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UNIVERSITY OF THE WITWATERSRAND

A F R I C A N S T U D I E S I N S T I T U T E

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Title: 'Jezebels', Good Girls and Mine Married Quarters: Johannesburg, 1912.

by: Kathy Eales

No. 245

Sixty thousand black men were employed in 1912 as domestic servants on the Witwatersrand.1 Most white women disdained this 'Kaffir work' and in Johannesburg, there were less than 5 000 black women.2 Thus black men performed the tasks in white homes conventionally seen as women's work. "When I realise the extent to which this dangerous practice is carried, and the fewness of the complaints arising out of it," noted a contemporary observer, "I only marvel at the honour and faithfulness of the black man."3

Yet, in that same year, Johannesburg was wracked by white hysteria following two incidents of brutal rape of white women by black men within fourteen months.4 Black male sexuality became the focus among whites of a more generalised fear of disorder, popularly termed 'the black peril', and 'house-boys' were made the butt of public prurience.5 No woman was deemed safe from their 'passions', and expectant fathers were said to mutter, "Thank God it's a boy" when their wives gave birth to sons.6 Clearly a safer - female - substitute was called for, yet most employers were reluctant to draw on the small pool of black women living in the city, whom they deemed unreliable and immoral. Consequently, many black women had difficulty finding formal paid employment and turned to the trade in illicit liquor and sex to subsist. This vindicated white employers' assumptions that black women were immoral and perpetuated the dominance of black men in domestic service. This chapter will explore these themes in more detail, and from there, review both white and black attempts to set the terms on which black women lived and worked in Johannesburg.

The women whose morals ostensibly offended Johannesburg's white citizens were most conspicuous in settlements along the city's southern periphery. Here Johannesburg's suburban boundary was defined from west

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1 Central Archives Depot, Pretoria (hereafter CAD), Evidence before the Commission appointed to Enquire into Assaults on Women, 1912, K373, (hereafter EAC), Verbatim evidence of Stephen Black, Attorney, Johannesburg, p.35

2 EAC, Statement by the Witwatersrand Church Council, p.4; Union Government, Third Census of the Population of South Africa, 3.5.1921, UG40-'21, Pretoria, 1924, p.62

3 Quoted in 'Report of Commission VI: The Black Peril', in 'Fourth General Missionary Conference', The Christian Express, 1.8.1912, p.127.

4 See Charles van Onselen, 'The Witches of Suburbia: domestic service on the Witwatersrand, 1890-1914', in his Studies in the Social and Economic History of the Witwatersrand, 1886-1914, Volume II: New Nineveh, (Ravan Press, Johannesburg, 1982), p. 50, and pp. 45-60 passim.

5 For a comprehensive account, see Charles van Onselen, 'The Witches of Suburbia', pp.1-73.

6 EAC, William Houston, Secretary of the White Protection League, Johannesburg, p.25.

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to east by a swathe of mine properties which effectively sealed the edge of township sprawl. Mine-held surface rights ruled out the erection of permanent public structures on mining land, but this land was not left fallow. Within the municipal area alone in 1908 there were eleven mining locations, where small clusters of squatters set up iron huts and shanties within easy reach of the mines.7 In addition to these were locations on mine property run by labour agents who sub-contracted labourers for work on the mines.8

Mine authorities were ambivalent in their tolerance of mine locations before 1908.9 More specifically, the more profitable, stable mines - such as Crown Mines - offering reasonable food and accommodation could afford to do without the locations and their attendant problems of drunkenness and lapses in productivity. On the older, smaller mines, the locations served as bait for labour.10 These shanty locations met the demand for family accommodation at no immediate cost to employers and, moreover, helped counter the high turnover of migrants and foster a more stable, skilled workforce. Indeed, "coloured" and certain categories of skilled workers refused to live in the compounds.11 Secondly, compound managers on some of the more marginal mines were happy to turn a blind eye to the prostitution and liquor selling carried on close by as they realised that without easy access to these amenities, their poorly paid and poorly housed compound workers would leave and seek work elsewhere. In particular, plentiful liquor was seen as an inducement to Mozambican workers who were prized because of the long contracts they were prepared to sign and notorious for their large liquor consumption.12 Thirdly, given the huge all-male population of the mines, mine locations were seen as a powerful prophylactic against 'incidents of Black Peril' - or rape of white women. Mine officials commonly referred to these settlements as 'outlets' for the 'passions' of black workers,13 and in this regard mine married quarters were seen as being of advantage to white women as they buffered black women between the mines and the city's white suburbs.14

Opponents of these 'irregular' locations - primarily missionary bodies and police - based their case on the conditions of depravity and vice

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7 Transvaal Intermediate Archives [TIA], Johannesburg City Health Archives, SGJ 173, 'Irregular Locations', 'List of Irregular Locations in and around Johannesburg Mines', 14.2.1908.
8 EAC, AM Mostert, Labour contractor, Johannesburg, p.15; EAC, WA Terry, Native Affairs Department, Boksburg, p. 5
9 For a fuller discussion see Sean Moroney, 'Married Quarters on the Mines', in S Marks and R Rathbone, Industrialisation and Social Change, Longmans, London, 1982.
10 EAC, Rev C B Hamilton, Transvaal Missionary Society, p.50.
11 SGJ 173, 'Irregular Locations', Mines Sanitation Inspector to Medical Officer of Health, Johannesburg, 23.1.1908.
12 Charles van Onselen, 'Randlords and Rotgut: 1886-1903', in his Studies, Volume 1, pp. 51-2.
13 EAC, George Devenish, Compound Manager, Robinson Deep Mine, p.19
14 EAC, Superintendant BB Betts, Pretoria Police, p.26

said to prevail there. Black women who brewed beer, prostituted themselves and spread diseases were held responsible. In addition, they were said to support 'Kaffir loafers' and passless men on the proceeds of their illicit earnings.15

TABLE I: PARTIAL LIST OF IRREGULAR LOCATIONS IN AND AROUND JOHANNESBURG, 1907 16

Name	Pop	Where	Pass	Dr	LO	Raids	Galls
Crown Deep	80	3kms E of Langlaagte	5	9	2	5	4 000
George Goch	300	3kms E of Jeppe	81		31	4	5 600
Henry Nourse	80	Near Denver	13		2	10	5 000
Langlaagte United	100	Nr Langl. Village		1	2	5	4 250
Newclare Wash	50	3kms N.W. of Langl.	22		1	3	2 500
Robinson	40	4kms E of Langlaagte	3	8	3	5	4 700
Wolhuter	400	2kms E of Jeppe	9		14	5	4 355

KEY: Pop=Population; Pass=Pass Offences; Dr=Arrests for Drunkenness; LO=1902 Liquor Ordinance contraventions; Galls=Gallons KB seized.

