

There was an alternative for those seeking better health care, with the proviso that they could pay for it. The well managed Carnarvon Hospital was described as having extensive accommodation for both black and white patients and had "...admirable convalescent wards for the better class of invalids, who can pay for the same".<sup>48</sup>

The situation in health care reflected the position of blacks in other spheres of the mining society. Wealthy blacks could obtain the best medical attention that money could buy. To many 'Cape Coloureds' and colonial Africans who lived in poverty this was not an option and they had to be content with the same medical care that was offered to non-colonial African labourers.

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<sup>46</sup>K.P.L., *Hawthorne Manuscript*, p. 11

<sup>47</sup>*Ibid*, p. 24

<sup>48</sup>*Cape of Good Hope Official Handbook*, (Cape Town; S.Solomon,1886), p. 104

Religion formed an integral part of the lives of many living at the dry diggings and the building of churches followed hard on the heels of the establishment of digger communities. These early churches were rudimentary, often made of baked mud, canvas and wood.<sup>49</sup> When it became apparent that the settlements inland would be of a more permanent nature than those around the river, more enduring structures were erected. Branches of the Wesleyan, Roman Catholic, Anglican and Dutch Reformed Church sprung up in and around the main centres at Old de Beers, Dutoitspan and Kimberley itself<sup>50</sup>. Such was the zeal with which the crusading mission of the church was being carried out that Roberts comments, "Soon there was scarcely a religious denomination that was not represented by a minister or a lay preacher".<sup>51</sup> Other religions were not slow in establishing places of worship and towards the end of the 1880s a synagogue and a mosque had been built by the Jewish and Muslim communities respectively.<sup>52</sup> In 1889 a new mosque, the *Norie Hamida*, was built and acclaimed as the finest in the entire Cape Colony.<sup>53</sup> Indians in the city also obtained permission from the authorities to build a Hindu Temple.<sup>54</sup>

In the early days of the river diggings there was some evidence of blacks being allowed to attend church services. Doughty describes one such case, "...the first marriage ceremony among the river diggers which the first Church of England

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<sup>49</sup>Angove: *In the Early Days*, pp. 48-55

<sup>50</sup>Ibid ; Roberts: *Kimberley*, pp. 82-84 ; Doughty: *Early Diamond Days*, pp. 165-167 ; Matthews: *Incwadi Yami*, pp. 393-404

<sup>51</sup>Roberts: *Kimberley*, p. 83

<sup>52</sup>Matthews: *Incwadi Yami*, pp. 405-406

<sup>53</sup>*C.A.*, 16/08/1889

<sup>54</sup>Bhana and Brain: *Setting Down Roots*, p. 105

chaplain was called upon to perform, was that of a young coloured couple.<sup>55</sup> He goes on to relate how the diggers cheered the event and congratulated the happy groom while treating the bride like royalty. Barely two years after the event described above a contemporary newspaper related the story of another 'coloured' couple who wished to be married, this time in a Kimberley church. White reaction this time was far different, revealing the extent of underlying racial tension in the community by this time -

One day last week a couple of coloured persons had the audacity to seek the services of a Christian minister with a view to matrimony. They actually presumed to be married by Christian rite! The minister incautiously opened, or was about to open, a Christian Church, intending to perform the ceremony there. The profane man was, however, happily prevented from sacrilege. He was quickly told that if those blacks were married in that church, no whites would ever enter there.<sup>56</sup>

The denomination of the church is not mentioned in the article but it could just as well have been any one of the main Christian groups in Kimberley.

By the end of the 1880s the Anglicans had established a number of churches on the diamond fields. There was no rule barring coloured people from attending Anglican services and in many cases congregations were mixed. However, there were churches set aside especially for 'natives' and others which had predominantly coloured congregations. One such church, St. Wilfred's was on the outskirts of Kimberley. The Reverend C.B. Maude of the more fashionable and central St.

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<sup>55</sup>Doughty: Early Diamond Days, pp. 166-167

<sup>56</sup>C.A., 21/08/1873

Cyprian's, with its largely white congregation, described St. Wilfred's with disdain as the church of 'half-castes'. In a letter published in the Quarterly Paper of the Bloemfontein Mission in 1878 he describes the church at greater length.-

When I first came to the Fields, two years ago, the congregation of St. Wilfred's was welcomed by a scroll in many-coloured paper letters over the altar, 'Welcome to St. Wilfred's', but several of the letters being put the wrong way up. Since Mr. Halls has begun to help in this work, he has introduced more taste into the decorations, and the church looks quite transformed, though, as the congregation is composed of our poorer classes, he is not able to do as much as he would.<sup>57</sup>

Even in those churches with mixed congregations prejudice and racial intolerance was never far from the surface. At St. Cyprian's itself there was an ongoing debate over the acceptance of coloured people as confirmands. One church member felt compelled to write to the press -

Yesterday glancing at the numerous candidates for confirmation, I was astonished to find that mixed with the European ladies and gentlemen, were coloured people of both sexes. Now sir! this is going too far; it may be bad enough to have them monopolise the Church during regular services, but to find them admitted as candidates together with white people, is too much. What is to be done? During the sacred service the thoughts of the candidates must naturally have been distracted by the knowledge of the repulsive position in which they were placed when they ought to have been concentrated solely on the holy rite they were to partake of.<sup>58</sup>

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<sup>57</sup>K.P.L., Quarterly Paper of the Bloemfontein Mission, 1877-1879, p. 34

<sup>58</sup>D.N., 26/09/1876

The reactions of whites to blacks in the same congregation ranged from blatant racism at worst, as expressed in this correspondence, to the patronising attitudes of 'liberal' whites and many of the clergymen themselves. The following example is a typical one. It is taken from the Griqualand West Church Magazine and is part of a report from the All Saints Anglican Church in Beaconsfield. The extract refers to 'the passing away of perhaps the oldest churchman in the Parish,' Andries Appels, who died aged 77. He was an ex-slave and had come to the diamond fields from the Cape to seek his fortune. The article sketches his life and concludes condescendingly that -

The lot of coloured Christians was in those days in many ways harder than now. We can feel glad that our Church has at last begun to come to the aid of such coloured folk, and although the honour of pioneering must be given to other Christian bodies, yet we can be glad that old Andries was able to find in our Communion an entrance which we may add he never abused.<sup>59</sup>

So, while it is true that there was racial mixing at church services, it certainly was not the harmonious interaction which some historians of the period suggest. The 'raw' Africans were kept firmly segregated and all denominations ran special 'native' churches or did mission work among the various ethnic groups living in and around Kimberley.

The available evidence suggests that black people attended services in both the 'native' and other, more 'mainstream', churches. The Lutheran church established a single church for its 'coloured' and 'native' members.<sup>60</sup> By the 1880s many of these

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<sup>59</sup>K.P.L., Griqualand West Church Magazine, vols. 3-4, 1886, 1887, p. xxiii

<sup>60</sup>Thorne, E.: Indomitable Spirit - The story of Hanna and Carl Meyer of Kimberley, (Historical Society of Kimberley and Northern Cape, 1971), Kimberley Series, No. 2, p. 38

poverty stricken 'natives' and 'coloureds' were worshipping together in their own churches in other denominations. A white correspondent of the *Diamond Fields Advertiser* visited in 1890 a 'native' church situated, interestingly enough, in the Malay Camp and remarked on the diversity of the congregation -

...on glancing on either side of the building one sees every imaginable shade of colour, from a pale yellow to the blackest ebony - truly 'a study in colour.'<sup>61</sup>

In short, while the earliest rudimentary religious observances show some evidence of racial mixing, by the second half of the 1870s coloured people were already being made to feel extremely uncomfortable in churches with predominantly white congregations. As a direct result of this more and more black people were turning away from these churches and joining 'native' ones. Where these churches had previously existed only on the periphery of Kimberley society, to serve the spiritual needs of African workers, they were now moving into the Malay Camp and into the centre of Kimberley itself where they ministered not only to African labourers but also to increasing numbers of colonial blacks.<sup>62</sup>

Already by the end of the decade, many white church-goers did not differentiate between indigent 'Cape Coloureds' and Africans - all blacks were made unwelcome. This is another example, which was replicated in other spheres of Kimberley society, of blacks from the Cape Colony, who had more in common with their white counterparts, being lumped together with Africans from the interior purely because of their dark skins.

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<sup>61</sup>D.F.A., 03/07/1890

<sup>62</sup>K.P.L., U.S.P.G., Reports, 1886, Sister Catherine

Religion and education went hand in hand in early Kimberley. The earliest primary school on the Fields, started by the Dutch Reformed Church at Dutoitspan, was soon followed by schools in Kimberley established by the Anglicans and Roman Catholics. Most primary schools were built in the early 1880s, the first High School in Kimberley opening only in 1888.<sup>63</sup>

This meant that for the 1870s and much of the 1880s the responsibility for education was borne largely by the religious bodies on the Fields. Indeed, as late as 1885 there was still only one 'undenominational' school in Kimberley<sup>64</sup>. In addition, there were a few private institutions run by tutors but these were expensive to attend and were not an option for the majority of people eking out a living in and around the mining camps.<sup>65</sup> An Islamic school was started in Kimberley during the 1880s and was headed first by Abu Effendi and later by his son, Ahmed Effendi, who was the first black man to be nominated for election to the Cape Parliament.<sup>66</sup> Christian churches also considered it their duty to teach as well as minister, especially to those who were indigent. The Anglican, Roman Catholic, Congregational and Wesleyan Churches accordingly made provision for the education of the poorer classes.<sup>67</sup> Mission education was hardly adequate as it provided only for a primary education up to the third standard.<sup>68</sup> 'Native' churches also commonly doubled as schools. The inside of a typical 'native' church is described by a white visitor who noted that -

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<sup>63</sup>Roberts: *Kimberley*, pp. 245-6

<sup>64</sup>D.F.A., 27/01/1885

<sup>65</sup>Roberts: *Kimberley*, p. 245

<sup>66</sup>D.F.A., 26/11/1889

<sup>67</sup>D.F.A., 27/01/1885

<sup>68</sup>Ibid , 26/08/1892 ; 27/08/1892

Surely the place does duty as a school as well as church, for there are evidences of such being the case in the form of antiquated looking maps, and etc. still clinging to the walls.<sup>69</sup>

In 1881, responding to the need for such an establishment, the Methodist church started a primary school for 'coloureds' in New Main Street.<sup>70</sup> Soon after this the new rector of the Anglican St. Cyprian's church, Canon W. T. Gaul, described as "a great champion of the coloured people," started the Perseverance school "...for coloured children and student teachers."<sup>71</sup> Many Muslims were aware of the benefits of their children having an English education and enrolled them in Christian schools, such as Perseverance, willing even to risk their conversion by over-zealous clergymen.<sup>72</sup> Schools of this type which were started for coloureds went a long way towards breaking down barriers between Christian coloureds and the Muslim community. Even though the school attracted many children from the Malay Camp, there were many more from this area who could not be accommodated or could not afford the fees charged and attended mission schools with Africans, further increasing the associations between indigent blacks. Still others grew up without any formal education whatsoever. While it is true that there were white children who went to these and mission schools they were a tiny minority who were too poor to afford an education elsewhere.<sup>73</sup>

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<sup>69</sup>Ibid , 03/07/1890

<sup>70</sup>Roberts: Kimberley, p. 245

<sup>71</sup>Ibid, p. 246

<sup>72</sup>K.P.L., U.S.P.G., Reports, 1886, Sister Catherine

<sup>73</sup>D.F.A., 27/01/1885

Residential proximity and a shared education were two areas where black people underwent shared experiences. Another was sport. The formation of sporting organisations also gave an indication of social divisions in the Kimberley community.

