3 Immigration and settlement of “undesirable” whites in Southern Rhodesia, c. 1940s–1960s

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Introduction

This chapter focuses on the immigration and settlement of so-called undesirable white immigrants in Southern Rhodesia, or simply Rhodesia, in the 1940s to the 1960s. In the post-Second World War years, Rhodesia embarked on a massive immigration campaign to attract more British settlers to increase the white population for economic, social and political reasons. This chapter argues that besides the exploitation of Africans, racism and restrictive immigration policies, notions of white undesirability troubled the Rhodesian settler community during this period. This chapter seeks to demonstrate that white undesirability was a contested, fluid and ambiguous concept influenced by political, social and economic circumstances prevailing at the time. Rhodesian settler communities often conflated race, class and culture to classify other white groups as undesirable despite their strong economic position and white skins. It relied on assumptions and stereotypes directed towards other immigrants officially known as white aliens, mainly Italians, Greeks and Portuguese considered to be economically “poor”. In the post-war years, Rhodesian officials expressed dismay at the quality and type of British immigrants the country received. Later in the 1950s, the country received non-British immigrants and deported some of them as undesirable characters because of their class, moral conduct and criminal records.

Rhodesian settlers fashioned undesirability against its perceived settler standards – white respectability, moral purity and acceptable behaviour, and high wages, amongst other colonial rhetoric virtues. Curiously, instead of fashioning white undesirability against Africans, Rhodesian settlers crafted it against the so-called desirable whites. As this chapter will show, Rhodesian immigration officials had powers to define, according to the law and opinion, the desirability and undesirability of white immigrants. This chapter deals with social histories of undesirable whites and introduces human stories at the expense of laws and policies. It shows that although whiteness was a rallying point for the Rhodesian settlers, there were some divisions and tensions within the white community based on class, ethnicity, culture and political aspects. Despite the existence of these divisions, in a racialised society such as Rhodesia, whites certainly enjoyed colonial privileges and power compared to Africans. Rhodesian

settlers would consider it a disgrace if new white immigrants had similar living standards to Africans.

Desirable and undesirable white immigrants, whiteness and Britishness in Rhodesia

Immediately after the war, the Southern Rhodesian government embarked on a massive drive to attract white settlers of the “right type”, mainly from Britain. Generally, the right type meant white immigrants from Britain and English-speaking South Africans with capital, acceptable moral and political views, sound health, and with no criminal records, amongst other requirements. Section 3(d) of the Southern Rhodesian immigration regulation provided a definition of the legal immigrants which the country was willing to either accept or deny entrance to. Rhodesian immigration officials and the governor had the power to classify immigrants as desirable and undesirable after receiving positive or suspicious information from any foreign government or through diplomatic channels.¹ Immigration officers were supposed to issue a written statement to immigrants either granting or denying entry or asking them to leave the country as undesirable. If immigrants were deemed undesirable, they had the right to appeal to the nearest magistrate court within three days after receiving a notice of deportation.² Evidently, besides the provisions of the law, immigration officials played a significant part in defining the desirability and undesirability of immigrants depending on circumstances.

The issue of white population stability remained centrally important to settler politics throughout the colonial period and immigration remained the main way of increasing the white population.³ However, Rhodesian immigration policies were selective, restrictive and less accommodating, especially to those immigrants who were not of British cultural extraction.⁴ Ethnic chauvinism reflected itself in the immigration policies of Southern Rhodesia at least before the 1960s. This factor, amongst others, discouraged large-scale white immigration into Rhodesia especially from 1890 up to the 1940s, despite the officials’ desire to create a “white man’s country”.⁵ After the Rhodesian Front government unilaterally declared independence (UDI) from Britain in 1965, white migration and demographic patterns took a different twist and scholarly attention has focused on this period.⁶ For example, Peter Godwin and Ian Hancock discuss the impact of the war on white politics in the 1970s and the contradictions whites encountered in trying to defend what they called the “Rhodesian way of life”.⁷ In his study of the final days of white Rhodesia, Josiah Brownell argues that the state capitulated primarily because it lost the battle of numbers to stand against Africans.⁸ The selectivity of Southern Rhodesian immigration regulations was not unique. In the 1940s, Canada, Australia and New Zealand were not willing to allow entry to whites of perceived poor quality.⁹ While the literature on Rhodesia discuss patterns of white migration and the selective nature of immigration policies, it assumes that only the so-called desirable whites settled in the country.

One striking feature of the Rhodesian settler community was its Britishness, a situation that remained dominant up until the late 1950s.¹⁰ Rhodesian settlers appropriated the sense of Britishness to distinguish themselves from the Afrikaner-dominated South Africa. The state preferred settlers of British origin who could develop the country and be good citizens and this explains Rhodesians' desire to create a British fragment north of the Limpopo River. For white Rhodesians, the inclusion of non-British "types" would create, in effect, an entirely new fragment in Rhodesia, but one which was not entirely British.¹¹ Frank Clements reveals that in white Rhodesian society, 'status depended more on origin than on class or education. Where a man's father came from mattered more than anything else'.¹² Unsurprisingly, as John Parker observes, 'Rhodesia remained in many ways the most British of all the colonies'.¹³ The influence of civil servants and the jingoism of Rhodes, the founder of the colony, were instrumental in propping up this ultra-British flare making Rhodesia 'more English than the English'.¹⁴ Therefore, in the years before the turbulent 1960s, non-English speaking whites occupied a second class position within the Southern Rhodesian settler community.