This led the Chief of the Rand's Criminal Investigation Department to assert in early 1908 - a time of economic depression - that the locations were 'hotbeds of native crime':

> They are practically under no supervision and are the haunts of native criminals and illicit liquor runners, native prostitutes and other abominations, and their removal would considerably increase the safety of the public on the Rand.17

This was not the first time the police had complained about liquor and vice in the vicinity of the mines on the grounds that it strained further an already over-extended police force. But this time, February 1908, their complaints met with a sympathetic response from the Chamber of Mines. The need for inducements, like mining locations, to attract workers to the mines was easing. In the train of a series of natural disasters across the regiono - cattle disease, drought and a plague of locusts - came a steady stream of migrants in search of work. Early in March representatives of the police, health officials and the Chamber met and resolved to abolish all locations on mine property with the exception of mine married quarters. They resolved further that every woman living in those quarters should hold an identification ticket, signed by the compound manager, as proof of her right to reside there.18 Within months most mining locations had been demolished 19, but there is

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15 SGJ, 173, 'Irregular Locations', Mines Sanitation Inspector to MOH, Johannesburg, 23.1.1908; and see Moroney, Married quarters on the Mines', p.263

16 Ibid., 'List of Irregular Locations in and around Johannesburg, 1907'

17 Ibid., Chief Inspector CID to Medical Officer of Health, Johannesburg, 13.12.1907.

18 Ibid, Minutes of Meeting of CID, MOH and Transvaal Chamber of Mines, 10.3.1908.

19 Moroney, 'Married quarters', p.263

no evidence that the second part of the resolution - regulating women - was ever implemented.

Mine married quarters, present on most mines, then took over the function of the former locations. Generally more permanent structures than location shanties, the married quarters were officially provided for workers whose skills the mine wanted to retain, for example in the blacksmith's or carpenter's shop.20 On some mines, though, any employee who could find a room and afford the rent - anything from six shillings to a pound a month - was accommodated.21 No woman could rent a room in her own right there, and so most lived there ostensibly as wives.22 A large number were not married to the men they lived with,23 although very often these 'wives' were in fact relatives living with their sons or brothers.24 Mine married quarters retained the stigma of the earlier settlements, though. As a major inquiry into conditions on the mines reported in 1914,

> while there are cases of reputable and respectable natives living there, there is no doubt that many of the women there are not, in any sense, the wives of the men with whom they are living, but are mere temporary concubines, often locally picked up, who contribute to the household the proceeds of liquor selling and prostitution.25

In this regard, most officials seemed to view the difference between mine locations and married quarters as largely semantic.

Most of the men living in these mine settlements were from Mozambique or the Eastern Cape and Transkei.26 This echoed the two major sources of mine labour in the period, both of them areas characterised by colonial penetration, political fragmentation and cattle disease.27 Between 1905 and 1912, 87 000 Mozambican men who went to work in SA did not return.28 Yet despite the large number of Mozambicans who settled

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20 EAC, WA Terry, Native Affairs Department, Boksburg, p.5
21 EAC, Godfrey Hook, Compound Manager, East Rand Proprietary Mine, p.2; Union Government, Report of the Native Grievances Inquiry, UG37-1914, p.18
22 EAC, GB Hook, p.2
23 Statistics vary from 50 to 90%; CAD, Evidence before the Natives Grievances Enquiry, 1912, K358 (hereafter ENGC), Theodora Williams, p.10; EAC, GB Hook, p.1.
24 ENGC, Theodora Williams, p.10

25 Union Government, Report of the Native Grievances Inquiry, 1914 [UG37-'14], p.18
26 EAC, WA Terry, p.5; SGJ 173, 'Irregular Locations', Mines Sanitation Inspector to Medical Officer of Health, Johannesburg, 23.1.1908.
27 See Patrick Harries, 'Kinship, ideology and the nature of pre-colonial labour migration: labour migration from the Delagoa Bay hinterland to South Africa, up to 1895', in Marks and Rathbone, Industrialisation and Social Change; Colin Bundy, The Rise and Fall of the South African Peasantry, (Heinemann, London, 1979), especially Ch. 4;
28 Sherilynn Young, 'Fertility and Famine: Women's Agricultural History in Southern Mozambique', in R Palmer and N Parsons (eds), The Roots of Rural Poverty in Central and Southern Africa, Heinemann, London, 1977, p. 75.

and raised families in towns and locations along the Rand, there were relatively few Mozambican women among them before the Twenties.29 In the face of repeated crop failures, erratic rains and pandemic cattle diseases in the first two decades of the century, the relatively late migration of Mozambican women suggests the enormous resilience of traditional authority systems which constrained the mobility of women. Indeed, many miners on the Rand who wanted sexual relationships with a partner also from the East Coast found solace not in women, but in young Mozambican men.30 One may speculate that such relationships were conducted partly as a conscious defence by migrant men against permanent settlement on the Rand with women resident there.31

It would seem that the majority of women living in the mine married quarters came from the Cape, particularly the Eastern Cape and Transkei. Most had made their way to the Reef independently of a spouse or male relative and, broadly speaking, fell into two categories: those coming to join their husbands or lovers, and those leaving their parents and families in the Eastern Cape to find work on the Rand. The latter category predominated, and is particularly significant given the penetration of missionary teachings in the region.32 Several studies have demonstrated the role played by missionaries in undermining traditional authority structures, and, in particular, in attacking non-Christian perceptions of the role and status of women.33 Most girls who had had access to even the most rudimentary mission education were better educated than their parents, and this was possibly a factor in explaining the widespread complaints among parents about the breakdown in their authority. Said one Keiskammahoek missionary, 'From fourteen or fifteen, the girls are not amenable to discipline, and take to wandering about the country. .. The girls go now in large numbers to the towns.'34 It was apparently quite common for women to find

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29 The 1911 census cited 340 Mozambique-born women in the Transvaal, but by 1921 the figure had soared above 2 000. See Debbie Gaitskell, 'Laundry, Liquor and 'Playing Ladyish': African women in Johannesburg 1903-1939', unpublished seminar paper, SOAS, June 1978, p.2; The Star, 23.4.1921, and see correspondence in CAD, Archives of the Secretary for Native Affairs (hereafter NTS), NTS 1169 File 57/333, 1920.

30 EAC, AJ Hoffman, p. 39; EAC, AM Mostert, pp. 19, 20; EAC, HM Taberer, p.25.

31 Dunbar Moodie raises this issue in his paper, 'Migrancy and male sexuality on the South African gold mines', presented at the 1987 History Workshop, University of the Witwtersrand, pp. 11-12.

32 See EAC, comments by Rev and Mrs Charles Taberer, missionaries at Keiskammahoek, p.13.

33 Deborah Gaitskell, 'Wailing for Purity': prayer unions, African mothes and adolescent daughters, 1912-1940' in Marks and Rathbone (eds.), Industrialisation and Social Change in South Africa, p.338; Graeme Simpson, 'Christian peasants and politics in the Rustenburg district in the early Twentieth Century', unpublished seminar paper, Wits University History Department, 23.10.1986, pp.25-27.

34 EAC, Rev C. Taberer, pp. 13, 20

domestic work in the small towns of the Eastern Cape and, of those, a small number took the train to the Rand.35

Aside from the effects of missionary interventions on individual women, the most overt factor explaining the large number of Xhosa women on the Rand was the series of natural disasters in the Transkei and Eastern Cape during and after the 1890s which impoverished tens of thousands of African families in the region. Rinderpest decimated 70 to 80% of cattle in the Transkei and Ciskei in the late 1890s, crops failed utterly in 1903 following drought, and from 1910 East Coast Fever pauperised many families weakened by earlier crises.36 By 1911 over 80 000 Transkei men were working outside the territory on migrant labour contracts, and in 1912 the chief magistrate reported that it had become 'usual rather than rare' for Xhosa migrants to 'go out regularly each year', and that 'thousands went twice a year.'37 There are no statistics to show the number of Xhosa men who renewed their contracts and stayed on the Rand, but the evidence suggests there were many. "Having lost my cattle," explained one Transkeian man in 1913, "there is no tie to keep me there. My home is my work, and I should like to have my wife and children with me at my work."38 Many sent for their wives and accommodated them as best they could at their place of work.39