A number of clubs were formed by whites in Kimberley during the decades from 1870 to 1900. They encompassed a wide variety of sports including rugby, soccer, athletics, cricket, tennis, bowls and even 'skittles'. Most of these white bodies were exclusive and operated only within white residential areas in Kimberley. Men such as W. Ling and J. Collins, who had been in the vanguard of white agitation for blacks to be barred from owning claims in the 1870s, appeared on the executive of several of these clubs.<sup>74</sup>

The black élites on the Diamond Fields resorted to establishing their own sporting clubs, leagues and unions. To them, participation in sport was an indication of their respectable status as gentlemen of leisure, which set them apart from the broad masses of labouring blacks, colonial and non-colonial. Indeed, Brian Willan identifies cricket in particular, as representing to educated colonial blacks a 'social training ground.-

Cricket, after all was not just a game. Rather it was a uniquely British institution that embodied so many of the values and ideals, which individually and collectively, they...[Kimberley's African petty bourgeoisie]...aspired to. Cricket provided for them an opportunity to inculcate these values and ideals, and to demonstrate that they were capable

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<sup>74</sup>K.P.L., *Register of the Sporting Clubs of Kimberley*, souvenir of the opening meeting at the de Beers stadium, (18 April 1927)

and worthy of doing so. Cricket both embodied and disseminated the imperial idea.<sup>75</sup>

Blacks formed their own sports unions in the early 1890s. The two unions which had the biggest membership were the Diamond Fields Colonial Cricket Union and the Griqualand West Colonial Rugby Football Union in which clubs consisting of Muslims, Africans, 'Cape Coloureds' and Indians competed against each other.<sup>76</sup> Significantly, all blacks were welcome to join as long as they were 'colonial.' However, in reality, not only were non-colonial Africans excluded but also those colonial blacks who were deemed to be too poor and therefore not 'respectable' enough to join.

Those considered to be undesirable were kept out of the black élite clubs by the prohibitively high membership and annual fees. These blacks turned to other sports for entertainment. An immensely popular spectator sport, which also happened to be entirely free of any charge, was prize-fighting. A great hero of many poor blacks in Kimberley during this period was Joe Coverwell, referred to in some accounts as John Coverdale. Coverwell was a canteen owner in the Malay Camp who, although a violent and bullying man who beat his wife, was an influential and respected man in this section of the community.<sup>77</sup> Coverwell, described as being a 'coloured' man, was a skilled boxer who had -

...a most terrific reputation among his off-coloured brethren... He weighed, if an ounce, twenty stone, was much over six feet, young, and had an unbeaten

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<sup>75</sup>Willan: *An African in Kimberley*, p. 251

<sup>76</sup>Ibid, pp. 251-252 ; *C.T.*, 29/12/1892; *D.I.*, 27/11/1890

<sup>77</sup>*D.I.*, 14/10/1885

record. Joe was not at all a dark man, his complexion being the colour of unroasted coffee beans...<sup>78</sup>

Although prize-fighting, which entailed a stake for money, was banned in Kimberley it was nevertheless hugely popular among diggers. It took place either in secret, away from the watchful eye of the police, or in the Free State where British law had no jurisdiction. For a long time Coverwell had no match in the ring, beating both black and white opponents. Christian 'coloureds', Muslims and Africans alike treated Coverwell as a hero and took special delight when he beat a white man. As Cohen observed -

After this defeat of the Englishman Denton, there was no end of triumphal crowing and jeering on the part of the Malays and other dusky gentry.<sup>79</sup>

For black people who suffered prejudice at the hands of white diggers, Coverwell's triumphs in the ring over white opposition were a way in which the tables had been turned and they were celebrated with much enthusiasm. White diggers took a dim view of these celebrations. One observed rather crossly that -

As for Joe Coverwell, it must be admitted that while he boasted a great deal, and strutted as the observed of all observers through the town, he was hardly ever impudent or quarrelsome. It was different with the black admirers who followed him wherever he went, proud to be in company with the coloured man who had knocked spots out of the white soldier. The intrusive insolence of these ...was greatly resented, and there were many rows in consequence, which of course, created much bad blood.<sup>80</sup>

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<sup>78</sup>Cohen: Reminiscences of Kimberley, p. 201

<sup>79</sup>Ibid

<sup>80</sup>Ibid, p. 202

The irritation felt by many white diggers at Coverwell's success in the ring is recorded by Cohen who wrote just prior to another bout with a white opponent-

Before the battle it was usual for this small coloured band of pugilists to parade the town as proudly and grandly as if they were already conquerors, and owned the mines. The idea of defeat never occurred to these dark-skinned warriors.<sup>81</sup>

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Recreational activities outside of sport also show signs of racial exclusivity.<sup>82</sup> One example was dancing which was extremely popular in Dutoitspan and Kimberley. One favourite dancing saloon was frequented mainly by black people of both sexes. Of the women a contemporary writer observed with some admiration that -

... some of these half-caste ladies were really handsome, and as for the Coolie women, I have never seen more regular features than they possessed.

Some white males were drawn by the presence of attractive ladies, but were made to feel extremely unwelcome. The same observer elaborated -

...as the coloured 'pussons' were always in the majority, the white people who were inclined to try their luck among the dark-skinned beauties had to do so with some caution, as their strong-smelling cavaliers were exceedingly jealous and saucy.

He goes on to relate an incident when a white man left the saloon with a 'dusky beauty' and was immediately followed by several 'men of colour' who

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<sup>81</sup>Ibid, p. 204

<sup>82</sup>As Kimberley grew so too did its numbers of bars, dancing halls and other places of entertainment

strongly protested his actions. In the ensuing scuffle three of the pursuers, whom are described as Malays, were fatally shot. Incidents like these serve to give some insight into racial feeling in Kimberley which the writer himself describes as being 'much embittered' during the period of his visit.<sup>83</sup>

By the 1880s racial prejudice was firmly entrenched in all facets of life in Kimberley. The 'enemy' had become clear to many white people - he was not only the African from the interior, but most men who had black skins.<sup>84</sup> A white traveller illustrates this in a letter to the press -

On Saturdays and Sundays it is a common thing to see an ordinary Cape passenger cart crammed full of oily, perspiring, howling drunken, stinking Kafirs... We would suggest that the passenger carts be divided into two classes. Class I to be for white passengers only, and Class II for colored gentlemen and ladies. If this idea were acted upon the white people who are in the habit of patronising the cabs would be in less danger of catching small-pox, syphilis, 'B flats', 'Hoppers' and other animals...The idea of a lady getting into a cart that has been vacated by a crowd of dirty evil smelling vermin-infested and perhaps diseased kafirs is simply disgusting to any European who is at all fastidious.<sup>85</sup>

To many, the most important qualification for acceptance by middle class Kimberley was a white skin. By the end of the decade letters to the press reveal that educated blacks were taking strong exception to this discrimination.-

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<sup>83</sup>Cohen: Reminiscences of Kimberley, p. 203

<sup>84</sup>See Turrell, Capital and Labour, p. 99, quoting Reverend Bevan, U.S.P.G., Reports, (30 September 1878)

<sup>85</sup>D.L., 14/10/1885

It would be monstrous indeed to argue that no matter how clean or respectable a person might be, he could not enter the tramcars simply because his or their skins were dark, whilst white loafers, covered sometimes with vermin and reduced and degraded to the lowest degree, had the privilege of doing so merely because their skins were white, although reeking with filth. There are numerous coloured people on these fields who have been brought up respectably, well educated, and well conducted, and who it must be admitted are far in advance and holding better positions than many whites, and why should they be denied the same rights and privileges as the white man, and why should their feelings be wantonly outraged? Where is the use of our having schools and educating our children in the manner in which many of us are doing, if we are not to be treated with elementary justice and fair play?<sup>86</sup>

Many colonial blacks, especially those who were indigent and uneducated, were categorised by most whites along with 'raw' Africans who came from beyond the borders of the Cape Colony. Poverty stricken 'Cape Coloureds' increasingly attended mission schools and churches which had previously been frequented only by Africans. Elite groups of blacks still managed to preserve some sense of exclusivity, as in the sphere of health care and within their own expensive sporting clubs. However, in the broader community they faced increasing prejudice from whites in public amenities, such as churches and transport and were being discouraged from settling in predominantly white residential areas.

In the 1870s and 1880s Kimberley was a deeply divided society - divided to some extent along class, ethnic and religious lines certainly, but most importantly

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<sup>86</sup>D.F.A., 17/08/1889

into black and white specifically. 'Respectable' blacks, witnessing the growing equation of skin colour with social status, were increasingly assuming leadership roles in black organisations which emphasised 'civilised' and 'decent' norms.

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## CHAPTER 5

### Turbulent times- the 'Black Flag revolt' and the strikes of 1883-84

It would be simplistic to categorise the polarization developing between blacks and whites as an absolute one. While the black élites in the town were finding common cause, this did not yet translate into a motivation for a more inclusive black consciousness. Clearly ethnic, religious and class differences persisted as did the divide between non-colonial and colonial blacks. However, the 1880s were to witness an escalation of black and white antagonism to such an extent that black political organisations were established in Kimberley despite other differences. During this period the black élites became reconciled to their exclusion from the white community and used black consciousness as a vehicle to facilitate their social rehabilitation. Moments of crisis and conflict often provide a telling insight into the attitudes prevalent in a community at a given time. The Black Flag Revolt in 1875 and the strikes of the early 1880s are two examples of such moments. Almost a decade apart, they allow us to compare and contrast the degree of racial polarisation in Kimberley and the extent of its progression.