Rhodesian whites created an image of a thriving settler community presiding over the African majority. One of the reasons for screening immigrants was to avoid "poor white aliens" entering the colony.¹⁵ Rhodesian settlers considered whites who lived below their expected standards as deviants and undesirable, or they were simply known as the "other". This was different from the early Rhodesian settler self-image fashioned in relation to Africans, the imperial homeland of Britain and white South Africans.¹⁶ This is different from Linda Colley's argument that common threats, real or imagined fears, or interests united British people in the Dominions and settler colonies acting as points of convergence at different times. Colley postulates that 'whatever their own differences, Britons could feel united in dominion over, and in distinction from, the millions of colonial subjects beyond their own boundaries'.¹⁷ In South Africa, John Lambert observed that British whites constructed their identities in relation to Afrikaners and Africans.¹⁸ In an ambivalent scenario, Rhodesian settlers not only fashioned their identities against Africans but also in relation to desirable whites. However, the definition of undesirability was fluid depending on the prevailing circumstances, especially in the post-war years when the state judged other white immigrants as undesirable. As a result, the definition of desirability and undesirability depended on political, social and economic factors. The government granted resident permits to some whites who initially entered the country as desirable, but later these same whites came to be regarded as undesirable.

Post-war white immigration, assimilation and "Poor White Trash"

During the Second World War, there was a drop in white immigration as overseas travelling was difficult and the Rhodesian government wanted to keep jobs open for the demobilised white soldiers. As part of its war effort for the British

Empire, Southern Rhodesia hosted over 12,000 German, Austrian and Italian internees as well as Polish refugees.¹⁹ Deliberations were made after the war to accept Italians who made applications to stay in the country provided they had employment and were “of good character”, in order for them to be assimilated into the settler community.²⁰ Immigration officials placed emphasis on their moral conduct to ascertain whether their desirability was compatible with established settler standards. However, many internees of different nationalities and Polish refugees chose not to remain in the country after the war. Even so, after the war, white immigration increased as hundreds of demobilised British soldiers entered the country under the Rhodesian land settlement scheme to attract British and Royal Air Force (RAF) ex-servicemen and their families.²¹ The UK provided free passage into Rhodesia for a limited number of suitable British ex-servicemen and women together with their dependants.²² Rhodesia wanted white immigrants with a certain amount of income who had friends in Rhodesia who were already involved in farming.²³ The government expected immigrants to possess a sum of money and/or property exceeding £50, a further sum exceeding £10 for each dependent they brought with them, and bona fide employment for a period of not less than six months.²⁴ Arguably, few whites could meet these criteria and this provision deliberately excluded a large number of prospective immigrants.

The Selection Immigration Board was responsible for selecting suitable and desirable white immigrants with almost complete autonomy. Some members of the government made up the Board and worked closely with other departments for consultation in unclear circumstances, but it had the final decision. During the war, refugees without income were a source of concern to the Board. The Board noted that Jewish refugees and non-English speaking whites who entered the colony during the pre-1940 period were keen to bring in their relatives of varying degrees of kinship without the necessary means or qualifications to earn a living.²⁵ However, their relatives in Rhodesia attempted to overcome this setback by giving promises of maintenance. For fortuitous reasons, such promises were of no effect before the law and repudiated in the event of death or a change of mind by the local sponsor, leaving the applicant to charity.²⁶ The Board did not regard these applicants as useful and desirable citizens. It considered that accepting such cases would lead to organised immigration of non-English speaking whites to the probable prejudice of ex-service and other British immigrants.²⁷ The Board confined their acceptance to compassionate cases involving wives, children under sixteen and aged parents or grandparents. In this case, class played a crucial role in determining the undesirability of these white groups. The Appeal Board made their selections on the basis of personal opinion and not on law, in deciding on the desirability and undesirability of immigrants. Therefore, there was a possibility for the Selection Board to refuse individual applications made on identical grounds. For instance, the Appeal Board could decide to admit the unqualified whites on compassionate grounds or could refuse the application.²⁸ Even if repeatedly overruled by the Appeal Board the Selection Board would adhere to its view and continue to reject

applications of this type, thus exposing the contradictions within the immigration policies of the country.

The state was unable to fulfil its intended ambition of attracting large numbers of whites and to assimilate them into the Rhodesian settler community. Authorities doubted the feasibility of simultaneously bringing large numbers of whites to Rhodesia and assimilating them with the ideas and habits of the country.²⁹ As Shutt notes, new immigrants flocking into the country after the war were to be educated in the nature of white Rhodesian culture and manners by older settlers.³⁰ Considering the racial nature of Rhodesia, it was difficult for the old settlers to integrate large volumes of new immigrants holding liberal views. However, some immigrants were officers leaving newly independent India who found Rhodesia to be the best place for them because they believed in white supremacy.³¹ There were also adventurous immigrants from South Africa who were perturbed by assertive Afrikaner nationalism and the election victory of the National Party. By the late 1940s it became apparent that the influx of immigrants was greater than the country could possibly absorb.³² To deal with this challenge, the government introduced immigration restrictions to manageable proportions by compelling employers to give a guarantee for the repatriation expenses of immigrants introduced into the country. This regulation encouraged employers to engage immigrants from other territories in Southern Africa rather than the UK.³³ This incentivised employers to hire migrants from so-called undesirable white groups in South Africa and Mozambique. The government introduced a flat rate of immigration guarantees, irrespective of whether an employer brings the immigrant from Southern Africa or from the UK. By 1950 the government had relaxed the immigration regulations into the country. After two years, the government returned financial deposit guarantees to employers on behalf of British immigrants.