There were at least two further aspects of migrancy which led women to the Rand, and both related specifically to the natural disasters of the period. Impoverishment of peasant farmers through cattle disease and/or crop failure increased the incidence of debt amongst them, and increased their dependence on cash wages and migrancy.40 Men who abandoned their families for the Reef thus left them with few resources for taxes or possibly even food. Reef officials reported in 1912 that a large number of women were coming to the Reef to find their husbands, or at least collect money from them for taxes.41 A second consequence of major cattle disease was the effect it had on marriage in a society where bridewealth was measured in cattle. Young men wanting to marry either made their lobola payments in cash or sheep and goats, both of which devalued the symbolic exchange, or they had to work for longer as migrants to raise the lobola payments.42 The consequent marriage was frequently less secure, or it was delayed, or it was post-poned indefinitely - all of which could be humiliating to the woman involved.43

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35 EAC, John Tengo Jabavu, p. 11; EAC, Montague St.V Erskine, p. 47
36 Bundy, Rise and Fall, pp. 124-25
37 Quoted by Bundy, Ibid., p. 125
38 Quoted in Union Government, Report of Economic Commission, (UG12-'14), p.36.
39 See correspondence in CAD, Archives of the Government Native Labour Bureau (hereafter GNLB), GNLB 284, 'Destitute women'.
40 Bundy, Rise and Fall, p. 124.
41 EAC, WA King, Sub Commissioner, Native Affairs Department, Pretoria, p.16
42 A E Gifillan, East Coast Fever regulations inspector, King Williams' Town, EAC, p. 13
43 Phillip Bonner raises a similar issue in relation to Sotho women, in his '"Desirable or Undesirable Sotho women?" Liquor, prostitution and the migration of Sotho women to the Rand, 1920-1945', unpublished paper presented at an ASI seminar, April 1988, pp. 19-21

This could explain in part the origin of the 'fallen women' of the mining quarters who had been abandoned by their husbands, or come to look for their lovers.

There was no public shelter or 'home' where women arriving in Johannesburg could stay, and unless they had friends or relatives in the area and knew how to find them, their choice of accommodation was limited.44 'Often the girls arrive at night on the train, " explained a missionary:

> There is no-one to meet them, and they know no-one. They perhaps meet a native and he says, 'you can come and sleep at my place.' In that way she finds an easier way of making a living than working.km 45

There was a dearth of jobs in domestic service for women, and even fewer offered habitable accommodation. If contemporary missionary reports are to be believed, the consequence of this hard fact was that the streets of Johannesburg were strewn with the bodies of fallen women. "90% of native girls in the locations fall into sin," asserted one correspondent in a survey among missionaries on 'Native Girls in Town' while a more pessimistic colleague felt 99% was more accurate.46 The consensus seems to have been that 'most of the Native girls who go to the towns fall; those who do not go altogether wrong, deteriorate.'47

These notions of 'temptation', 'immorality' and 'fallen women' belonged to a moral universe far removed from the exigencies of subsistence of black women in urban areas. As used by moralists, 'immorality' was a broad term, covering activities as divese as sex outside of marriage and liquor selling. Given their virtual exclusion from the labour market, it is not surprising that many women drew on 'immoral' resources like liquor-brewing skills and sex to survive. And for these commodities, the mines were a key market.

Women gained access to the mine married quarters with little difficulty provided they were willing to set up household with a male tenant. Provided accommodation was available, any man able to provide evidence of a wife - however tenuous - was permitted to leave the cramped squalid confines of the all-male compounds and settle in married quarters.48 An anecdote recounted by a member of the Transvaal Missionary Society, one of the largest agencies ministering to mineworkers, illustrates this:

> A woman came a little time ago and stood in the front door and said to the induna, "I should like a husband," and he said, "All right, there is a man looking for a wife." And the boy

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44 'Report of Commission V: Native Girls in Towns', in Fourth General Missionary Conference of South Africa, Cape Town, July 1912, p.73
45 EAC, Amos Burnet, Wesleyan Methodist Church, Johannesburg, p. 16
46 'Native Girls in Towns', in Fourth General Missionary Conference, p.74.
47 Ibid.
48 EAC, GB Hook, p. 2

> took her to the compound manager and swore she was his wife, and that they had been married in the Colony. She was then allowed to go into the compound ...49

In return for accommodation, women provided domestic and sexual services. Some of these women were little more than prostitutes who sold their favours and beer-brewing skills to the highest bidder, often for a week or two at a time.50 Others were labelled concubines by white officials, but there is little in the evidence to suggest they bore any resemblance to the 'passive sexual playthings' conventionally associated with the term. They were neither wives nor prostitutes, and, moreover often made a significant contribution to the 'household' through liquor or laundrywork earnings.51 Although these categories were far from fixed, a third major category of relationship was discerned by observors - women formally married to the men with whom they lived. They made up a third to a half of the female population of the married quarters.52

Liquor selling appears to have been the most pervasive source of income among women in the married quarters. Mineworkers were rarely paid more than £3 a month, and even compound managers conceded that it was 'ridiculous' to imagine that a couple could live on that sum once the rent had been taken care off.53 Some women took in washing - often the laundry of a white miner living nearby - but it was demanding work and poorly paid.54 Selling beer, though, a woman could make up to £10 a month.55

Contemporaries distinguished between three types of liquor supplied to Africans on the Rand: 'European' liquor (wines and spirits), 'Kaffir Beer' or sorghum beer, and concoctions such as khali and skokiaan. African women had a virtual monopoly in concoctions, but traded in all three. An elaborate illicit liquor nexus traversed the Rand, and despite prohibition, no African wanting liquor and able to pay for it was ever deprived of it. In fact WNLA's Medical Officer of Health claimed to believe liquor was available so freely that it was not possible to guarantee that a labourer on the Rand would be sober for fifteen minutes at a time.56 Black women agents were particularly valued by white dealers, because police convention forbade the use of women to entrap suspected dealers.57 Dealers thus believed women to be fairly

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49 EAC, Rev C B Hamilton, p. 50
50 EAC, WA Terry, pp. 4, 5.
51 The closest English equivalent is 'lover', with less emphasis on the term's romantic component. 'Nyatsi', a non-gender specific seSotho term current from the 1930s is more accurate and less perjorative than concubine.
52 EAC, Sylvester K McKenzie, Compound manager at Crown Mines, p. 29
53 EAC, GB Hook, p.2
54 Ibid.
55 EAC, WA Terry, p.22
56 Transvaal Province, Report of the Mining Regulations Commission, 1914, Evidence of GA Turner, MOH, WNLA, p.166
57 EAC, George Devenish, Compound Manager, Robinson Deep, p.19.

reliable intermediaries, and both parties seem to have gone to great lengths to maintain a constant supply of liquor to their customers. George Devenish, compound manager at Robinson Deep, told of one example of their ingenuity:

> A police boy brought a whole lot of women before me, and asked me if I saw anything wrong with them. I said, "Nothing." He said they had all got babies tied up behind their backs, and asked me to have a look at them. Each one had a dozen bottles tied up, and they had a little head made like that of a baby on top.