To understand the impact of the growth of industry on race relations within the community it is necessary to place the period into context. Kimberley did not remain a primitive outpost for long. The 1870s and 1880s witnessed the rapid growth of the diamond mining industry in Kimberley.<sup>1</sup> During this time small diggers, almost all of whom were white, were transformed from being independent claimowners to more subservient positions as overseers and labourers in the employ

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<sup>1</sup>For an account of the period see Worger: S.A.'s City of Diamonds, pp. 147-257

of the big companies.<sup>2</sup> Whereas in the rest of the Cape Colony a white skin had been enough to ensure a measure of privilege, in Kimberley the emerging diamond mining industry operated according to principles of economic expediency and efficiency, and little else. While white privilege was evident in higher wages and job reservation the harsh realities of narrowing profit margins forced companies to review these policies.

The Cape Parliament, conscious of the sizeable income generated by the diamond mines, readily acceded to demands from mining companies for legislation which would ensure an efficient and submissive workforce.<sup>3</sup> Early legislation pertaining to diamond mining had almost exclusively affected African labour.<sup>4</sup> As the industry developed, the use of machinery became widespread. A number of white diggers who had been forced to give up their claims because of the low yields found employment as unskilled employees of companies. Other whites occupied skilled positions as artisans, mechanics and engine drivers.<sup>5</sup> While many laws, such as the introduction of the compound system, were still directed primarily against Africans, the white employees were beginning to feel the effects of Parliamentary measures to streamline the workforce of which they now formed an integral part.

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<sup>2</sup>See Turrell: "Labour and Compounds 1871-1881", in Marks and Rathbone: Industrialisation and Social Change, pp. 46-7. Between 1871 and 1875 the owners of claims at the diamond diggings were reduced from around 3500 to less than 1000. With the onset of company mining, individual owners were gradually phased out altogether.

<sup>3</sup>For revenue derived from diamond exports between 1869 and 1888 see Turrell: Capital and Labour p. 10, Table 1. ; also Worger: S.A.'s City of Diamonds, p. 120

<sup>4</sup>See Worger: S.A.'s City of Diamonds , pp. 110-146

<sup>5</sup>Turrell: "Labour and Compounds", p. 58

During this period there was a gradual decline of the independent white claim-holder to a position of complete dependence on the mining companies. The frustration and anger of many whites at their changing status found an outlet in race hatred. Rationalisation programmes by companies in the 1880s which included the replacing of semi-skilled whites with blacks, further exacerbated the situation.<sup>6</sup> Although the new challenges and demands of the age really required workers, both black and white, to make common cause, racial tensions and rivalries made this impossible.

It is with this scenario in mind that the change in racial attitudes and perceptions must be considered. Racial bigotry was not a phenomenon unique to this period. It was manifest in colonial society and was reflected already in the early racism of white diggers who demanded that all blacks be refused ownership of claims<sup>7</sup>. However, it is important to examine how the hardening of racial attitudes and the development of the mining industry proceeded apace.

On the twelfth of April 1875 a black flag was raised over a mound of debris on the outskirts of Kimberley. The black flag, traditionally a symbol of insurrection and anarchy, was a clear indication to the government of Griqualand-West of the depth of grievance within the digger community. The event itself, described by historians as the Black Flag Revolt, entailed no bloodshed and no armed conflict. Yet the running up of the black flag on the highest point in the mining camp brought to a

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<sup>6</sup>Turrell: *Capital and Labour* p. 137

<sup>7</sup>U.C.T. Archives, Smalberger Collection, B4.1, B4.16, "Diggers Associations 1871-1875"

head tensions within the community which had been simmering since the establishment of settlements at the dry diggings.

The beginnings of open racial strife in Kimberley can be traced back to the British annexation of Griqualand-West in 1871. Before this date all the inhabitants in the area were under the jurisdiction of the Orange Free State authorities, who kept interference in digger affairs to a minimum. As a consequence, white diggers had become accustomed to their interests being safeguarded by organisations such as the Protection Association and the Diggers Committees which effectively governed life at the claims.<sup>8</sup> These bodies dictated the rules by which everyday life on the fields was governed and ensured white privilege by not allowing blacks to own claims.<sup>9</sup> The annexation of the region by Britain removed power from white diggers and placed it in the hands of, what was to many whites on the fields, an unwelcome and intrusive colonial administration.<sup>10</sup>

British law, based on principles of equality of races in all its dominions, replaced self proclaimed digger 'Rules and Regulations' in the various camps which had ensured white control at the diggings at the expense of aspirant black claimowners.<sup>11</sup> The response from white diggers to the new British laws was swift. A protest by 'registered diggers and original claimholders of and resident at Du Toit's Pan' was held and the meeting resolved that it

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<sup>8</sup>Ibid, B4.1-4.5

<sup>9</sup>Ibid, B4.1

<sup>10</sup>Ibid, B4.1, 4.8, 4.16

<sup>11</sup>Ibid, B 4.1

...viewed with extreme regret the innovations and encroachments made by the British Authorities upon our legitimate rights and privileges, by the act of enforcing the various proclamations of Sir H. Barkly, bearing date October 27th,..<sup>12</sup>

The focus of white dissatisfaction was apparent from a resolution taken which stated that -

...by the action of Government not only does disorder and confusion reign in the camp, by the disallowing of our Rules, and etc., but by the issuing of licences to dig for diamonds to coloured persons of more than one fourth black blood - an act totally opposed to diggers' Regulations, - a pretext is given by which our native servants can wrongfully and unlawfully dispose of our property.<sup>13</sup>

The demand by white diggers that the granting of claim licences to 'persons of more than one fourth black blood' be withheld effectively meant, if implemented, that most black people on the Fields, including Muslims and other 'Cape Coloureds' would be among those affected. Thus, as early as 1871, white diggers were showing their intention to exclude all blacks, not only Africans from having the right to search and dig for diamonds.

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The period immediately preceding the Black Flag Revolt was one of political transition and economic uncertainty. In January 1873 the region was formally declared a British Crown Colony. This entailed a new constitution and marked the arrival of the first Lieutenant-Governor of the territory, Richard Southey. Meantime,

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<sup>12</sup>Ibid

<sup>13</sup>Ibid

the dissatisfaction of white diggers which had erupted into open riot the previous year had not eased.<sup>14</sup> To add to Southey's problems, economic conditions in the region itself could hardly have been worse. There had been a drought in the latter half of 1873 which caused the price of food in Kimberley to rocket.<sup>15</sup> There was also a drop in the price of diamonds as finds became more plentiful and flooded the market.<sup>16</sup> Mining operations became more difficult and profits decreased owing to what Worger calls 'organizational and technological' problems in the period 1873-1875 as diggers experienced problems with the collapse of reef and flooding as claims went deeper and deeper.<sup>17</sup> The costs of hiring labour increased as African workers were able to demand higher wages because of the labour shortage.<sup>18</sup> More and more small claimholders were forced to sell their claims and leave the Fields as diamond mining became no longer economically viable for them.<sup>19</sup>

Once again, there was an increase in anti-black violence in the town as white diggers reacted against blacks being allowed claim licences. The Governor of the Cape, Sir Henry Barkly, suggested to Southey that tensions in the region would ease as they had done after the riots of 1871/2.<sup>20</sup> The latter was much more pessimistic, warning that only the promise of the new constitution for Griqualand-West had for the moment quieted the populace. Southey warned that what white diggers ultimately wanted was power -

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<sup>14</sup>This disturbance has been examined in Chapter Three.

<sup>15</sup>Turrell: Capital and Labour, p. 32

<sup>16</sup>Ibid

<sup>17</sup>Worger: S.A.'s City of Duamonds, p. 23

<sup>18</sup>Ibid, pp. 113-4

<sup>19</sup>S and M, 10/08/1882 ; 23/07/1872

<sup>20</sup>U.C.T. Archives, Smalberger Collection, B 4.8

This is what they have contended for all along, and that lot will not rest until made to do so, unless they can get the coloured people under them. This is what they are striving for, but as I have already shown, the coloured people are much more loyal subjects than they are.<sup>21</sup>

The 'coloured people' Southey refers to were in all probability those educated black élites who were expressing their alarm at the volatile situation and re-affirming their dedication to British law.

When the new constitution was announced in July 1873 there was great dissatisfaction among white diggers. For many it was the last straw. One of the clauses stipulated that any man irrespective of colour, could vote if he earned 100 pounds a year or 50 pounds a year with board and lodging.<sup>22</sup> This effectively excluded many small white diggers from the vote and caused a tremendous outcry. The Diamond Field, commented caustically on the 'absurdity' of -

A scheme of suffrage wherein, as far as we can read it, the digger working on shares, uncertain, therefore, on income, and certainly receiving neither wages nor proper salary, is left voteless, while the Coolie cook, who earns his five pounds a month with board and lodging to boot, is a qualified elector.<sup>23</sup>

Many white diggers had hoped that the new constitution would guarantee some of the privileges they had enjoyed before Britain annexed the region. An equality of all races before the law as stipulated by the constitution angered many whites who pointed to the masses of migrant African labourers in their midst as an

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<sup>21</sup>C.A., GLW 115, "Correspondence: Southey to Barkly", (17 April, 1875)

<sup>22</sup>U.C.T. Archives, Smalberger Collection, B 4.20

<sup>23</sup>Diamond Field, 19/07/1873

example of the social gulf that existed between blacks and themselves. Their response was to ignore the authority of the new administration and to turn to their own instruments of representation. Notifications of public meetings called by these bodies appeared with increasing frequency in local newspapers. A resolution at one of these meetings echoed the sentiment of many others in calling for the franchise criteria as set out in the new constitution to be scrapped and replaced by

A voters qualification, which shall extend to every white man of the full age of twenty one years, who has not been convicted of felony.<sup>24</sup>

Clearly, the diggers completely misinterpreted the realities of the situation and had over-expectations in terms of what they thought should happen - an attitude not uncommon when substantial political or social change is in the offing. In reality, though, even where Responsible government had been granted, the British government, through the Colonial Office and its representative on the spot, the Governor, would obviously expect the political scene to bear some resemblance to that of Britain itself. The demands of the diggers for what amounted to universal, white male adult suffrage exceeded the franchise legislation passed in Britain as recently as 1867/8, which still tied the vote to property/income requirements. The racial criterion would also have been completely unacceptable.<sup>25</sup>