When the Federation of Southern Rhodesia, Northern Rhodesia and Nyasaland came into being (1953–1963), aspects of the desirability of white immigrants remained topical. Rhodesian settlers flaunted the idea of maintaining the ambiguous British way of life in the Federation. Southern Rhodesia attracted more white immigrants because it was the most economically developed territory in the Federation. The 1954 Immigration Act and the Immigration Regulations governed the selection of immigrants into the Federation. The Federal government took over the responsibility of immigration from the three territorial authorities placed under the Ministry of Home Affairs based in Salisbury, Rhodesia's capital and the Federal capital. The government's immigration policy was to bring into the Federation the greatest number of suitable immigrants that the country could absorb in order to develop the country's natural resources.³⁴ There were two selection boards: one in Salisbury and the other at Rhodesia House in Britain, which considered applications for permanent residence in the Federation from British subjects. According to immigration regulations, immigrants were supposed to get residence permits before entering the Federation. The London board considered applications for permits

only from British subjects who at the date of application were resident in the UK or the Republic of Ireland. The Salisbury board considered applications for residence permits in the case of all other British subjects.

In considering applications for residence permits, the boards followed the procedure set out in the immigration Act and Regulations. The boards were to be fully satisfied that the desirable immigrants were of good character, sound physical and mental health, that they had sufficient means to pay for their maintenance, and were in possession of sufficient capital.³⁵ The boards could refuse residence permits to any applicant likely to pursue occupations already congested in the Federation. They also considered the productivity, suitability and efficiency of qualified immigrants before granting them residence permits.³⁶ The Federal board could refuse to issue residence permits to aliens if not satisfied that such whites were likely to become desirable inhabitants or were harmful to the welfare of the Federation within a reasonable period after entry.³⁷ Authorities expected immigrants who applied to stay in Rhodesia to have knowledge of the English language. This was in line with the national language policy and helped to preserve the Britishness of Rhodesia.

Rhodesian settlers expressed mixed perceptions towards some of the post-war British immigrants. Some well-placed Rhodesian officials, such as Alan D. Hutchison Lloyd, claimed that a greater proportion of the post-war immigrants belonged to the lower class. Lloyd joined the Education Department in 1933, transferred to the Department of Justice, and later became a member of Garfield Todd's short-lived Cabinet. Lloyd averred that after the war, British immigrants were of the poor type endeavouring to get away from the austere post-war conditions in Britain.³⁸ Old settlers expressed unsympathetic attitudes towards the class of new immigrants whom they accused of diluting the racial boundaries of Rhodesia. Lloyd recalls a revealing incident that sheds light on how other non-Rhodesian whites expressed similar disgust at the class of the post-war immigrants:

I remember well going down for an appeal by air to Bloemfontein in the Union of South Africa. I was sitting next to a man who told me he was a Director of the Hong Kong and Shanghai Bank and lived many years in Ceylon, who, knowing I was a Rhodesian, said to me that he was surprised at the amount of the poor white trash that he saw in Bulawayo.³⁹

Evidently, in this quotation, Lloyd was eager to express his status and position because he could fly to South Africa and meet top officials. The idea of calling new British immigrants trash is quite revealing of how class and poverty were important in defining undesirability. It also reveals that even British immigrants, despite being of the officially accepted cultural group, could be considered undesirable if they were not sufficiently wealthy. Moreover, some new British immigrants freely mixed with Africans, transcending racial boundaries. Ralph Drew Palmer, who came to Rhodesia in the 1920s,

alleged that it was the nature of post-war immigrants that changed the political landscape of the colony:

They used to go and have tea in the kitchen, and speak to [Africans], as they would do to another European, and eventually the African would let them down – he would pinch all the sugar or go away and not come back on the time he said he would. Moreover, all these sort of things would upset these chaps and they immediately went over to the right wing. It is one of the reasons for a sudden political change and feeling in the country; it was a result of the new immigrants.⁴⁰

This kind of racial indifference angered the older settlers who considered themselves as heirs to the so-called Rhodesian way of life and guardians of the pioneering and imperial tradition in the country. Old Rhodesians cynically directed their intolerance to new immigrants as the scapegoats for political and economic pressures in the country.

Rhodesian settlers were not comfortable in welcoming immigrants holding different political views, and grew progressively more hostile to anything they believed to be communism after the Second World War. The example of Charles Taylor is a clear testimony where authorities used political justification to conceal deep-seated labour problems in the country. Taylor, a recent migrant from Britain, was a key figure in the 1954 Rhodesian railways strike over poor salaries. He had previously been a member of the National Union of Mineworkers in the UK. Rhodesian immigration officials deported Taylor for leading the strike and most importantly because of his communist connection in Britain.⁴¹ Taylor's wife claimed that her husband ceased to be a card-carrying member of the Communist Party before he left for Rhodesia and, upon entering Rhodesia, had denied that her husband had any connection with the Communist Party in Britain.⁴² Garfield Todd, the prime minister of Southern Rhodesia, alleged that his administration deported Taylor because his wife said that he had been a member of the Communist Party in Britain but he lied to immigration authorities about his connections.⁴³ Since Taylor showed great skills in organising a strike, it was essential to find some way of removing him from the scene.⁴⁴ The briefings of the British Security Liaison Officer in Salisbury revealed that Taylor had a communist background and that he maintained his communist connection in the UK until his departure for Southern Rhodesia.⁴⁵