His anecdote ended with the recurrent litany - 'the women are the source of all the trouble ...'58

Concession stores on the mines were an integral link in the liquor trade, although very few actually traded in liquor. Their conventional trade was so easy and their profits allegedly so huge that few needed to risk their trading licenses when they could do an even larger trade openly selling the ingredients for home-brews.59 These ingredients - malt, pearl barley, semolina, sugar, syrup, yeast, bread and so on - were freely available in the stores, yet mine officials promptly confiscated them when found in the possession of Africans. No action was ever taken against the storekeepers.60 This was particularly ironic given that malted sorghum was used exclusively for making sorghum beer - illegal in Transvaal towns - and in fact, germinating and preparing the grain was one of the most laborious and conspicuous aspects of brewing. After soaking the grain in water for three or four days, it had to be drained and left for a week to sprout. Then it was spread out on dry, sunny for about three days and when completely dry, it was ground.61 In Johannesburg this thankless task had been commercialised by astute entrepreneurs, who, needless to say, were not prosecuted for their troubles either.62 This led a senior city Native Affairs' official to observe wryly that 'the chief reason so many Native women make a living by the 'Kaffir Beer' traffic is because of the facilities they have for procuring the malt ready ground.'63

Apart from 'Kaffir Beer', khali and skokiaan were the two most common drinks made by African women. Skokiaan, made primarily from syrup and yeast, could be brewed in three or four hours, and khali was ready for consumption in an hour. Where every minute of exposure increased brewers' vulnerability to police inspection, the time required for preparation was not insignificant. Khali was made from the roots of a crushed root, ntsema64, which was added to golden syrup and sugar. The

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58 Ibid.
59 EAC, WA Terry, p.23
60 NTS 45, File 2427, 'Excessive brewing of Khali', F. Meyer to Major H S Kirkpatrick, Boksburg Police, ?.?.1913.
61 Naboth Mokgatle, The Autobiography of an Unknown South African, (University of California Press, Berkeley, 1971), p. 21.
62 GNLB 136, File 2756/13/54, Sub Native Commissioner, Witwatersrand, to the Director of Native Labour, Johannesburg, 24.10.1914.
63 Ibid.
64 Raphionacme Divaricate, Family Asclephiadaccae

concoction looked like thin white mud and although 'fiercely' intoxicating, its alcohol content - 3.7% - was relatively low.65 At a pound a cup the powder was not cheap, especially as three to four cupfuls were needed for a five gallon mix, but it could be used repeatedly in quick succession with potent effect.66

Once prepared, the beverage was hidden until called for, often in drums buried underground. Other methods of concealment were as effective:

> If you did not know, you would never think of the ways they do it. About six months ago I knew there was something going on, but I could not find out exactly, but at last I found one boy had a bed with four big pipes as the frame and in each of these pipes he had a tube, or tin, which fitted the pipe. These were all filled, not with 'Kaffir Beer', but with quali.67

Peak trading days for the brewers were the miners' day off, Sunday, and payday, generally a Tuesday, but as compound managers were obliged to issue passes to mineworkers who had finished their shifts by 3 pm and wanted to leave the compound, every day was potentially a working day for women who wanted the business.68

These activities had several important consequences. Firstly, mine married quarters were regarded by many of Johannesburg's citizens as second only to Gomorrah in depravity. The immediate result of the abundance of liquor was drunkenness, manifest in absenteeism and reduced productivity; City Deep Mine blamed liquor for its 17% drop in tonnage hauled on Mondays. More serious were the long term effects noted by mine officials: 'raw natives' acquired a taste for liquor, became debauched, squandered their earnings and went home with little to show for their labours but VD. Altruism had little to do with this observation; at least some mine managers were aware that it was not wise to antagonise the traditional authorities who wielded much power over potential migrants.69 However, without women on the property and liquor on tap, the stability of a marginal mine's labour complement might be jeopardised. Consequently, the men responsible for conditions and discipline in the mine married quarters, the compound managers, often took a pragmatic middle view and generally left control in the hands of an induna.70

More alarming to white Johannesburg than the vagaries of the labour market was the impact of liquor on crime. Liquor was responsible for 80% of crimes of violence amongst the native and coloured population,

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65 Union Government, Report of the Mining Regulations Commisson, Evidence of G A Turner, p. 166; EAC, George Devenish, p. 20.
66 EAC, Devenish, p.20
67 Ibid.; see also ENGC, Joseph Winter, Compound Manager, Langlaagte Compound Manager, p. 26.
68 Ibid.
69 GNLB 136, 2756/13/54, Manager of City Deep to the Secretary, Rand Mines, 21.1.1920.
70 EAC, Rev CB Hamilton, Transvaal Missionary Society, p.50

claimed the Union's Chief Commissioner of Police, and it allegedly aroused their 'erotic instincts'.71 The reason for this was their lowly position in the Great Chain of Being:

> Natives need little to become inflamed with passion. They have purely the passions and appetites of the lower animal and once excited, they will if possible find a vent. Very little is needed to inflame such passions, and that very little is supplied by liquor ...72

This 'fact' was enormously important in discussions on how to curb 'the black peril'.

The upshot of this thinking was that all black women living in mine married quarters were assumed to be sexually promiscuous liquor sellers, and it was a stereotype which tainted black women in Johannesburg as a whole. A Native Affairs Department expressed his feelings bluntly:

> As regards the women, if I had my own way I should sweep the whole lot out from one end of the Reef to the other, and I would not have mine locations at all.73

He believed strongly a 'better class of women' would not emerge in Johannesburg until the Rand, as a whole, was swept clean.74

The status quo in mine married quarters came under particular scrutiny following a number of highly-publicised assaults on white women by black men in 1911 and 1912. Liquor was commonly believed to inflame the passions of black men and induce them to prey on white women, and the mines, as the largest single employer of black men on the Rand, were assumed by the general public to be the obvious refuge of dangerous criminals and sex fiends. So great was the level of public hysteria generated by the 'black peril' scare that the Rand Daily Mail mounted a massive petition campaign calling for government action to reduce the perils of the Rand.75 One result of this was a major commission of inquiry, appointed to investigate the whole issue of assaults on women. While the commission formally exonerated mineworkers from all suspicion, the evidence led by numerous witnesses suggests that married quarters, and particularly the 'undesirable women' who lived in them, were commonly seen as a major contributor of the 'black peril' problem. The General Missionary Conference of the Church of England went so far as to 'earnestly request' the Chamber of Mines to abolish the 'so-called "married quarters"'.76

The major charge leveled at married quarters was that they fostered depravity. The availability of liquor there roused the passions of

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71 Quoted in Union Government, Report of the Commission Appointed to Enquire into Assaults on Women, (UG34-'13), 1913, p.15.
72 EAC, Sub-Inspector William J Clark-Kennedy, Transvaal Police, Johannesburg, p.13.
73 EAC, WA Terry, p.5.
74 Ibid, p.20.
75 Charles van Onselen, 'The Witches of Suburbia', p.50
76 'A memo to the Chamber of Mines', in The Christian Express, 1.8.1912, p.126.

mineworkers, whose thoughts then turned to sex. The prevalence of prostitutes eroded the simple mineworker's moral fibre, and 'if a man has once got the idea rooted in his mind, he will not be content with what he gets freely. He passes on to debarred ground.'77 Secondly, 'these women' supported 'kaffir loafers' on their immoral earnings, and as these men could then remain beyond the clutches of pass officials and police, they inevitably drifted into a life of crime.78 Thirdly, these women were said to encourage men to stay longer on the mines and sever ties with their rural kin. This broke down 'tribal discipline' and gave rise to 'the detribalised native' who had 'no wish to return to his kraal'. He, too, would turn to crime.79 An inordinate share of the responsibility for conditions in the married quarters was placed at the door of the women who lived there.80

Having side-stepped any taint of culpability for conditions in the married quarters or their consequences, the Chamber of Mines went on to take full advantage of the situation. It laid all blame for the rapes at the door of the 'house-boy', and proposed his replacement with black women:

> When the land is crying out for able-bodied natives, and the farmers cannot get them, it seems to me wrong that we should have 60-70 000 natives employed in work which women ought to be doing.81

This statement, made by a lawyer acting for the Chamber, was a cheap bid for the favour of farmers. It was also an amended version of a statement made weeks before in tandem with the Johannesburg Municipality and Chamber of Commerce. Then 'the agriculturalists and mines alike' had been crying out for labour.82 In 1911 the mines had spent heavily on recruitment to stave off a serious cheap labour shortage,83 but by 1912 East Coast Fever had tipped the balance for many marginal subsistence farmers and the labour shortage eased. But the mines could not afford to be complacent yet about their labour complement.