Initially, at the election which followed, white diggers attempted to vote members into the Legislative Council of the Crown Colony to change the constitution

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<sup>24</sup>U.C.T. Archives, Smalberger Collection, B 4.8

<sup>25</sup>See e.g. Keir, D.L.: The Constitutional History of Modern Britain, 1485-1937, (London; A & C. Black, 1948), Chs. VII and VIII passim.

from within. When this failed the diggers resorted to the formation of their own police force, the Vigilance Committee, which concentrated on monitoring and controlling the movements and activities of black people on the Fields. The colonial authorities viewed this organisation with growing hostility as it became a law unto itself. In August 1874 the Committee of Public Safety was formed at a mass meeting. Its purpose was actively to pursue all avenues to express the discontent of the white diggers with the Southey administration. Other digger organisations also sprouted. One of them, the Defence League and Protection Association, formed in November 1874, and inspired by the Republican agitator, Alfred Aylward, resolved not to pay taxes.<sup>26</sup>

In March 1875 yet another rebel organisation, the Diggers Protection Association was formed. This was to be the 'army' of the diggers and commenced drilling and patrolling the mining camps. Its stated objective was the safety of whites at the diggings. The show of force by white rebels was a source of great concern to all blacks. Southey himself commented on the increase in rebel activity that -

It is paralyzing trade, it is alarming and driving away coloured people; it is depreciating the value of property in the mines, and in other ways causing much alarm among the honest and industrious trades people, and owners of property...<sup>27</sup>

Southey's response to this threat to his authority by the rebel diggers was to encourage the formation of pro-government forces. While two hundred whites did

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<sup>26</sup>For a manifesto and demands of digger organisations formed during the Black Flag Revolt see Smalberger Collection, B4.1 - 4.5 ; also Turrell: Capital and Labour, pp. 32-43.

<sup>27</sup>C.A., GLW 115, "Correspondence: Southey to Barkly", (10 April 1875)

enlist to form a pro-government militia, most of the recruits were black.<sup>28</sup> Over six hundred including 'Cape Coloureds' and Africans, both Colonial and non-Colonial, volunteered their services.<sup>29</sup> Already the divide between black and white was such that many whites who had enlisted threatened to withdraw unless blacks were excluded. Southey estimated that over one thousand black people would have joined the government force had he himself not discouraged it, fearing that it would prevent whites from enlisting. Concerning the grievances of rank and file members of the rebel organisations, he wrote

You will find their greatest grievance to be my determination not to place Her Majesty's coloured people under disabilities to which they, the white inhabitants, are not liable, and I ought therefore here to tell you that Her Majesty's coloured subjects have shown their loyalty by I may almost say rushing to the officers to enrol their names<sup>30</sup>

Those blacks who had volunteered as government troops were not permitted to arm themselves or to drill in public because of Southey's deference to the sensitivities of the white population of Kimberley.<sup>31</sup>

Increasingly, black people resorted to forming vigilante groups of their own to counter those already established by the rebels. One such body was led by John Coverwell, the pugilist referred to in Chapter Four. The men under his command were black and were the target of indignant outrage from pro-rebel newspapers who

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<sup>28</sup>Ibid, (17 April 1875)

<sup>29</sup>Ibid, (15 April 1875)

<sup>30</sup>Ibid, (17 April 1875)

<sup>31</sup>Turrell: Capital and Labour, p. 43

suspected that this vigilante group was operating with the blessing of the government. As the Diamond Field put it -

It is the most mistaken action of Government in permitting persons of colour to consider themselves 'troops' of the future. 'Parliament Men' is the name the vile wretches give themselves, and although our rulers may quibble and dodge and deny the enrolment of those men of colour, yet the grand fact remains that 'their names were taken down' and they work under an acknowledged and known leader.<sup>32</sup>

The same report claimed that they had attacked innocent white people<sup>33</sup> -

they pressed into the bar of the Hotel clamouring for drinks, and rudely hustled the boarders and regular customers. Then after having thus proclaimed the equality of races they drew up outside and prepared for the attempt at murder and robbery, which but too soon followed.

The report concluded by bewailing -

... the determination of the Government rather to permit anarchy to exist in the Camp than to avail themselves of the strength and discipline of the Associations for the purpose of continuing to preserve that order which was so remarkably manifest during the D.P.A. patrol period.

The tension building in Kimberley between pro-government forces and white rebels further strained relations between blacks and whites in the town. The 'Revolt' itself was no more than a stand off between government and rebel forces outside the courtroom where one of the rebel leaders was being tried for illegal arms buying. Bloodshed was averted after lengthy negotiations and the arrival of British troops

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<sup>32</sup>D.F. 21/04/1875

<sup>33</sup>Ibid

from Cape Town weeks later was enough to ensure the disbanding of the rebel organisations

The causes of the Black Flag Revolt were varied.<sup>34</sup> However the decline of individual small claimholders during this period forced hundreds of previously independent white diggers into competition with blacks and provided a rallying point for dissatisfied elements in the white community. The worsening conditions in the mining industry coupled with the prevailing drought caused other white diggers to abandon their claims.<sup>35</sup> While many left the Fields altogether, others sought employment in diamond related industries elsewhere in the camps. These typically required less capital and fewer running costs. One option was share-working which entailed the working of claims in return for a share of the profits from the ground.<sup>36</sup> Another was the washing or sorting of discarded debris from the claims. This became an industry of its own which offered the unemployed and indigent an opportunity to 'strike it lucky' and find diamonds which had remained undiscovered. 'Debris-washing' allowed black and white people to search the soil for diamonds without the expense of owning a claim.<sup>37</sup>

By 1875, a number of white diggers found themselves forced to compete with blacks for employment in diamond related industries. This was unacceptable to many, especially to those who had petitioned the government of Griqualand-West in

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<sup>34</sup>For a detailed account of the events leading up to the Black Flag Revolt see Turrell: Capital and Labour, pp. 32-72 ; Sutton, I.B.: "Diggers revolt in Griqualand-West" in the International Journal of African Historical Studies, 12, (1), 1979.

<sup>35</sup>S and M, 10/08/1872

<sup>36</sup>See Turrell: Capital and Labour, p. 52

<sup>37</sup>See Worger: S.A.'s City of Diamonds, pp. 273-4

1871 and 1872 to bar blacks from owning claims or dealing in diamonds.<sup>38</sup> They considered the root of the problem to be the refusal of the British authorities in the region to allow racial discrimination to continue. They reasoned that it was the liberal policies of the new Government that allowed blacks to compete with whites for the already limited mineral resources in the region. The diggers fondly recalled a time when white privilege was unquestioned. While the coastal towns practised the same British law which would, at least on paper, permit no discrimination on the grounds of race, studies of the period have shown that in reality racial prejudice in them was rife.<sup>39</sup> In the densely populated diamond camps where there was desperate competition for a limited resource this was doubly true, at least in respect of the diggers specifically.

While the causes of the Revolt were more complex than simply the dissatisfaction over Southey's liberal attitude towards blacks, it was this issue which, more than any other, mobilised support for the diggers committees at grassroots level. Other incidents which had aroused anger were the increase in rent by the proprietors of the land on which the claims were situated and the dissatisfaction of aspiring monopolists at the refusal of the Government to allow ownership of more than ten claims by one person. However these were issues of more interest to the leadership of the Revolt.<sup>40</sup> For the rank and file members of the Diggers Protection Association these matters were secondary to their desire for a government guarantee

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<sup>38</sup>See Chapter Three

<sup>39</sup>Bickford Smith: "Commerce, class, ethnicity" ; van Heyningen: "Public health and society"

<sup>40</sup>For these see Turrell: Capital and Labour, pp. 49-72

of white privilege on the mines. This had not been secured after the riots of 1871/72 and was no closer after the after the Black Flag Revolt. In 1882/3 the further erosion of white privilege would cause violence once again in the mining camps.

The Black Flag Revolt and its motivation give a clear indication of the state of race relations in the economic field in the period prior to the formation of the big companies. A major contributory factor to the Revolt was the marginalisation of many white smallclaimowners who could no longer afford the soaring cost of diamond mining. Kimberley in the 1880s was a very different Kimberley to the one of a decade earlier. It saw the blossoming of industry in an age characterised by large companies, profit margins and a new struggle, between employer and employee, within the mining society. Yet, despite the emergence of this new alignment in the community, the distinction between blacks and whites remained a deeply divisive one. Much of the extent of the polarisation between blacks and whites almost a decade after the Black Flag Revolt is manifest in the strikes which followed.

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By the start of the 1880s the diamond industry was entering a new phase. The supply of diamonds on or near the surface of the soil had been largely exhausted by this time and claims were going deeper and deeper as the relentless search for the precious stones continued. Constant problems with collapsing reef, a result of the gradual weakening of the soil caused by the continual excavations, were exacerbated by the flooding of many claims. All this meant that the maintenance of claims was becoming prohibitively expensive for individual diggers, resulting in ownership

becoming concentrated into fewer and fewer hands. Individual claimholders and even some of the smaller companies found themselves forced into amalgamation to survive. While the actual mining of diamonds was becoming more costly, their price was dropping sharply on international markets as the industry was caught up in a long term depression. The golden age of individual claimowners was consigned to the past and with the new decade came indications that the future lay with those big companies able to afford large scale underground mining.<sup>41</sup>

Employment in the mining industry during its formative years reflected the same patterns of privilege among racial groups that were apparent elsewhere in the Cape Colony. The educated African élites who were coming to Kimberley in growing numbers were employed in the town itself and not on the mines.<sup>42</sup> Those Africans who were employed by the companies were almost all migrant labourers from beyond the borders of the Colony.<sup>43</sup> The main distinction in the workforce, therefore, was between colonial whites and 'Cape Coloureds' on one hand and 'raw' Africans on the other<sup>44</sup>. Whites were employed mostly in a skilled capacity as artisans, mechanics and engine drivers; 'Cape Coloureds' were especially prominent as semi-skilled transport riders and overseers and 'raw' Africans were manual labourers. As a result, in the mining industry at least, there was little or no association between

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<sup>41</sup>For much of the material in the rest of this chapter I am indebted to Turrell: Capital and Labour, pp. 73-104, and Worger: S.A.'s City of Diamonds, pp. 147-236, both of whom have carried out an extensive analysis of the growth of the mining industry and the consequences thereof for the inhabitants of Kimberley.

<sup>42</sup>Willan: "An African in Kimberley" pp. 238 et seq.