Initially, the government accused Taylor of breaching the Rhodesian Peace Preservation Act by leading the strike. Jack Keller, a Labour member of the Rhodesian Parliament described the Act in cynical terms. He called it 'a barbarous and a measure of the Mussolini and Hitler type. It gave the prime minister power to turn Southern Rhodesia into a police state and should never be tolerated by a British possession'.⁴⁶ Todd admitted that the Act did not target Europeans who should have a strong sense of responsibility. Later, Taylor complained that he did not receive any communication from Rhodesia prior to his

deportation as a prohibited immigrant. The high commissioner in the Federation of Rhodesia and Nyasaland noted that Taylor had outstanding qualities as a demagogue.⁴⁷ The Rhodesian government considered Taylor a dangerous person to remain in the colony and decided to deport him as an undesirable immigrant. The National Union of Mineworkers protested over the deportation of Taylor from Southern Rhodesia because of a labour dispute and without trial.⁴⁸ However, Taylor did not bother to use the provisions of the legislation to contest his deportation. Taylor alleged that whilst in Rhodesia he did the unmentionable thing of borrowing money from his (African) house-boy to buy milk for his children.⁴⁹ This was unmentionable because Taylor belonged to the broader white society expected to live above the level of Africans.

Some whites became undesirable and were declared prohibited immigrants after the government granted them permits to stay in Rhodesia. For instance, one Watch Tower Movement missionary called Cooke arrived in Rhodesia in January 1948, on a six-month visit permit for work. He was engaged as a full-time missionary and devoted most of his time to Africans. Later in 1948, four more Watch Tower missionaries arrived from Canada for the purpose of full-time employment. The secretary for Native Affairs was of the opinion that the Watch Tower organisation was now more of a nuisance than it being dangerous.⁵⁰ He also felt that declaring these five Europeans as prohibited immigrants – after allowing them in to the colony for two months – would make martyrs of them. He agreed with the commissioner of police that the sending of missionaries to Rhodesia by the Watch Tower Society was unnecessary and undesirable.⁵¹ He therefore suggested that instead of declaring these five people prohibited immigrants, they be given a time limit and told that their temporary permits would not be renewed. The government deliberately refused the renewal of their permits and deported them as prohibited and undesirable characters. However, it was no secret that the state knew about the previous activities of the Watch Tower movements in the country around 1917. These missionaries were whites, English-speaking and possessed qualities that made them desirable in the first place. Their alleged activities amongst Africans shifted their desirable status to become undesirable immigrants.

Some cultural associations such as the District of the Sons of England and Benevolent Society of Rhodesia were deeply concerned with the emergence of divisions within white Rhodesia settler community, supposedly caused by new immigrants. The association originated in Toronto in 1874 before it spread into South Africa in 1881 and later into Rhodesia with its membership restricted to males of British birth or descent, pledging to maintain imperial interests in the subcontinent.⁵² The Lodge complained that non-British immigrants were diluting the British way of life in the country. The Rhodesian settler community was more egalitarian and not entirely reflective of the class-based British life. The minister of Internal Affairs, Hugh Beadle, told the Sons of England about the British foundations of white settler Rhodesia. He alluded that the preservation of the essentiality of the British character of Rhodesia and the reasonable standard of living of whites were two foundations of the country.⁵³

These ideals seemed axiomatic but there was pressure on the government to introduce measures that might encroach on them. Southern Rhodesian legislators designed the Aliens Act of 1946 as a way of preserving the colony's British background. Beadle assured the Lodge that since 1946 the immigration of aliens had been limited annually to 8 per cent of the number of British immigrations who entered the colony.⁵⁴ Periodic movements for admitting larger numbers of central Europeans and Italian peasants for the colony's economic progress were not sufficient for justifying the dilution of Rhodesian white values. Officials reasoned that the influx of non-British immigrants had the potential of lowering standards of living in the colony.⁵⁵ However, this was an exaggeration: officials conveniently excluded other white immigrants because of their cultural heritage regardless of their socio-economic status.

Rhodesian officials were not willing to accept immigrants looking for jobs, to avoid the problem of unemployed whites. The country needed white immigrants able to start their own private business. The *Rhodesian Recorder*, a monthly magazine concerned with industrial development in the country, in an exaggerated manner alluded to this fantasy: 'Rhodesia is outstandingly a place where you can get on your own, in preference to getting into a job. People taking risks quite the opposite to the socialistic doctrine of so-called "security" built up the British Empire'.⁵⁶ This comment captures differences between Rhodesia and the post-war British welfare state. The industrial community further advocated for more thrift and entrepreneurial settlers to immigrate into the colony. 'We do not want too many cotton-wool people in Rhodesia. . . . We need all talented folk who are thinking of settling here. . . . Rhodesia is one of the last bastions of private enterprise'.⁵⁷ The idea of attracting only talented whites and framing Rhodesia as the last bastion of private enterprise is telling of the rhetoric of settler pride. Certainly, this was an exaggeration cushioned in settler nationalism and quite opposite of the economic realities in the country. Rhodesian whites prejudiced job seeking immigrants as soft-handed and lazy because it was against the settler projection of a hardworking community. Desirable white immigrants were supposed to bring skills and money to invest in the country or establish branches in Rhodesia from overcrowded British industries.⁵⁸ The idea was that this type of white immigrant would lead to the economic development of the country. White immigrants who could not take care of themselves were undesirable as they had the potential to offset established white standards within the Rhodesian settler community.