There was a further benefit to employers should a substitute be found for the house-boy. Black female replacements would be cheaper to their

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77 EAC, Rev D D Tywakadi of the Undenominational Native Minister's Association, p.32
78 Ibid.
79 WA Terry, EAC, p.19
80 In this regard, liquor was a convenient red herring often used to displace criticism of the ill-effects of migrant labour on men. See EAC, 'Statement of Evidence of the Transvaal Chamber of Mines', where the Chamber flatly denied that long periods of separation from wives and families had any effect on the morale of workers, and claimed that 'demoralisation', 'unnatural vice' and the 'breakdown in tribal discipline' were solely attributable to liquor.
81 EAC, SC Black, p.38.
82 'Joint Statement of the Municipality, Chamber of Commerce and the Chamber of Mines', 12.10.1912, appended to the evidence of SC Black, p. 9.
83 EAC, AM Mostert, Labour contractor, Johannesburg, p. 26.

individual employers, and would also help lower the cost of labour on the Rand. The reason for this was that 'house-boys'' wages - £3 to £5 a month - were believed to rule the labour market, and by contemporary standards, 'house-boys' were paid well.84

The Assaults Commission's findings endorsed the Chamber's views, and, arguing that 'propinquity bred familiarity', concluded that the major cause of assaults on white women on the Rand lay indeed with 'the 'house-boy'system'. However, noted the commission's chair, before the 'house-boy' could be done away with, an adequate substitute was required.85 At the time, there was no apparent alternative available in the right number or at the right price. Labour recruiters in the Eastern Cape, meanwhile, had been quick to respond to public apprehension about house-boys, and, flouting regulations which forbade the recruitment of African women, had consigned several hundred to the Rand's domestic labour market by late 1912.86 Once on the Rand, though, few women remained long in service as it seems the majority fell foul of prevailing white prejudice which typecast them as unreliable and immoral.87 To counter this prejudice, the commission proposed a scheme to make black women more attractive to potential employers through a combination of formal training in domestic skills and accommodation in 'homes' to ensure chastity.88 If the 'right kind of girl' was available, it was hoped that employers would hire black women and 'the'house-boy'problem' would quietly ease away.

This emphasis on domestic training for women was ironic. Black mothers trained their daughters - not their sons - from childhood in the basics of household work, yet very few of the 70 000 black men at work in white Transvaal kitchens had ever had any such training. Admittedly, some of the Zulu-speaking 'house-boys' were apprenticed in Natal kitchens and young Pedis on farms and in small towns before coming to the Rand, but this was probably true for many women too.89 Formal training, per se, was obviously not the issue. More significant was the fact that men carried passes and women did not.

The pass laws provided employers with a rough legal framework in which to hire, fire, discipline and identify their employees. Very simply, the pass laws tied workers into wage labour contracts for a minimum of a month at a time. If they broke this contract or absconded, their passes made them easier to trace - in principle at least - and when

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84 EAC, William Houston, p.32
85 EAC, P A Bell, comment by the chairman, p.12
86 EAC, Montague Erskine, labour recruiter based in King William's Town, p. 47; EAC, Mesach Pelem, Queenstown labour agent, p.22
87 EAC, WA Terry, p.22; MC Bruce to the Editor, The Star, 10.12.1908; see also EAC, WA King, p. 16
88 Union Government, Report of the Commission Appointed to Enquire into Assaults on Women, p. 28, paragraphs 134-138.
89 EAC, HM Taberer, p.15; Van Onselen, 'The Witches of Suburbia', p. 18; Suzanne Gordon, A Talent for Tomorrow: Life Stories of South African Servants, (Ravan Press, Johannesburg, 1985), p.4.

found, their misconduct was recorded on the pass. Employers had no such hold over women:

> You hire her this morning, and she may sleep on your premises one night, but she may take it into her head to walk away the next day... If the Transvaal housewife is given some hold on the girl, it would be quite different. She would not mind the trouble of training the girl, but as it is today, I would not take the trouble. I would much rather take an untrained kaffirboy .. I feel sure of him for at least the month.90

Apart from withholding wages, there was no way to compel women to remain in service, and if they deserted, there was little chance of finding them as there were few legislative constraints on their mobility.

Passes served also as a certificate of good health as all men were medically examined before being issued with a pass, and those found to have venereal or other diseases were sent for treatment.91 Employers had no such safeguards when employing women and, given the widespread belief amongst them that blacks were riddled with VD and could spread the disease through impersonal contact, many whites were genuinely scared to hire anyone who had not been screened.92 Their fears were fuelled by a comprehensive medical survey in 1907 which had revealed that syphilis was indeed endemic in certain areas of the north-western Transvaal, in precisely those areas from which migrant labourers had been drawn to the early diamond diggings in Kimberley.93 In Johannesburg, too, VD was spreading, amongst both blacks and whites, but it was black women - not men - who were blamed when members of white households showed signs of the disease.94 Compounding these prejudices was a peculiar form of racism which portrayed black women as lascivious savages who corrupted white children and enticed white men.95 The result was that employers preferred not to employ black women.

The flipside of these perceptions of black women's morality was black parents' concern for their daughters' well-being. To many who had never seen the city, Johannesburg was apparently synonymous with the Rand's mines, and given the latter's reputation for depravity, few parents volunteered their daughters for the city and many actively prevented them from going.96

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90 EAC, aside by a member of the commission, Mrs Faure, during the testimony of HM Taberer, p. 15

91 EAC, Dr Thomas Gilchrist, Johannesburg's District Surgeon, p. 31; WA King, Pretoria NAD, p. 17

92 See, for example, CAD, Pretoria Municipal Archives, MPA 3/195, Sub-Native Commissioner, Pretoria, to the Town Clerk, Pretoria, 15.12.1911, and the Town Clerk, Pretoria, to the Provincial Secretary, Pretoria, 1.3.1912. Thanks to Michelle Friedman for this reference.

93 Transvaal Colony, Report of the Contagious Diseases Commission, (Lagden), 1907, pp.13-15.

94 See, for example, EAC, G A Mulligan, Solicitor, Johannesburg, p.3

95 EAC, WH Poulteney, Secretary of the Witwatersrand Agricultural Society, p.21

96 EAC, Rev Charles Taberer, p.20

The perceived dangers of the city were partly real, partly imagined, and partly a mask for the perpetuation of controls which denied women their autonomy. A very real danger for women in Johannesburg lay in their accommodation, which, particularly for blacks, was in short supply and expensive. Police Captain HF Trew expressed the point succinctly: 'She is not protected, she is not looked after, and she goes to the bad very soon.'97 Boarding houses simply did not cater for black women, and there were few homes and no hostels where women arriving on their own could stay.98 If a woman did not have relatives or friends, she had to make do with what she could find.