<sup>43</sup>See Chapter One

<sup>44</sup>Turrell: Capital and Labour, p. 128

'Cape Coloureds' and 'raw' Africans. In fact, 'Cape Coloureds' in the mining industry were still being classified under the term 'European' by the time of the strikes.<sup>45</sup>

During the Black Flag Revolt the workforce at the diamond mines was made up almost exclusively of migrant African labourers who usually chose to work for the diggers who paid the highest wages or offered the best terms. By the 1880s African migrants still made up by far the majority of the workforce. However, by this time a substantial number of whites and 'Cape Coloureds' were in the employ of the big companies and constituted a labour aristocracy.<sup>46</sup> This alignment of some colonial blacks and whites in the workforce showed to what extent the big companies controlled the diamond mining process by the early to mid-1880s. While still mindful of white privilege, the companies allowed for the employment of a minority of blacks in positions where they competed directly with whites.<sup>47</sup>

There were also distinctions between white workers. Worger identifies two main groupings of white employees - skilled and unskilled labour. The latter category was made up largely of overseers, with a small percentage of white labourers included. White overseers were often men who, in the recent past had owned claims which they were forced to abandon through bad fortune. They imagined that they had a common entrepreneurial bond with the mining bosses and certainly considered themselves an élite above the manual labour performed by the largely African workforce.<sup>48</sup> This illusion was shattered as the mining companies on

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<sup>45</sup>Ibid, p. 260, This classification of whites and 'Cape Coloureds' under the term 'European' was terminated in 1885, see footnote 13

<sup>46</sup>Ibid. p. 128

<sup>47</sup>Ibid

<sup>48</sup>Worger: *S.A.'s City of Diamonds*, p. 25

the diamond fields outlined plans in the early 1880s to change labour recruitment policies as part of an overall plan for survival in the depression.

The great majority of skilled white workers had come from Europe in response to the changing technological requirements of the mining industry as machines became more sophisticated and needed operators with expertise in the field. Included in this group were engine-drivers, carpenters, mechanics and miners. Because of their different background and experiences the interests and expectations of this group of men differed widely from those of the overseers.<sup>49</sup>

'Cape Coloureds' involved in the mining industry were commonly listed as 'Europeans'. They were employed mainly in semi-skilled occupations and were especially prominent in the mine transport network as cart and whim drivers.<sup>50</sup> The number of 'Cape Coloureds' involved in the industry became negligible after this group was replaced by skilled white engine drivers when new technology became available. However, their numbers did increase with the re-organization of labour in the 1880s.<sup>51</sup> The categorisation of 'Cape Coloureds' as 'Europeans' owed less to their acceptance by whites as a group socially superior to migrant Africans than to the desire of companies to operate according to the strictest principles of efficiency. On the contrary, the grouping of a minority of blacks with whites by bosses only

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<sup>49</sup>Ibid, p. 158

<sup>50</sup>A 'Whim' was a large wheel which protruded above the surface of a claim. It was normally driven by horses who walked a circular treadmill, continually rotating buckets on the wheel for use underground.

<sup>51</sup>Turrell: Capital and Labour, p. 158

exacerbated the resentment of many white overseers and labourers who found their transition from employer to employee complete.

The hiring of 'Cape Coloureds' in semi-skilled positions drew off black élites who might otherwise have identified themselves more closely with African migrants, thereby establishing the foundation for black consciousness in the region. It is ironic that when companies were later forced to hire Africans in semi-skilled positions in order to lower wages, the new recruitment policy served rather to unite than further divide blacks. The backlash from white workers at the erosion of their positions of privilege resulted in attacks, both in the newspapers and on the streets, not only against Africans but all blacks.

While at one end of the scale the big companies were resolving to tighten their belts to maintain profit levels, small claimholders at the other end faced ruin as running costs soared. Even previously wealthy individuals were forced to reconsider their position at this time of crisis for the diamond industry. The Diamond Fields Advertiser reflected, by way of an editorial, the gloom that was all pervasive in Kimberley in the early 1880s -

The people of Kimberley have as a rule met their difficulties in a brave and uncomplaining spirit and many men who were formerly in affluent circumstances are now working hard to make up for the heavy losses sustained by them during the last few years. We question whether any place in the world has had such a steady run of prosperity until the present crisis set in. <sup>52</sup>

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<sup>52</sup>D.F.A., 24/04/1884

The depression which gripped the diamond industry affected the entire Kimberley community which was heavily dependent on the mines for its income. Many canteens and eating houses were forced to close and merchants in the town were similarly affected by falling profits.<sup>53</sup>

At the beginning of the new decade the degradation in status of many whites from their position as independent claimholders to that of employees, as overseers and labourers in the pay of the large mining companies was entering its final stages. This process had already started in the 1870s as ownership of claims became more concentrated and small claimholders, the vast majority of whom were white, were increasingly eliminated. They were rapidly losing their distinct status from the rest of the labour force. It was further compounded by measures taken by companies to reduce wages. This was done by replacing whites in a supervisory position with blacks, both African and 'Cape Coloured' who were then paid less to do the same work. A new trend in the employment of labour emerged in the early 1880s; to an increasing extent blacks were employed as overseers and whites enlisted as labourers - a reversal of fortune which had formerly not been envisaged because of the prevailing ideology of white superiority in all spheres of life<sup>54</sup>. That it increased tensions is obvious. The restructuring process did not end with this for the big companies set about streamlining the efficiency of mining operations to reduce operating costs. They envisaged doing this by maximising their regulation and control of the labour force.

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<sup>53</sup>Roberts: Kimberley, pp. 197-8

<sup>54</sup>Turrell: Capital and Labour, pp. 127-32

Of great concern to employers of labour was the amount of money lost because of illicit diamond buying on one hand and the maintenance of artificially high wages in the diamond industry on the other. Accordingly, legislation was passed in 1880 which made provision for searching workers as they left the workplace. At the same time there was an increase in the hiring of blacks for jobs previously reserved for whites. Worger comments that the implementation of these new measures

[They]...marked the first time that black and white workers at the fields were to be treated in the same manner.<sup>55</sup>

The implementation of the regulations governing the searching of both black and white workers for concealed diamonds as they left the workplace was too much for the white workers. They regarded this as the final affront to their dignity and resorted to strike action to force its cancellation. With the support of the African workforce, which did not want to be searched either, the strike of 1883 was a success. A year later they struck once more as searching regulations were being implemented again. This time the outcome was different and the strike was broken after several strikers, who had attempted to enforce the closure of mines, were shot by police.<sup>56</sup>

According to newspaper reports those who bore the brunt of the shootings were the Europeans in the vanguard of a large crowd of whites and blacks.<sup>57</sup> Yet the subsequent enquiry into the shooting revealed that there were black casualties. A

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<sup>55</sup>Worger: *S.A.'s City of Diamonds*, p. 158

<sup>56</sup>For an account of the shooting see *D.F.A.*, 01/05/1884 ; 10/05/1884

<sup>57</sup>*Ibid*

'coloured' man was reported killed and a 'Cape man' injured.<sup>58</sup> It was ironic that white workers sought the support of blacks for a strike which had as its main objective the retention of the *status quo* of preferential treatment for the former group. Little wonder then that black suspicion of white demands was aroused when rhetoric at overseer meetings emphasised racial distinction.<sup>59</sup>

Despite this, the numerous accounts of strike action make it obvious that there was large scale African involvement. To many whites this was unacceptable; they voiced their strong disapproval, on the grounds that 'raw' Africans were liable to run amok thus causing a negative impression of the strike in the public mind. An emphasis on violence in the press would overshadow the publicity given to the real motives for the strike. A strike leader voiced this fear at a protest meeting pleading -

I hope, if there is to be a strike, that I shall not see any of the Kimberley men at the head of a band of niggers with the intention of doing any harm to property.<sup>60</sup>

Even during the strikes some bands of white workers attempted to distance themselves from the Africans who were striking. At the inquiry into the massacre, one of the survivors was asked where the Africans in the crowd had come from. His answer illuminates the true nature of the 'alliance' between black and white workers -

I cant say how the natives came with us. I and others warned them not to follow. Deceased up at the mine told me to keep the natives back and not

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<sup>58</sup>Ibid, 01/05/1884

<sup>59</sup>Ibid, 25/04/1884

<sup>60</sup>Ibid

allow them to do any damage, it was the same crowd of natives that went from De Beer's to the Half-Way House to come with us.<sup>61</sup>

A danger in an analysis of the strikes of 1883 and 1884 is to regard them as action taken under the direction of white workers.<sup>62</sup> As a consequence, the impression is created of an alliance across the colour bar against the growth of monopoly in Kimberley. This overlooks the fact that many blacks came out on strike with whites because of their own opposition to searching. Indeed, many migrant Africans had already shown their disapproval of the new regulations by 'voting with their feet' and leaving the diamond fields.<sup>63</sup> When strike action was decided on by the white workers they realised that they needed the support of Africans to make the venture a success. While many Africans did join the strike there were others who decided that this action was inappropriate. A newspaper article reports that there was a substantial number of African workers who chose not to strike.

The natives do not, as can easily be imagined, sympathise with the white men, for it means to them no money coming in, a circumstance contrary to their wishes.<sup>64</sup>

Those African labourers who did join the strikes were primarily responsible for the success of the action taken in 1883 as companies were forced to back down when left with no workforce.

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<sup>61</sup>Ibid

<sup>62</sup>See for example, Roberts: *Kimberley*, pp. 214-217 ; 225-230

<sup>63</sup>See Worger: *S.A.'s City of Diamonds*, p. 103; Tables 2.3 and 2.4 - During the years of the strikes (1883, 1884) the number of African labourers at the diggings dropped sharply.