Immigration of other "undesirable" whites

During the Federation years, Salisbury, the Federal capital, attracted the most immigrants including the so-called undesirable white immigrants because it offered more opportunities. In the 1950s, the largest groups of undesirable alien whites were Italian, Portuguese and Greek.⁵⁹ Soon after the Second World War, Greece was plunged into serious economic challenges leading to the exodus of many people looking for economic opportunities and the country was

steeped in poverty in the 1960s.⁶⁰ The Federation attracted Italian, Portuguese and Greek immigrants who were seeking economic opportunities. Because they were non-British and were looking for economic opportunities, Federal authorities considered them to be undesirable. Non-British immigrants for the years 1955–56 constituted 12 per cent of the total white immigration, though only 10 per cent were considered to be desirable.⁶¹ This meant that 2 per cent of the total number of white migrants were non-British undesirable immigrants, which was quite significant and the majority of them chose to settle in Southern Rhodesia.

There were particular worries within the Selection Board over Italians who opened firms and businesses in the Federation and employed their own nationals.⁶² The state wanted to attract investment in the Federation and limit the numbers of the so-called alien immigrants. Interestingly, even if Italians belonged to the wealthy classes, their cultural background made them undesirable. The Board encountered difficulties when non-British firms registered, acquired premises and engaged staff from outside Rhodesia to apply for residence permits.⁶³ Officials wanted firms to employ Rhodesian settlers before engaging Italians, Portuguese, Greeks and other white immigrants.

The construction of the Kariba Dam in the 1950s exposed race and class tensions in Southern Rhodesia as the presence of Italians caused uneasiness amongst the pro-British settlers of the colony. The project itself was a source of settler pride because of its size and engineering achievement, seen to demonstrate white civilisation and progress in the region. As Julia Tischler writes, the fact that the Federation awarded an Italian construction firm the tender to construct the Kariba Dam generated much tension in Rhodesia and it was a metropolitan problem. 'It exposed colonial patronage as being incompatible with "free-market" modernisation, probing British motives behind post-war development and contributing to the ideological deconstruction of the Empire'.⁶⁴ Rhodesian whites did not embrace the presence of southern Europeans whom they looked down upon as belonging to inferior cultural heritage. Their white skin and race were not enough to be on equal terms with British and English-speaking settlers in the country. Their class made them undesirable despite the fact that they were Europeans and not Africans.

However, it was not only during the construction of the Kariba Dam that race and class tensions were exposed within the white Rhodesian community. Perceptions about Italians continued to surface in racial partnership politics associated with the Federation period in Rhodesia. The overtly British white Rhodesians perceived Italians as "poor" whites. Their presence in the country would therefore dilute the perceived Britishness and moral standards of Rhodesian white society. Some Rhodesians called Italians and Greeks, as the novelist Doris Lessing states, "wops and dagos" or even worse "scum of the earth".⁶⁵ Their white skins were not sufficient as a cultural asset, even when placed in contrast with Africans. Lessing recalls one Rhodesian liberal white saying, 'I do not mind being considered the equal of an educated African, but I object to any dregs from Europe being my equal simply because they have

white skins'.⁶⁶ In this case, undesirability was quite an arbitrary and fluid concept that the state deliberately applied to include and exclude other white categories.

The Rhodesian business community perceived that non-British artisans accepted lower rates which was in direct contrast to established settler standards associated with advanced skills and higher wages. Rhodesian whites questioned the possibility of assimilating Italians who were willing to accept lower standards against the accepted settler status.⁶⁷ There was no legislation restricting the proportion of alien to British employees and firms took advantage of this situation. This led to the formation of clusters of non-British nationals and Rhodesian settlers who felt that this had the potential of diluting and endangering their imagined white standards and the Britishness of Southern Rhodesia. Moreover, the situation disadvantaged British subjects in the country who felt entitled to available job opportunities. Selection Boards could refuse issuing permits to aliens if there were unemployed British white artisans available in the country.⁶⁸ Overall this was not helpful as some alien firms were prepared to do without rather than employ British artisans. In 1958, the Rhodesia chief industrial officer compiled a list of 73 firms giving names of building contractors in Salisbury who employed aliens. Twenty firms employed only alien artisans and the remaining forty employed a mix, although aliens were predominant.⁶⁹ This was in relation to the official desire to populate the country with British settlers. In the existing circumstances of poor employment prospects, there were fewer British immigrants willing to migrate to the Federation. In Britain and South Africa, most people in the occupational categories from which the Federation obtained its immigrants enjoyed a high standard of living.⁷⁰ These countries also demanded their services and no one risked being unemployed. As a result, this forced firms to hire cheaper and readily available white artisans.

Another factor worrying officials was that many foreign migrants had left their families behind, especially Italians working on the railways. This brought substantial demand for family reunion that had a great impact on the number of permits issued to aliens and irked officials when some of them used their social networks to bring in their relatives and friends.⁷¹ After the war, Italy faced economic challenges and hence many Italians abroad saw no reason for going back home. Some had lost contact and roots with home after spending many years in other parts of the world and wanted to stay in Southern Rhodesia or other territories in the Federation. After the promulgation of the Aliens Act in September 1946, by 1949 the Alien Immigrants Selection Board approved 148 applications from Italians.⁷² The Board received a steady stream of applications for permits from Italians living in such places as Egypt, Abyssinia, Eritrea and Somaliland because in these territories colonial rule was ending, triggering political and economic uncertainty.