The shelters offered to domestics were often worse than anything they could afford or choose themselves, yet many accepted the backyard hovel, hut or kitchen corner offered them. Nor did these options necessarily offere much physical security, and rape or seduction by a master, boarder or fellow-servant was not uncommon.99 Black women, in fact, had little protection against sexual harassment or worse from white men, either in practice or in law. Transvaal law - prompted by the activities of white prostitutes - barred sex between black men and white women on the grounds that it was degrading for white women,100 but black women were given no comparable protection from white men despite the superior power and influence used by them to coerce black women to have sex with them.101 Similarly, very few white men were ever convicted of raping black women despite massive evidence indicating how widespread such attacks were.102 Where white women were per-

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97 EAC, Captain HF Trew, Pretoria, p.25
98 'Report of Commission V: Native Girls in Towns', in Fourth General Missionary Conference of South Africa, Cape Town, 1912, pp.73-4.
99 EAC, Dr W B Rubusana, MPC, p. 23
100 Charles van Onselen, 'Prostitutes and Proletarians, 1886-1914' in his Studies in the Social and Economic History of the Witwatersrand, Vol 1, New Babylon, Ravan, 1982, pp 139-140.
101 For example, the rape of a black woman by the Kroonstad Location Superintendent, 1911 - see EAC, Rev DD Tywakadi of the Undenominational Native Ministers' Association, p. 32; see also EAC, Theophilus Shepstone, Cape Town, pp. 2-4; EAC, William Houston of the White Protection League, Johannesburg, p.28; 'Report on the Fourth General Missionary Conference', in The Christian Express, 1.8.1912, p.127.
102 Ibid. Many contemporary opinions of the issue are chilling. WH Poultenoy, for example, Secretary of the Witwatersrand Agricultural Society, believed that black 'girls are so utterly loose that there is practically no occasion for their rape.' [EAC, p.2] Comments like this inspired Sol Plaatje to respond:

> The partiality of the law makes it almost impossible for an outraged native to prove an ugly charge against a white man; and so white men who rape native women are almost invariably allowed to go unpunished. I was present in Court one day when a white youth was tried for criminal assault upon a respectable married native woman. Of course, he was acquitted. After the trial, I heard a shopkeeper accost a juryman and enquire about the result. The juryman said: "He -d the poor woman right enough, but it would have been a shame to send him to prison for that." "Good!" exclaimed the shopkeeper, "Shake hands."

['The Mote and the Beam', reprinted in English in Africa, Vol 3:2, p.88]

ceived by officials as sexually vulnerable, black women were not. It seems they were seen as fair game or prostitutes - and the courts rarely intervened.

Not all incidents of 'immorality' on the part of black women were involuntary, and their parents were acutely aware of this. They might not have gone so far as to agree with the Native Affairs official who claimed 'practically the only pleasure allowed them now is fornication'103, but there was general parental unease over employers' lack of supervision of their daughters' leisure hours.104 Much parental criticism was informed by resentment of 'European law' which recognised the legal majority of all women over 21 - instead of the customary perpetual minority.105 This, claimed several witnesses before the Assaults Commission, explained both the reluctance of parents to allow their daughters into the cities, and the 'fall' of those who got there as 'it gives the female power to say she is going to do what she likes, which is illegal according to native law.'106 Perpetual minority, on the other hand, 'would put the girls in their right places'.107 The significance of this was that many 'respectable parents' effectively barred their daughters from domestic work.108 This in turn gave rise to the presumption amongst many whites that no respectable parent would allow his or her daughter into service, and hence any woman seeking domestic work must, by definition, be immoral.109

Most black women who entered domestic service did so at a disadvantage. They had to contend with their employers' prejudices, poor accommodation, sexual harassment and, to add insult to injury, constant assumptions of immorality. Their wages and working conditions left much to be desired, too, as they were seen as a poor substitute for the Protean labours of 'house-boys'. At 15/- to £3 a month, women domestics were paid far less as their skills were valued less. And, notwithstanding the problems passes caused their holders, passless women were left without alternative protection or come-back from employers who exploited the absence of written contracts to change conditions of work and pay unfairly. Given these constraints, it is hardly surprising that many exploited the few openings available to them and left domestic service when it suited them.110

Employers' complaints of the unreliability and 'flightiness' of women domestics suggest these women did not accept ill-treatment without com-

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103 EAC, WA King, Pretoria, p. 17
104 EAC, Dr WB Rubusana, MPC, Cape Town, p.9
105 EAC, PA Bell, chief interpretor, Johannesburg Native Affairs Department, pp. 5-6.
106 Ibid., p. 6
107 Ibid, p. 12
108 EAC, PA Bell, p.5
109 EAC, Captain HF Trew, Pretoria Police, p. 25; EAC, WC Scully, p. 29
110 As did many men in domestic service. See C van Onselen, 'The Witches of Suburbia', p. 41.

plaint. In several respects, black female domestics in fact had the edge on their male counterparts. The implications of dismissal for a woman were not as severe as for a pass-bearing man whose dismissal and status as unemployed would be recorded on his pass, nor was there the same compulsion to find and accept work within six days. Although she was legally bound by the Master and Servants' Act, a woman who rejected her working conditions and left was rarely traced for prosecution. At another level, their frequent desertions suggest a refusal to knuckle-down to their employers' work rhythms. Most significantly, these indications of resistance suggest two possibilities: either they found their working conditions intolerable, or they had choices. Both, in combination, were probably true, and it is here that the option of liquor brewing resumes importance.

The route that led women from domestic service to liquor brewing was not necessarily downhill nor direct, and both resources could be managed in tandem. Two routes that stand out are both noteworthy in that they highlight the structural dependence of contemporary women on men. The first includes women who left paid domestic service for the conjugal attractions of white men. A 1911 police survey of two townships close to the mines - Turffontein and City and Suburban - found black women in over 500 white households who called themselves the wives of the white men living there.111 The area was largely working class, and one may assume the men were mostly miners. The majority of white miners were foreign-born, and few brought their wives or families with them to the Rand because they could be laid off from their work at 24 hours notice.112 As a result they formed relationships with local women, both black and white. Cynical observers claimed black women were preferred because their keep was cheaper and they demanded less,113 but a more likely reason was because formal marriage was out of the question as no marriage officer could officiate across the colour line. This gave rise, no doubt, to arrangements of mutual expedience, but the corollary was the number of black women said to have been abandoned by their former white spouses.114 Some then turned to liquor selling.115

A second, more common, route to the liquor trade was that taken by women who fell pregnant while in service. Unwanted pregnancies were a very real problem, given both the inadequacies of traditional methods of natural or barrier contraception and deficiencies in sex education among women raised under the taboos of missionary influence.116 Once pregnant, many who had chosen to live in town apart from their parents

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111 EAC, AJ Hoffman, p.21
112 EAC, Graham Cross, Assistant Magistrate, Johannesburg, p.22; EAC, WJ Clarke-Kennedy, Johannesburg, Transvaal Police, p.4.
113 EAC, WR Boustred, Mayor of Johannesburg, p.7
114 EAC, Graham Cross, p.22; EAC, JW Mushet, IOTT, Cape Town, p.2
115 EAC, Graham Cross, p. 22
116 Deborah Gaitskell, ''Wailing for Purity': prayer unions, African mother and adolescent daughters, 1912-1940', in Marks and Rathbone (eds), Industrialisation and Social Change, p. 340.

could not turn back to their families for material support nor call on their sanction to pressure a recalcitrant spouse into an honourable settlement. Many turned of necessity to the liquor trade as both brewing and selling liquor combined well with childcare. The case of a woman known to officials only as 'Maria' exemplifies this.117 Maria had abandoned her family in the Queenstown district and had come to the Rand where, by 1912, she was working as a domestic servant. She became involved with a man living in the married quarters of a nearby mine, and when she became pregnant by him, she left her job and joined him on the mine. Soon after the birth of their baby he absconded. Having run away from home, Maria was reluctant to return in disgrace and chose to remain on the mine. Why return to domestic service for 30/- or £2 a month when she could make £10 a month making beer? Yet it was a precarious existence, and as a Native Affairs official noted, her future on the mines was bleak:

> If a man gets tired of a woman he throws her away like an old coat and she is taken up by somebody else until she is at an age when she is decrepit and of no further use and she wastes away.118

In many ways, Maria's experiences exemplified black parents' worst fears of the perils their daughters faced in urban employment.