<sup>64</sup>*D.F.A.*, 25/04/1884

However, despite having the same goal, namely the scrapping of the searching regulations, black and white worker co-operation never extended beyond what Worger calls an 'alliance of convenience' and even this was seldom more than superficial.<sup>65</sup> The racial division of labour, in place on the diamond fields for more than a decade, was being challenged for the first time by actions of the big mining companies in their bid to safeguard their interests. Among the workers themselves the ideology of racial segregation persisted. Blacks attended the white worker protest meetings as observers, but were not able to influence proceedings.<sup>66</sup> Indeed the primary objection of white workers to searching was that it put them through the same treatment which the African labourers were forced to endure. They considered this degrading and felt that their position of privilege in the mines was being further eroded. One of the strike leaders, made the point -

We don't object to be searched, we object to be stripped. They want to strip you the same as a Kafir or a common felon ... but I say we are a class above suspicion.<sup>67</sup>

The uneasy alliance that had existed between 'Cape Coloureds' and whites in the labour aristocracy also came under attack as job reservation gave way to new recruitment policies. Other offensives of the mine bosses and the state to regulate labour, including the proposal to have locations for Indians, Chinese and Muslims outside of white urban areas and the implementation of the compound system for African labourers was met with white worker support. With the further erosion of

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<sup>65</sup>Worger: *S.A.'s City of Diamonds*, p. 177

<sup>66</sup>Ibid, p. 174

<sup>67</sup>*D.F.A.*, 25/04/1884.

their privilege in the mining industry, many whites perceived all blacks to be the 'enemy', further polarising the community into black and white with the extent of racial intolerance making little allowance for shades of grey.<sup>68</sup>

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A comparison between the Black Flag Revolt and the strikes of the 1880s reveals much of the extent of racial tension within the community during the respective periods. Both events had as their main cause white dissatisfaction at the erosion of their privilege. Importantly, however, whereas the Black Flag Revolt was primarily aimed at the elimination of competition of claim-owning black élites, the strikes are an indication that, by the 1880s, elements of these élites had been accommodated within privileged white circles. The strikes were a reaction not against 'Cape Coloureds' occupying a part of the labour aristocracy, but rather against the further subordination of white employees to the extent that they found themselves competing with cheaper African workers once the new recruitment policies were enforced. The implementation of the searching regulations only confirmed their fears. The pressure valve which had existed because of the 'passing' of some blacks into the white workforce was replaced by a more extensive racial polarity in the wake of the strikes.

By the early 1880s Africans, Indians, 'Cape Coloureds' and Muslims were the targets of an intensification of racial prejudice. The Black Flag Revolt was essentially the culmination of white digger dissatisfaction at the issuing of claim-owner licences to blacks. However, it was precisely this empowerment of certain groups of colonial

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<sup>68</sup>Worger: *S.A.'s City of Diamonds*, p. 129

blacks in Kimberley first as claim-holders and later as a part of the labour aristocracy in the formative years of the diamond industry that tapped off black leaders. The 'Cape Coloured' semi-skilled workers in the mines, African petty-bourgeoisie in the town and the insular Muslim community had little in common other than their increasing exclusion from white Kimberley in the wake of the new recruitment policies of mining companies and the spread of smallpox. As a result, these groups of blacks were being segregated from the white community along with the army of migrant African labourers who made up the bulk of the workforce.

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## CHAPTER SIX

### **Black political activity in the 1870s and 1880s: The Africander League and the Coloured People's Association**

In the previous chapter we showed that the nature of racial animosity and hostility in Kimberley differed from that in other urban centres in the Cape Colony, in that it was directly influenced by the growth of the diamond mining industry. An examination of the most turbulent events of the 1870s and 1880s, the Black Flag Revolt and industrial strikes respectively, reveals that they were sparked off by whites in protest at the erosion of their privileged position in the industry. African migrant labourers, whose dress and traditional customs set them apart from colonial blacks and whites, were most commonly the target of white prejudice. However, the heightened racial tension during and after the Black Flag revolt and strikes resulted in vilification of all blacks, including the petty bourgeois group of colonial Africans, Indians and Cape Coloureds.

It is no surprise that the first organisations claiming to represent blacks in Kimberley originated during or after events which strained race relations. Indeed, the riots of 1871-72 spawned the Coloured Diggers Association, the first body representing blacks on the fields, which was made up of claim-holders who protested white demands that blacks be denied claim-holding licences.<sup>1</sup> In the 1880s benefit societies for black people sprouted, reflecting the increasing polarisation of racial groups in Kimberley as the growth of the diamond mining industry accelerated.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>D.N., 11/09/1872

<sup>2</sup>See Chapter Three ; For sports organisations see Chapter Four

Despite all the sporting, social and benefit organisations which were established for blacks, there remained formidable obstacles to be overcome before a black political organisation could be formed. Many of the associations which arose were started by the black élites as they tried to come to terms with their exclusion from the white community in Kimberley. However, these organisations were inspired, not by a desire to change the *status quo*, but rather as a means to facilitate the social rehabilitation of Kimberley's black bourgeoisie. Typically, early black organisations were characterised by their adherence to Western ideologies.<sup>3</sup> It was this affirmation of colonial values by the black élites that emerged as the greatest obstacle to an inclusive black consciousness in Kimberley. Early organisations for blacks were dominated by these élites, who did little to encourage participation by non-colonial blacks.<sup>4</sup> The first political organisation in Kimberley formed by blacks, the Africander League, was to perpetuate this trend.<sup>5</sup>

The establishment of the first black political organisations in Kimberley took place against a background of broader political changes in the region. In October 1880 Griqualand West was annexed by the Cape Colony. In doing so, it became the eighth electoral division of the Colony and was entitled to representation in both its Legislative Council and House of Assembly.<sup>6</sup>

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<sup>3</sup>See Chapter Three

<sup>4</sup>While early black organisations did not specifically bar African labourers their leadership usually revealed a decidedly elitist orientation

<sup>5</sup>For Africander League see D.N., 15/12/1883 ; D.I., 13/12/1883

<sup>6</sup>For debate surrounding the incorporation of Griqualand-West into the Cape Colony see C.A., 07/04/1877 ; 09/06/1877

Accordingly, the first parliamentary elections in Kimberley were held in March 1881, returning members with strong connections to the diamond mining industry.<sup>7</sup> In the ensuing years these representatives agitated for legislation which would further increase the influence of the diamond companies in Kimberley.<sup>8</sup> These measures were noted with alarm by the powerful merchant interests around the mining centres who were concerned that the stifling grip which the companies were beginning to exercise over their employees would adversely affect free trade.<sup>9</sup> By the time the next parliamentary elections were due in Kimberley in 1884 local inhabitants had shown that they had acquired a taste for electioneering. While the commercial and mining interests were squaring up to each other in preparation for the campaign ahead, various other political associations were formed with the express purpose of returning candidates who would further their specific cause in the Cape Parliament. An important grouping which was emerging in Kimberley during this period consisted of those people who called themselves 'Africanders'.<sup>10</sup>

Two political associations purporting to represent 'Africanders' were formed towards the end of 1883 in preparation for the parliamentary elections due in Kimberley the following year. These were the Griqualand West African Political Association and the Africander League.<sup>11</sup> Significantly, the former catered for a white membership while the latter was aimed at reaching a black constituency, emphasising the polarisation between the races.

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<sup>7</sup>Worger: *S.A.'s City of Diamonds*, pp. 133-134

<sup>8</sup>Ibid, pp. 134-146

<sup>9</sup>Ibid, pp. 199-200

<sup>10</sup>See reference (31) of Introduction above

<sup>11</sup>For formation of G.W.A.P.A. see *D.L.*, 22/11/1883 ; For Africander League see *D.N.*, 15/12/1883; *D.L.*, 13/12/1883

The black Africander League included Africans, 'Cape Coloureds' and Indians.<sup>12</sup> That this was a source of some antagonism seems apparent. This is highlighted in an address by Joseph Moss, the Interpreter to the High Court in Kimberley, to an early meeting of the League. He criticised those of 'mixed' parentage who denied that they were coloured, preferring rather to think "Oh, we are white men; our fathers were white men." Moss encouraged those at the meeting to be proud of being black remarking of himself that -

I am a real negro, there is no doubt about that. I am a Fingoe, and if you want to see a specimen of a negro, come to me. It was all bosh that a coloured man could never come to anything. A negro was the finest specimen of a human being that could be wished, all they wanted was to be developed. He must be treated fairly and firmly, not unfairly and firmly, or he would fly at his master.

Moss was also scathing in his contempt for colonial blacks who considered themselves superior because they were educated,

The same with the negro or the coloured man. Put him to school and teach him to write his name or say a word or two in English. Put him in a long pair of boots and he thinks he is a gentleman. You have made him worse than the raw Kafir. Those educated Kafirs are worse than the raw Kafir. It is because they are spoiled.<sup>13</sup>

Moss pinpoints the two biggest stumbling blocks to a common black consciousness during this period. Those of part white parentage, like 'Bastards' and 'Cape Coloureds' considered themselves to have a superior social standing to other

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<sup>12</sup>D.N., 15/12/1883

<sup>13</sup>Ibid

blacks and used their lighter skin colour to pass as whites and move in their circles. The other obstacle was the tendency for educated blacks in Kimberley, whose numbers were being increased by the arrival of mission educated Africans from the Eastern Cape, to dissociate themselves from 'raw' Africans.<sup>14</sup>

At the inaugural meeting of the Africander League seventy people put down on paper their application for membership. While Moss himself advocated one day sending a black man to parliament the stated aims of the League were far more modest. They were, "... to promote our own general interests and those of all classes in Griqualand West." It was resolved that to achieve this end "All members of this League are bound in cases of election to vote in conformity with the majority of the League."<sup>15</sup> After much deliberation over prospective candidates the League decided to support four candidates, G. Goch, G. Wolf, M. Cornwall and F. English. All of them were white and represented commercial interests in varying degrees.

The choice of candidates reflected where the allegiances of the League lay. The majority of the speakers expressed conservative political views and with few exceptions, urged support for commercial over mining interests. These members represented traders and merchants who constituted an elite component of the black population. This was best illustrated by the fact that their major concern was the excessive taxation of standholders on Company land.<sup>16</sup>

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<sup>14</sup>See Chapters Three and Four

<sup>15</sup>D.L., 13/12/1883

<sup>16</sup>Ibid

Three of the four candidates nominated by the League were successful in the elections.<sup>17</sup> However this was due to their popular appeal in the white community rather than representing a triumph for the ideals of the Africander League itself. It disbanded soon after the elections, having served its purpose.

The formation of the Africander League for blacks in Kimberley prior to the Parliamentary elections was significant for a number of reasons. It revealed that there was a class of blacks who recognised the need to act in concert on matters political. The lively nature of the debates at meetings during the short lifetime of the organization showed that black people remained divided in many ways. Moss, perhaps the most eloquent speaker at League meetings, encouraged the espousal of a black solidarity that would transcend class and ethnic distinctions. His thoughts regarding black consciousness were, in many ways, ahead of their time. In the end, the very League to which he addressed his speeches showed the same exclusivity which he warned against. The interests and aims of the Africander League suggest that they represented an alliance of petty bourgeois blacks, rather than having a broad base of support.