The Inter-Governmental Committee for European Migration (ICEM) was responsible for bringing most of the undesirable whites into the country employed by the Rhodesian railways. Because of their cultural and national affinities, they tended to stick together in little enclaves because they entered the

country in batches, infuriating Rhodesian whites concerned with the preservation of a British settler colony. Rhodesian settlers were also a minority mainly made up of immigrants but could not tolerate other white categories because of colonial class, ethnic, political and moral prejudices. In December 1955, the first batch of Greeks employed by the railways faced objection from their British colleagues.⁷³ However, this apparently subsided because the numerically smaller and politically weaker Greeks did not retaliate. Rhodesian whites showed initial objection and resentment for working with Greeks because of language difficulties and prejudices related to unhygienic habits.⁷⁴ Rhodesian whites associated whiteness with settler privileges, higher wages, white-collar jobs, hygiene and comfortable living conditions above those of Africans. Tischler argues that in a society founded on immense inequalities between the black majority and the white minority, settlers vehemently defended these privileges.⁷⁵ Rhodesian settlers dominated the African majority using discriminative legislations in all aspects of life. As a result, settlers wanted to protect these colonial privileges and could not tolerate whites who seemed to lower these standards.

The following examples demonstrate that Rhodesian settlers conflated racial boundaries with acceptable moral conduct to ascribe undesirability to non-British immigrants. During the Anglo-Rhodesia steel project, the presence of Italian workers disgusted Rhodesian officials. The minister of Interior, Hugh Beadle, declared that an influx of Italians were living almost on the level as Africans.⁷⁶ The Italian ambassador was anxious to dissuade the Rhodesian government from retracting their approval from the scheme to employ Italian labour. The Foreign Office was anxious to see this project progressing well to ease Italy's economic challenges and population problems, thereby diminishing the spread of communism in Italy. It would certainly be unfortunate, to the British Foreign Office officials, to abandon the project purely because of any prejudice against Italians on the part of the Southern Rhodesian government.⁷⁷ The parochialism of Southern Rhodesian settlers towards other whites had the potential of tarnishing British-Italian relations in the post-war years. Identity politics amplified by the classification of other white groups as undesirable had definite political implications. Although it was anxious for the deal to work, the Foreign Office did not want to endanger the general immigration policy of Southern Rhodesia. In similar circumstances, the Rhodesian railways which employed Italian plate layers expected them be able to read, write and speak English in order to be able to understand instructions.⁷⁸ Italians supervised Africans in the railways; therefore, it was mandatory for them to present settler self-image as respectable white masters. The Rhodesian government could not expect the railways to employ Italians holding extreme political views at variance with the democratic principles observed in British territories.⁷⁹ Since they worked with Africans, there were fears that radical or fascist-minded Italians would influence Africans to disrespect authorities and question the settler government.

The proximity of colonial Mozambique in the east allowed for Portuguese artisans and "chancers" to infiltrate into the Federation looking for employment.⁸⁰ By calling Portuguese artisans "chancers", Rhodesian settlers perceived

these immigrants to be of poor class by their white standards. This resulted in many Portuguese entering the building industry and competing with white British artisans. Since Portuguese artisans looked for cheap employment, this was an aberration to established white views. Industrial officials complained about the alleged conduct and indecent behaviour of Portuguese workers considered inappropriate with regards to perceived white moral purity. Because of their numbers, Portuguese immigrants formed their own communities, which made assimilation impossible. Officials noted that their social contacts were Asians, coloured and African prostitutes, *shebeens* (unlicensed drinking establishments) and that they generally lived in squalid conditions and standards lower than that of Africans.⁸¹ In colonial Mozambique, sexual intercourse between African women and Portuguese men was not strictly prohibited, unlike in Southern Rhodesia. Marc Epprecht points out that 'Sea kaffirs' (Portuguese), carrying a reputation of sexual indiscipline from Mozambique, were especially worrisome to respectable Southern Rhodesians.⁸² Industrial officials complained that Portuguese immigrants deliberately broke every industrial law and were allegedly prepared to work under uncomfortable conditions, which a local white Rhodesian artisan would not tolerate.⁸³ Allison Shutt and Tony King show that old settlers wanted to present a picture of Southern Rhodesia as a white man's colony where whites could achieve a higher standard of living than elsewhere.⁸⁴

Another example of where unacceptable moral behaviour translated to undesirability is the case of Portuguese Joao Filipe Viegas. In February 1956, a member of the Criminal Investigation Department cautioned him after he harassed a 21-year-old white woman. Another white woman accused Viegas of constantly following her around Bulawayo, pestering her and abducting her nineteen-year-old daughter.⁸⁵ In August 1956, there were complaints that Viegas was having an affair with a young coloured woman. In the opinion of the senior Social Welfare Officer, Viegas was wrecking what was otherwise a happy marriage, prompting his deportation.⁸⁶ In addition, officials classified four Greeks as undesirable residents for homosexual practices, all of whom were firefighters on the Rhodesian Railways.⁸⁷ In the early 1950s, a popular culture of intolerance against homosexuality coalesced in a less explicit but equally repressive form in Southern Rhodesia.⁸⁸ The appearance of homosexuality within the Rhodesian settler community with its celebrated masculinity and machismo was unacceptable. The masculinity was associated with 'hard-drinking, womanising, laughing-in-the-face-of danger, at-ease-in-the-*bundu* (wilderness) and with Africans'.⁸⁹ Yet the state encountered difficulties and embarrassment when southern European whites with different sexual views entered the country in the post-war years. It was also difficult to ascertain one's undesirability in terms of sexual conduct; these are circumstances that officials tried to rectify by deporting individuals accused of indecent behaviours.