Not all women in Johannesburg seeking domestic employment came from beyond the Rand, and not all shared Maria's fate. Among Johannesburg's diverse black population was a small settled stratum in the town and at Klipspruit who tried, despite incredible odds, to forge lives that were dignified and 'correct'. At the apex of this small hierarchy were educated professional or clerical men. Socially beneath them were the men who worked in petty trade or as artisans and clerks, whose skills but not their wages raised them above the mass of working people. Raising families in the city on such wages was difficult enough, but when coupled with the material costs of their higher status - better clothes, better furnishings, better education - the need for added income was immense. Christian codes of temperance and respectability ruled out illicit liquor sales as a reputable supplement for most.119 This fact placed great pressure on the women in this grouping to go out to work, yet few could find work. 'All means whereby we could make our living are unsympathetically locked up', complained 123 Klipspruit women in a 1910 petition to the mayor for aid in finding employment.120 The service sector, virtually their only option, was dominated by men and beyond this was the prejudice of employers.121 Consequently,

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117 EAC, WA Terry, pp.22-3
118 EAC, WA Terry, p.4
119 RE Phillips, The Bantu in the City, Lovedale Press, 1938, pp.262-3
120 NTS 86, File 338/19/F164, Mrs Ellen Leeuw and 122 Native Women, 'Petition to His Worship the Mayor', 29.3.1910.
121 See also the comments of the Transvaal Native Council. For example:

> The spectacle of great hulking Zulus and other males nursing children and washing clothers, even to the monopoly of the washhouses and laundries, is an injustice to our females and a menace all round as it exposes the black females to poverty and the white females to undue familiarity and danger from molestation.

[EAC, Statement submitted by the TNC, p.47]

claimed Charlotte Maxeke, a prominent Transvaal Native Congress member social worker, i n 1918, 'many an honest girl and woman' had succumbed to selling liquor 'because she had nothing else to make her living from'.122

It was women in precisely this stratum whom church groups and administrators were most keen to thrust into domestic service. They were respectable, usually literate and came from 'good' homes - in marked contrast to the stereotyped immorality of women living outside formal employment on the mines and in town. What was needed was a means to distinguish the wheat from the chaff, to separate the good from the bad and prevent the corrupt from tainting the innocent. Essentially, white Johannesburg was calling for a pass law for women. In February 1912 the Transvaal Provincial Council obliged with a draft ordinance.123

Including black women in the pass laws was not a new idea in the Transvaal, and several attempts to do this had been made since 1903.124 These gained momentum in 1911 when a broad front of conservative white women's organisation - including the Ladies Temperance Union and the Vrouwen Federatie - put pressure on local authorities and Native Commissioners for help in transforming black women into a more reliable substitute for the 'house-boy'.125 The crudity of the 1912 pass proposals showed all the symptoms of a sketchy, expedient response to white public panic. Without further detail or sanction, the Draft Municipal Government Ordinance granted municipalities the power to compel 'native females' 'to register at the Native Pass Office, and before entering on domestic service to obtain from a doctor ... a certificate showing (inter alia) that they are free from contagious disease.'126 Registration would give pass officials the chance to screen all women coming to the city, record their particulars and, once duly certified, send them off in search of work. Through registration, commented an observer, officials 'could gradually eliminate the bad characters, because their characters would be known.'127

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122 C Maxeke, evidence before the Moffat Commission into the Pass Laws, quoted in D Gaitskell, 'Female Missionary Initiatives on the Rand, 1903-1936', unpublished University of London MA thesis, p. 151.
123 'Draft Ordinance to Consolidate and Amend the Law relating to Municipal Government in this Province and the establishment of Health Committees therein, and to provide for matters incidental thereto,' Transvaal Gazette, Volume V:96, 19.2.1912.
124 Significantly, proposals then had been prompted by traditional authorities' demands that women be restrained from leaving their homes at will, in sharp contrast to subsequent attempts by urban officials to prevent the ingress of women to the towns. See GNLB 281, File 458/17/D7, Correspondence between the Secretary for Native Affairs and various Native Comissioners on the Rand, 1903-4.
125 Mrs Brandt of the Central Standing Committee of Women's Organisations, quoted in RDM, 25.6.1912; EAC, Aside by Mrs Faure, a member of the commision, during the testimony of Captain Trew, p.25.
126 Sub-section 26 of Section 75, Draft Municipal Government Ordinance, RDM, 11.7.1912.
127 EAC, Rev CB Hamilton, Transvaal Missionary Society, p.27.

The ordinance was proposed as a check on women coming to town without the knowledge or permission of their families, and, in principle at least, runaway wives and daughters could be sent back home.128 More ominously, it presumed to define the terms on which black women lived in Johannesburg, and as such also constituted an attack on women living outside of formal marriage or employment. Black female liquor sellers, in particular, were a key target of the proposed pass controls, and the ordinance aimed to restrict this sector's growth. Prevailing popular wisdom linked liquor irrevocably with crime and black sexual assaults, and female liquor sellers with crime, by association, and prostitution. Hence women who sold liquor were the scape-goat for a number of social evils. They sold the liquor which stirred the passions of black men who assaulted white women; their promiscuity corrupted men, both black and white, and tempted white men to degrade themselves in miscegenation; and they tainted the good name of noble African womanhood which meant their more moral sisters had trouble finding work and so, caught in a vicious cycle, they too turned to vice.129 Above all, black female liquor sellers were deemed undesirable because they were not beholden to the labour market. They promoted a sub-culture in which illegality was not anathema, where hard work was not the sole alternative to starvation, and where some supported men who did not work.

The proposed ordinance prompted meetings of black women in Johannesburg and across the Reef where women resolved not to carry passes130. The Transvaal Native Congress, too, was adamant that 'their women folk shall not carry passes'131, yet when pressed for clarification of their stance by the Assaults Commission, TNC representatives made it clear they objected not so much to controls and registration, but to the real dangers women would be exposed if stopped by police and told to produce a pass.132 Indeed, there was virtual unanimity amongst all witnesses before the Commission on the need for some kind of 'protection' for women. Dissent came in deciding which form of control would be most effective, and who would administer it.