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Ten years later, however, a more powerful and more radical political organisation was formed by blacks in Kimberley. Much had happened in the intervening decade to make this organisation more truly representative of all blacks in the town. We have already seen that the growth of industry in Kimberley played

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<sup>17</sup>D.I., 15/02/1884

no small part in polarising the community along racial lines. Two issues being discussed at length in the Cape Parliament towards the latter half of the 1880s were to have a major impact on the Kimberley community and to galvanise the blacks there into political activity. One was the question of the possible implementation of a secret ballot in elections. The other, equally controversial proposal, was for an amendment to be made to the franchise qualifications of the Cape Colony. Although supported by different interest groups in parliament, these two proposals were eventually both drafted in a single Act - the Franchise and Ballot Act of 1892.<sup>18</sup>

The secret ballot was introduced to eliminate the intimidation which had invariably taken place at previous elections. Those most open to intimidation were farm and mine workers whose employers could and often did influence the vote of those in their service.<sup>19</sup> The secret ballot was then especially welcomed by the mine workers in Kimberley who constituted a substantial proportion of that town's voters.<sup>20</sup> They could now, for the first time, exercise their franchise without fear of dismissal or reprisal at the hands of employers.

The changes in franchise qualifications as outlined in the Act were met with considerably less approval. Franchise requirements had been increased as a consequence of the fear by many members of parliament that existing qualifications were so low that whites would be swamped by newly enfranchised black voters in the annexed African territories along the Frontier.<sup>21</sup> To forestall this eventuality the

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<sup>18</sup>Act of Parliament of the Colony of the Cape of Good Hope: Act No. 9 of 1892; Statutes of The Cape of Good Hope, 1652-1895; (Cape Town; W.A. Richards and Sone, 1895).

<sup>19</sup>Worger: S.A.'s City of Diamonds, pp. 214, 218

<sup>20</sup>Ibid, pp. 227-8 ; 234-5

<sup>21</sup>van Huyssteen: "The non-European franchise, 1872-1892", (M.A. Thesis, U.C.T., 1952), pp. 50, 76-77

franchise was raised. While some parliamentarians considered the increase excessive, many thought it should be higher still so that more of the black vote could be eliminated.<sup>22</sup> Significant changes made were an increase in the property qualification and the introduction of a simple literacy test which required the prospective voter to be able to sign his name and write his address and occupation. The wage qualification remained the same.<sup>23</sup>

What concerned black people in the Colony most about the changes made to the franchise qualifications was the introduction of the literacy test. Although the test was a very easy one, it was enough to exclude the vast majority of colonial blacks, as their educational facilities lagged far behind those of whites. It was estimated that only 20% of the 'mixed' population, 11% of Fingoes and 5% of 'Hottentots' in the Cape Colony could read or write.<sup>24</sup>

In Kimberley there was a flurry of political activity among black people in opposition to the Act. One protest gathering was described by the D.F.A. as - "...an enormous meeting of the coloured population, voters and non-voters; and of every section of that large and diversified class,..." The Act was attacked by the meeting as an attempt to "...dis-enfranchise the whole of the coloured people, and to deprive them of their rights." It was viewed as being "...the forerunner of a scheme to bring the coloured people of the country into a state of semi-slavery."<sup>25</sup>

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<sup>22</sup>For the debate surrounding the increase in franchise qualifications see *Ibid*, pp. 76-88; S. Trapido: "White conflict and non-white participation in the politics of the Cape of Good Hope, 1853-1910", pp. 408-414. (Unpub. Ph.D. thesis, University of London, 1970)

<sup>23</sup>van Huyssteen: "The non-European franchise", p. 97

<sup>24</sup>*Ibid*, p. 92

<sup>25</sup>*D.F.A.*, 26/08/1892

The widespread nature of black opposition to the Franchise and Ballot Act was such that an African observer was moved to note of the composition of an

I recognize some Abdols, and some Adonises are here tonight. I recognize faces I am not very much used to see congregated together. Never have I been at a meeting of Abdols, Adonises and Coolies, so well attended, so orderly, and so intelligent.<sup>26</sup>

Indeed, the presence of colonial Africans, 'raw' or 'blanket' Africans, Indians, Muslims and other 'Cape Coloureds' in such large numbers at a meeting was unprecedented. Not only were all shades of black present but also all classes, non-colonial and colonial.

That old antagonisms and divisions would emerge between the diverse groups at these meetings was inevitable. At one such meeting in Kimberley a speaker purporting to be a representative of the 'blanket' vote admitted that many Africans were suspicious that Muslims supported the Afrikaner Bond. Also apparent was the gulf between non-colonial and colonial blacks. Nevertheless, the meeting resolved, that all blacks would need to stand together to thwart what was perceived as an attempt by the Afrikaner Bond to disenfranchise the black voters in the Colony.<sup>27</sup>

A dominant theme at the various protest meetings by the black community was the planned petition to the Queen. This perhaps reflects the orientation of the leadership of these gatherings, who were almost exclusively made up of petty bourgeois blacks, the majority of whom were overt in their allegiance to the Crown.

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<sup>26</sup>Ibid, 27/08/1892

<sup>27</sup>Ibid

It was hoped that more than 10 000 signatures could be collected throughout the Colony to protest the Act.<sup>28</sup> The petition was the main focus of the protests and encapsulated the continuing belief in British liberalism to redress injustices held by the leadership of the malcontents. The Daily Independent reflected on the futility of an appeal to the Queen by inhabitants of a Colony that had not long before agitated for and received Responsible Government -

In a Colony possessing complete self-government, and in which the Government is responsible to the people, an appeal to the Crown direct is an anachronism. It is upon the local machinery of Government - upon the Ministry and upon the Parliament that influences has to be exercised.<sup>29</sup>

It was the failure of the petition and a growing awareness among the black élites that they had to form a political body to represent their own interests that prompted the formation, in March 1893, of the Coloured People's Association.<sup>30</sup> The Daily Independent welcomed the moves by blacks to form their own political organisations and admitted that to whites -

...coloured votes are regarded as belonging to a separate class and as mixed up with different interests. Hence it is natural that they should take independent action in respect of political matters.<sup>31</sup>

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<sup>28</sup>Ibid, 26/08/1892 ; 29/08/1892

<sup>29</sup>D.I., 02/03/1893

<sup>30</sup>Ibid

<sup>31</sup>Ibid

This realisation by educated blacks in Kimberley that they needed to mobilise and end their reliance on white politicians was becoming increasingly evident. At the inaugural meeting of the C.P.A. the chairman, H.O. Ally, made reference to the futility of supporting whites and commented that -

He could draw the attention of his fellow coloured men to many other proposals said to have been made with a view to keeping the coloured man down in the face of the fact, too, that a larger portion of the public revenue, directly and indirectly, was contributed by the coloured people of this country ...And surely on that ground they were entitled to equal privileges and rights.<sup>32</sup>

There was agreement on the importance of a common course of action by blacks and an increasing realisation that the severance of ties with Britain meant that black people needed to unite politically. The manifesto of the C.P.A. reveals an emphasis on the upliftment of 'coloured' people through education and the desire to obtain political and judicial representation. The eight 'objects' of the C.P.A. were -

- (a) To obtain by all constitutional means equal political rights, justice, freedom, and liberty for citizens of this Colony.
- (b) To obtain the redress of all grievances.
- (c) To ameliorate and alleviate the conditions of the labouring classes.
- (d) To protest against any class legislation.
- (e) To take a practical interest in Parliamentary, Town Council, and Divisional Council elections, in order to return fit and proper representatives.
- (f) To obtain better educational advantages for all citizens.

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<sup>32</sup>Ibid

(g) To obtain better representation of coloured people on the jury lists.

(h) To establish a library and reading-room for the better enlightenment of the coloured people.<sup>33</sup>

Speakers at the meeting reflected the trend away from reliance on Britain and white politicians and spoke of the need for 'Coloured people' to take action themselves to defend their rights. Another view expressed by many was that black people had been abandoned by whites to fight their own battles and should recognise what had become their common interests. One speaker criticised those colonial blacks in Kimberley who had always placed their faith in the institution of Cape Liberalism, which was mistakenly thought to be proof against any discriminatory legislation.<sup>34</sup>

While the audience at many protest meetings consisted of blacks of every shade ranging from 'Muslims, Indians, Cape Men and natives,' those occupying 'conspicuous places' were mostly 'Cape Coloured.'<sup>35</sup> This was an indication that most of the educated blacks in Kimberley came from this group. Many had received a colonial education and represented the largest group of articulate blacks in Kimberley. While the number of educated Africans and Indians in Kimberley was growing, 'Cape Coloureds' still made up the majority on the executives of both the Africander League and the C.P.A. That Africans and Indians were present in the audience in considerable numbers is shown by the presence of interpreters of Indian and African languages.<sup>36</sup>

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<sup>33</sup>Ibid

<sup>34</sup>D.F.A., 27/08/1892

<sup>35</sup>D.I., 02/03/1893

<sup>36</sup>Ibid

The reaction of white newspapers to the C.P.A. was revealing. Ten years earlier most whites had blamed their misfortunes on blacks and newspapers had reflected high levels of prejudice and discrimination towards all blacks. However, by the late 1880s, the 'enemy' had become the mining industry which was controlling most facets of life in Kimberley and stifling small enterprise.

In spite of this, ingrained notions of racial inequality in the community still proved an insurmountable obstacle to unification. The Daily Independent, sympathetic to white lower middle class interests, acknowledged the need for a class alliance and welcomed the aims of the C.P.A. commenting that -

The amelioration of the condition of the labouring classes is an object, for example, in which white and coloured may be equally concerned.<sup>37</sup>

While the Africander League and the C.P.A. were not the only political organisations formed by blacks in Kimberley during this period,<sup>38</sup> they were certainly the most significant. Separated by a decade, they show the growth of an intention by blacks to involve themselves in the political process. To many blacks the first step was acknowledging that they had concerns, separate from the majority of white colonists, which needed to be addressed.

By the end of the 1880s blacks were becoming increasingly disillusioned with white politicians. The realisation that the British liberal influence on domestic affairs

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<sup>37</sup>Ibid., 27/08/1892

<sup>38</sup>One example was the Griqualand-West Coloured People's Political Association which was formed in 1891.

in the Colony was waning in the wake of the granting of Responsible Government in 1873 and the abolition of the cumulative vote by the Cape Parliament to prevent the first black candidate from being elected were causes for alarm among blacks throughout the country.<sup>39</sup> Nowhere else in the Colony had the black élites been forced to endure the same level of racial antagonism from whites as in Kimberley. This prejudice against blacks was so pronounced in Kimberley partly as a consequence of the colonial ideologies of racial inequality and partly as a result of the unique tensions which arose between blacks and whites in the region over intense competition for limited natural resources.