Rhodesian officials accepted immigrants with criminal records in their previous country of residence or who were involved in unlawful acts. However, some whites with criminal records entered Rhodesia as holiday makers under circumstances which the state could not detect. In 1953, Manuel Madeira De

Faria entered the country on a holiday visit but did not declare his previous crimes in Mozambique. The government deferred his application for a residence permit when he admitted to two convictions in Lourenço Marques for assaulting Africans.⁹⁰ In May 1955, when it appeared he was likely to become destitute, he admitted upon enquiry that he also had a conviction of robbery in Beira.⁹¹ De Faria was a serial criminal but he managed to enter Rhodesia, exposing the colonial state's porous borders. Later on, authorities were able to track his criminal record and deported him back to Mozambique as an undesirable immigrant. Even more embarrassing were cases of laziness portrayed by certain whites. For instance, the case of Joao Salgado Ferreira who entered the country on 9 November 1954. Employers dismissed him for laziness shortly after taking employment, prompting him to travel around the country accepting casual employment.⁹² This was an embarrassment to the acclaimed settler picture, as Shutt writes, of a hardworking class of whites determined to develop their country who could even work in their homes despite having mostly African servants.⁹³ When he was later joined by his wife – three months pregnant by Ferreira's brother – and three children, his marital relationship came under strain. He left his children alone in dirty and unkempt conditions, completely neglected by their parents.⁹⁴ In 1956, the government deemed him undesirable and he was deported on grounds of his morals and ethical conduct not resonating with Rhodesian settler social standards.

The case of Jose Joao provides another illustrative example. Following his entry into Southern Rhodesia in 1953, the courts had convicted him for threatening violence, possession of an unlicensed firearm and ammunition without a permit. Against established white standards, he lived in squalor in an African compound, habitually consorting with African women for sexual intercourse.⁹⁵ When he entered the country, officials could not ascertain his behaviour leading to his deportation as an undesirable white immigrant in a situation where moral and criminal accusations overlapped. In 1956, the courts convicted Fernando Moreira Malia of assault occasioning bodily harm and allegedly living with a pregnant coloured woman.⁹⁶ Arguably, there were other whites involved in such acts but these could not attract the states' attention because they probably belonged to a cultural category that was deemed acceptable. In 1955, the government declared Joaquim Antonio De Lemos as a prohibited immigrant and he returned to Lourenço Marques. He re-entered Rhodesia, worked as an insurance agent, and ran an informal employment bureau at Bulawayo before it came to the notice of the Immigration Authorities.⁹⁷ Later, the police arrested him for secretly recruiting and importing Portuguese artisans, charging exorbitant recruitment fees.⁹⁸ The government deported him because of his criminal activities and for circumventing the authorities. Another Italian, Luigi Grillo, faced 42 days' imprisonment for three counts of theft. He stole money totalling £22, 10 from a fellow railway employee, and the government declared him as undesirable and a prohibited immigrant.⁹⁹ In another case, the Ministry of Home Affairs was perturbed to learn that L. P. Pafitis, a Cypriot, had been illegally resident in the Federation for five years without officials' notice.¹⁰⁰ These

cases go to show that Rhodesian settlers wanted to project an image of a law abiding community.

In some instances, class was central in defining immigrants as undesirable without placing emphasis on race. For example, in June 1956, two Greek plasterers and one Italian carpenter arrived in Gwelo. Officials reported that the carpenter was of a reasonable standard but the Greeks failed badly.¹⁰¹ One of the Greeks found work so strange that his hands blistered the first day and he eventually worked as a learner supervisor on the railways.¹⁰² At the same time, another Greek plasterer arrived in Fort Victoria and his lack of ability was such that the ICEM representative removed him and put him on a day's trial with a Gwelo firm. The result of the trial was that the employer was prepared to continue his employment on the same conditions as the trial, that is, without payment of wages.¹⁰³ The ICEM local representative then asked MacDonald Construction Ltd. to employ him and suggested, as an inducement, that they could pay him less than the minimum of the building agreement. Again at Fort Victoria, officials found an African helping a Greek plumber where he had gone wrong in making a sheet metal downpipe. On being informed, the employer was not too concerned and stated, 'these chaps are grafters and I can kick them around which is more than I can do to the Britisher'.¹⁰⁴ This quotation suggests that Greek workers were less white since employers could beat them just like Africans without any problem. They could not do this to British artisans who could sue them or even publicise the incident in the newspapers. It would be unfair to condemn the artisan in this case as there were very few countries where the plumber was required to do sheet metal work; he might have been quite a good plumber. It would have been acceptable if the Greek was the one showing the African where he had gone wrong, or at least would have preserved the white settler image.

Disobeying superiors at work, especially in front of Africans, also qualified white immigrants as undesirable. The cases discussed here demonstrate how ethical conduct at work and moral questions rendered other white groups as undesirable. Authorities defined the Italian Elio Jugovaz as undesirable because of his alleged unbecoming conduct in the work place. According to officials, Jugovaz was purposely obstructive in his work, subversive in his speech, rebellious against discipline and incited others to adopt an indifferent attitude towards work.¹⁰⁵ Indeed, officials did not expect his conduct in front of Africans and the government severely reprimanded him, he lost his salary and he was eventually deported. Likewise, Pavlos Nikiforakis, a Greek, commenced work on 30 December 1955, as firefighter at the Rhodesian railways. Authorities made some enquiries regarding a delay in a shunting engine where Nikiforakis worked, resulting in him receiving two severe reprimands for absence from duty.¹⁰⁶ He also got a wage reduction for fifty-two days for absence from work. He agitated for his release from the railways and allegedly used the administration as a means to enter the Federation. The government eventually deported him on 14 September 1956 as an undesirable character showing negligence while on duty.

Despite these fears, decolonisation on the African continent had some immediate undesired effects. The country received large numbers of immigrants from Mozambique and Angola in 1975 following the end of Portuguese colonial rule in those countries.¹⁰⁷ Immediately after Belgium granted the Congo independence in 1960, the new country was plunged into civil war that had a psychological impact on Rhodesian whites.¹⁰⁸ It created a sense of white solidarity against African nationalism. David Coltart's family hosted Belgian refugees, and he recalled they 'told harrowing tales of what was happening in the Congo . . . the spectre of thousands of Belgian refugees in their country had a profound effect on the mind sets of white Southern Rhodesians'.¹⁰⁹ In 1960, there were bloody riots in Southern Rhodesia as blacks protested against the colonial state's racist policies. Because of these insecurities, white solidarities, conservatism and rightwing extremism surfaced in Southern Rhodesia. The coming into power of the Rhodesian Front in 1962 and the subsequent hostilities between blacks and the settler regime had lasting effects. The fear of African nationalism forced Rhodesian settlers to embrace previously undesirable whites. However, the Rhodesian Front declared other whites as prohibited immigrants for political reasons in the 1970s. The period after the UDI ushered in a different historical moment in Rhodesian settler colonialism and significantly altered patterns of white migration. It marked a turning point of race relations in the country as armed confrontation between blacks and whites that lasted until 1979, with the dawn of the country's independence in 1980.

Conclusion

Southern Rhodesian officials considered some of the British immigrants who entered the colony in the immediate post-war years as undesirable and of the poor type. Inasmuch as the country was desperate to attract more British settlers of the "right type", the opposite happened. Colonial bureaucrats and industrial officials complained about lazy, "cotton-wool" type of whites flooding the country. The net effect of this was significant as far as the social and political terrain of the colony was concerned. Their liberal ideas were often less compatible with Rhodesian racial boundaries. However, this was not a permanent situation as some of them switched to right-wing conservatism in the later years. Being a British immigrant was not sufficient justification to claim desirable status in Rhodesian settler society's constructions of whiteness, respectability and identity politics. Claims to desirability called for more than just a legitimate claim to British cultural extraction. Class and acceptable moral conduct were essential aspects in the definition of desirability. The deportation of individuals classified as undesirable demonstrates the heterogeneity and divisions prevailing within the Rhodesian settler community before the political instabilities of the 1960s and 1970s. However, whiteness tended to conceal internal tensions within the Rhodesian settler community. However, this is not enough reason to justify settler colonialism by showing that some whites were undesirable, trash or poor. Whatever the case, indeed, whites enjoyed better material benefits than Africans.

The state was afraid that the so-called undesirable whites had the potential to upset the ambiguous British way of life in the colony and dilute the self-built settler image. The Rhodesian settler community projected an image of a striving society, commanding respect and supremacy over Africans. The government expected post-war white immigrants to maintain this image associated with material privileges, respectability, good behaviour and acceptable social conduct. The presence of the so-called white immigrants and subsequent state action to police their alleged social conduct reveals more about the Rhodesian settler perceptions and prejudice towards other whites. Moreover, undesirability was an economic, political and social state-engineered and sanctioned category of identity. Immigration officials acted as classification officers of class categorisation and as gatekeepers against the penetration of undesirable whites in the country. While Rhodesian immigration officials worked hard to weed out the so-called undesirable whites, they were not always successful in carrying out their mission. The fact that unwanted white individuals entered the country exposes the porosity of colonial borders and immigration policies. On paper, Rhodesian immigration policies were selective, yet in practice undesirable white characters slipped into the country.

Undesirability was a fluid and contested category encompassing prejudice, unacceptable moral behaviours, extreme political views and class as well as criminality. The state arbitrarily applied the term *undesirable* depending on economic and political developments in the country. In describing both British and non-British white immigrants as undesirable, the Rhodesian settler community conflated class, race, cultural and ethnic aspects under different circumstances. The overlapping of these facets stretched the definition and usage of the term arbitrarily. Arguably, immigration officers' personal opinions and the ever shifting economic and political terrain of Rhodesia at any given moment altered the meaning of white undesirability.

Notes

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- 4 Mlambo, 'Some are More White Than Others', 139–160.
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- 6 Good, 'Settler Colonialism in Rhodesia', 10–36; Watts, 'Killing Kith and Kin', 382–415; Murphy, 'An Intricate and Distasteful Subject', 746–777.
- 7 Hancock and Godwin, *Rhodesians Never Die*.
- 8 Brownell, 'The Hole in Rhodesia's Bucket', 591–610; Brownell, *The Collapse of Rhodesia*.
- 9 Constantine, 'British Emigration to the Empire-Commonwealth', 25; Cavell, 'The Imperial Race and the Immigration Sieve', 346.
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- 11 Schutz, 'Political Change in Rhodesia', 24.
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- 46 TNA, DO, 35/4831, Deportation of Charles Taylor, 28 July 1954.
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