For educated blacks in Kimberley the passing of the Franchise and Ballot Act in 1892 was the last straw. They assumed leadership of black protest to the Act even though most of them would have been unaffected by it.<sup>40</sup> This decision by articulate blacks to throw in their lot with 'raw' Africans and illiterate colonial blacks who were most affected by the Act was motivated by their increasing isolation from the white community. Long term class alliances by workers across colour lines had failed to materialise. The formation of the Coloured People's Association represented not as some historians<sup>41</sup> have claimed, the first attempt at a national 'Cape Coloured' organisation but rather a tentative attempt at the first organisation for all blacks,

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<sup>39</sup>For an account of Effendi's unsuccessful bid see Trapido: "White conflict and non-white participation", pp. 411-414.

<sup>40</sup>Although some historians give the founding date of the C.P.A. as 1892, this is incorrect. (the below refs-41-refer. The error probably stems from the petition by Kimberley blacks to the Secretary of State for the Colonies in 1892. However, the body responsible for this was the 'Coloured Agitation Committee', not the C.P.A. which was formed only in March 1893. - C.A. See C.O. 48/521, H.O. Ally to Ripon, (24 October 1892).

<sup>41</sup>See for example, Lewis: Between the Wire and the Wall, p. 10; van der Ross: The rise and decline of apartheid, p. 12; Odendaal: Vukani Bantu, pp. 12-13; Edgecombe: "The non racial franchise in Cape politics", pp. 34-35

irrespective of class or colour. However, not only was the rest of the country not ready for an inclusive black consciousness; neither was Kimberley.

Already tension was growing in the C.P.A. between colonial and non-colonial on one hand and different ethnic groups on the other. Imvo Zabantsundu, the first black run newspaper in the Colony, reflected in its columns the indifference, and in some cases even support of black élites elsewhere in the country for the increased franchise qualifications.<sup>42</sup> The protest, which was centred mainly in Kimberley, Port Elizabeth and Cape Town, eventually fizzled out and the tentative alliances between blacks in the Northern Cape crumbled as old divisions reasserted themselves.

The C.P.A. continued to agitate against the Franchise and Ballot Act and made plans to branch out as a national organisation. They came to nought though, and the C.P.A. faded away almost as quickly as it had been established. What it did represent, albeit for a short time, was an association of blacks across the spectrum - colonial, non-colonial, wealthy and indigent - on a scale that was unprecedented in black politics. While there were various and conflicting interest groups in the C.P.A., which effectively prevented the organisation from acting in concert on any issue other than to protest the Franchise and Ballot Act, its establishment was significant in that it reflected the extent of the alienation of black élites from the middle class white community in Kimberley.

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<sup>42</sup>See Edgcombe and Odendaal above.

## CONCLUSION

Marks and Trapido have shown how the "dominance of a liberal incorporationist strategy, based on the belief in the ultimate assimilability of indigenous peoples - whether white or black"<sup>1</sup> was being challenged by new ideologies of dominance in the second half of the nineteenth century. Scientific racism and social Darwinism held as their basis that biological differences between race groups made them unequal and in so doing provided justification for a stratified society. These ideologies urged a segregation of Africans from whites, arguing that premature assimilation would destroy indigenous cultures.

Britain's annexation of African chiefdoms in the nineteenth century had important political and economic ramifications. Incorporationist policies threatened the status quo of white privilege as thousands of Africans became subjects of the Queen and potential voters. British expansion northwards from the Cape opened a vast labour market. African migrants to the Colony worked on public works projects and farms in ever increasing numbers. For white and 'Cape Coloured' workers the influx of cheap black labour represented a grave threat to their own positions of employment.<sup>2</sup> This, coupled with the political threat posed by Africans, led to an intensification of prejudice and meant that the segregationist tenets of scientific racism found ready acceptance among many whites and colonial blacks. Bickford-Smith has demonstrated a growth in negative stereotyping of Africans in Cape Town and elsewhere as they arrived in the urban centres where they were prepared to

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<sup>1</sup>Marks and Trapido: The Politics of Race, Class and Nationalism, pp. 1-10

<sup>2</sup>Bickford-Smith: "Class, commerce, ethnicity", pp. 163-170; Saunders: "Africans in Cape Town", pp. 1-18

work for lower wages. He argues that the influx of cheap black labour into the Colony created the perception of Africans as being only manual labourers.<sup>3</sup> 'Cape Coloureds', although also becoming victims of white prejudice at the Cape towards the end of the century, were still able to 'pass into' the white community and occupied semi-skilled and skilled positions along with whites in the workforce at the Cape. This was due in no small part to the durability of the Cape liberal tradition which espoused non-racialism and equality of all British subjects before the law.<sup>4</sup>

Kimberley had no such heritage. Its early history was marked by white 'digger democracy' which ensured that white privilege and rule was a way of life on the fields.<sup>5</sup> This does not mean, of course, that all whites were racists. However, the early years were dominated by a white working class which was, especially when its own economic advantage was threatened. When the annexation of Griqualand-West in October 1871 brought British law and rule, Kimberley became the centre of Britain's newest Crown Colony with a Legislative Council and Governor-General. For the majority of whites the imperial inheritance was irksome and an interference in the affairs of white diggers.<sup>6</sup> It did not take long before the imposition of Colonial rule and the new policies of non-racialism was met with a violent challenge in the riots of 1871-2. A few years later open conflict between white diggers and the authorities broke out once again in the form of the Black Flag Revolt. Both the riots and the Revolt had their origins in white digger desire for the restoration of privilege. While British policy in the Cape Colony in the nineteenth century showed

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<sup>3</sup>Bickford-Smith: *Ibid*, pp. 186-188 ; 200-202

<sup>4</sup>*Ibid*, p. 198

<sup>5</sup>U.C.T. Archives, Smalberger Collection, B 4.1 - 4.5

<sup>6</sup>*Ibid*

signs of being influenced by dual ideologies of incorporation and segregation, the situation in Kimberley was less ambiguous. Unlike other urban centres in the Colony, Kimberley had an African population which far outnumbered the other inhabitants. Although whites were unable to have blacks barred from owning claims, they did have some success in the regulation of African labourers. Pass laws, locations and eventually compounds restricted and controlled the movement and freedom of Africans on the diamond fields.

After the turbulence of the 1870s Kimberley assumed many characteristics of the urban centres in the Cape Colony. Indeed, Willan called Kimberley in the 1890s a "supremely British place".<sup>7</sup> The black élites who had expressed anxiety during the troubled 1870s had been successfully incorporated, at least on the surface, into the structures of the Crown Colony. There was a thriving African petty bourgeoisie, a semi-skilled 'Cape Coloured' workforce and an industrious black community in the suburbs, of whom the Cape Muslims formed the most visible sector. Turrell even writes that "In stark contrast to the black versus white confrontation during the Black Flag Revolt, the alignment of social and political forces in the 1880s cut sharply across colour lines".<sup>8</sup>

Upon closer inspection this picture of racial harmony is less rosy. What had started as class discrimination against migrant African labourers became as a result of the heightened racial tension of the 1870s a more inclusive negative stereotyping of all blacks in Kimberley, fuelled by the social disintegration of indigenous Koranna

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<sup>7</sup>Willan: "An African in Kimberley", p. 238

<sup>8</sup>Turrell: Capital and Labour, p. 199

and Griqua communities. The demise of the individual white claim-holder and the depressions of the early 1880s saw blacks and whites competing directly with each other in mining-related industries. The epidemic of smallpox during the same period and white perceptions that blacks, and particularly Muslims, were to blame for its rapid spread further strained race relations. Increasingly, blacks were being separated from whites in various social spheres including church services and sporting activities, and by residential segregation.

The two most significant bodies formed by blacks on the diamond fields showed the extent of the progression of black political organisation. While the *Africander League* represented commercial interests and supported white candidates, the *C.P.A.*, formed a decade later, was blatant in its commitment to the upliftment of black people. Although still dominated by the black elites it counted among its members many 'raw' Africans. The *C.P.A.* also made clear its intention of electing black men to positions where they could influence the political process.

The polarisation of the Kimberley community into black and white was reflected in Colonial documentation relating to Kimberley. Turrell himself notes a change in official racial terminology in 1885. Before this date 'Cape Coloureds' and Indians were grouped with 'Europeans' while 'Kaffirs and Hottentots' were listed as 'natives'. After 1885 this was discontinued and 'Cape Coloureds' and Indians were classified with 'persons of Asiatic descent and 'other coloured people'. Those 'Cape Coloureds' who were employed in the mining industry were categorised separately

only in 1883 and 1884 and were subsequently listed as 'natives and others'<sup>9</sup>. This was in stark contrast to elsewhere in the Colony where, during the same period, 'Cape Coloureds' were increasingly being identified as a distinct group from Africans and whites in newspapers, official documents and records.<sup>10</sup>

This does not exclude the existence of distinctions between blacks themselves in Kimberley. To Muslims their religion was a way of life and one which would always set them apart from other blacks. Many 'Cape Coloureds' who had come from urban centres in the Colony considered themselves to be superior in social status to other blacks. A Kimberley newspaper article related the incident where two 'Cape boys' badly beat up a white man who had called them 'Hottentots'<sup>11</sup>. Amongst Africans ethnic differences also remained a source of conflict and division. Despite the formation of a political organisation for all blacks the distinction between colonial and non-colonial remained a marked one at the diamond diggings. Indeed, the cricket and rugby unions formed by the black elites in Kimberley during the early 1890s changed their names from 'coloured' to 'Colonial' to emphasise their 'respectable' status and exclude 'raw' Africans.<sup>12</sup>

It is significant that the initial response by many blacks in Kimberley, Cape Town and Port Elizabeth to the Franchise and Ballot Act was to petition the Queen to veto its passage. The realisation by black élites that they could no longer appeal to Britain to redress grievances after the Colony was granted self-government

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<sup>9</sup>Turrell: *Ibid*, p.260, see footnote (13).

<sup>10</sup>Goldin: *Making race*, pp. 12-27

<sup>11</sup>D.F.A., 30/11/1883 ; 01/12/1883

<sup>12</sup>Willan: "An African in Kimberley", pp 251-252 ; *D.I.*, 27/11/1890

prompted this group to mobilise and form their own political organisations. The C.P.A. was founded only after the failure of the petition. Even then, the aims of the organisation reflected the influence of its petty bourgeois leadership. Foremost among them was the desire for increased representation of 'coloureds' in government and the judiciary and an emphasis on the provision of educational facilities for all blacks. Inherent in these aims was the desire for inclusion in mainstream Colonial society which black élites in Kimberley had sought all along.

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