Employers wanted black women included in the pass laws on the premise that this would transform them into disciplined servants. Opponents of this plan - primarily church groups and black political organisations - objected on the grounds that pass checks would expose women to abuse by police. Their counter-proposals were premised on the assumption that

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128 EAC, Capt. H Trew, p. 26
129 See CAD, Records of the Pretoria Municipality, MPA 3/195, petition of the South African Women's Federation, and correspondence between the Sub-Native Commissioner, Pretoria, the Town Clerk, Pretoria, December 1911-March 1912. These perceptions also informed the evidence of the majority of witnesses before the Assaults Commission. See EAC, WR Boustred, Mayor of Johannesburg, pp14-15; EAC, WA Terry, pp. 19-20.
130 EAC, Rev CB Hamilton, p.25; EAC, Statement by the Transvaal Native Congress, p.47. These informants did not detail dates or venues.
131 EAC, Statement by the Transvaal Native Congress, p. 47.
132 EAC, S Noah, Transvaal Native Congress, pp. 53-4.

all black women needed guidance in guarding against the vices of white civilisation, and help in safe-guarding their morals. Under the rubric of 'protection' a number of schemes were devised.133 The most innocuous concerned 'hostels', where women would be accommodated, supervised, cloistered and trained by 'Christian matrons', and which would serve in addition as labour bureaux.134 Other suggestions were that no woman leave home without a letter showing she had her parents' permission to travel135; that runaway wives and daughters be spanked severely before being sent back home;136 that officials inspect urban locations frequently to ensure no unmarried women lived there unless under the charge of parents or guardians or in service 137; and that women in service be medically examined every time they changed job because 'if a native girl knew that every time she changed her employment she had to be examined, she would be much more careful about her behaviour.'138 If she had 'done what she should not have done', she would be sent back to her parents.139 Overall, it seemed the ordinance aimed to protect black women from their own 'fickle-minded passions.'140

There is no question that many women would have benefited from cheap accommodation, secure contracts and sheltered living, but as they stood, these schemes removed the element of choice. Moreover, the talk was in terms of 'protecting girls', a notion which stripped women of their adulthood and their right to make decisions for themselves. This, in fact was the bottom line: the retention of patriarchal power in its crudest guise - father over daughter, husband over wife and man over woman. Some rural black fathers complained they lost out on lobola or bogadi payments when their daughters left for town.141 Others resented the autonomy the city offered women which they would rarely find at home.142 Husbands whose wives had left them were handicapped when trying to go after their spouses, because the time men wasted getting a pass permitting them to travel often gave their wives several days headstart.143 Between the self-interest of whites wanting chaste, good girls as servants and the gender and generational con-

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133 See 'Report of Commission V: Native Girls in Towns', in Report of the Fourth General Missionary Conference, pp.73-77, passim.
134 For a fuller discussion, see D. Gaitskell, ''Christian Compounds for Girls': Church Hostels for African Women in Johannesburg, 1907-1970', unpublished History Workshop paper, University of the Witwatersrand, 1978, pp.4-6.
135 Witwatersrand Church Council and Transvaal Missionary Association proposals, RDM, 11.7.1912.
136 EAC, Capt H Trew, p.25
137 Witwatersrand Church Council and Transvaal Missionary Association proposals, RDM, 11.7.1912.
138 EAC, WA King, Sub Native Commissioner, Pretoria, p.17
139 Ibid, p.15.
140 EAC, George F Kuun, Berlin Missionary Station, Pietersburg, p.2
141 'Kumalo, John', in The James Stuart Archive, Vol 1., p.215. [Thanks to Carolyn Hamilton for this reference.]
142 EAC, PA Bell, p.6
143 EAC, Capt H Trew, p. 27

flicts among many blacks lay the expedience of white administrators who tried to exploit prevailing sentiment to bring urban women under control. The autonomy of black women was the trade-off.

The 1912 draft pass ordinance never passed into law. In mid-1912, an ad hoc 'Native Affairs Joint Committee' was formed to draft a submission to the Assaults commission. It comprised representatives of the Johannesburg Municipality, Chamber of Commerce and Chamber of Mines, and met three times.144 The result was a four page document - the most comprehensive statement on Native Affairs policy to date in the city - which focused on how best to purge the Witwatersrand of potentially criminal elements. It called for segregated locations under municipal control 145, single-sex barracks to accommodate daily togt labourers and far more stringent pass regulations to 'curtail the roaming propensities' of unemployed black men.146 Employment of black women in domestic service was to be encouraged, and accordingly the committee resolved:

> ... the question of including native females under the Pass Law was neither expedient nor necessary, as the enforcing of a native female Pass Law would be deeply resented by the natives all over South Africa, and would have a most prejudicial effect on our labour supplies.147

In part, the committee's decision was pragmatic. The Transvaal Native Congress had hinted at a strike of 'mine boys and other servants' if the pass proposals went ahead,148 and secondly, the committee probably realised that black women might respond by refusing to enter domestic service.

At a third level, the prominent Witwatersrand Church Council had predicted a 'rebellion among the natives' if the proposal was not withdrawn,149 and put forward two cogent arguments against a formal pass law. It was patently unfair to assert women needed passes to protect them from 'immorality' when the reason many 'fell' was because they were poor and unemployed - the victims of the prejudice of white employers who would not hire them. Furthermore, if 'protection' was indeed the motive, it was it absurd to put women in the power of black police - men who were notorious for alleged abuse and rape themselves.150 The Native Affairs Committee accepted these arguments and withheld its support for women's passes.

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144 EAC, SC Black, p.32
145 Recognition of the need to accommodate the city's non-migrant black population seems to have been motivated largely by the Chamber of Commerce, whose primary concern was to boost retail trade. See EAC, AF Robinson, President of the Johannesburg Chamber of Commerce, p.13
146 Addendum to evidence of SP Black, 'Statement by the Native Affairs Joint Committee', EAC, pp. f-h.
147 RDM, 21.8.1912; EAC, Addendum to the evidence of SP Black, p.g
148 Statement by the TNC, EAC, p. 47
149 Walter Scott, speaking for the Witwatersrand Church Council, quoted in the RDM, 26.6.1912.
150 Ibid.

The Church Council's successful use of the notion of women as victims raises a broader issue. Many women turned to illicit liquor trading because they could not find legal work that paid a living wage. The Klipspruit women who petitioned Johannesburg's mayor for the chance to work, for example, were striving to preserve their respectability. When ignored, many would have been thrust back into the grey zone of illegality from which strove to escape. As such they were the victims of a labour market which would not yet place them, and the victims of a legal code which defined as unlawful many of their alternatives, such as liquor selling. Yet one needs to practice caution in seeing black women who sold liquor just as victims, as that reduces them to the quiescent objects of prejudice and patriarchy. Part of the reason employers were reluctant to employ black women as domestics was because many women were reluctant to relinquish their autonomy on poor terms while other options remained open to them. They refused to submit either to long term labour contracts for poor pay and worse conditions, or household abuse and harassment. Instead of staying on the job to gain improvements through confrontation, they left - to take up options more lucrative, and in work that allowed them more latitude. Indeed, it is a poor reflection on the working conditions offered women that many chose to sell liquor and risk harassment and humiliation at the hands of police rather than endure the hardships of domestic service.

Given prevailing constraints on women's lives and activities, it is not surprising that a small courageous sector rebelled and set out to make their own way in the world. As black women in South Africa, 1912, they were subordinates in a society ranked by age, race and gender and were frequently rewarded for their boldness with hostility, slander and arrest. Despite the weight of 'European' law which recognised black women's legal majority once they were 21, it seems an adult black woman required a certified husband before she was no longer perceived as a 'girl'.151 Moreover, as popular wisdom deemed it improper that unmarried women should be in town without their parents, it comes as little surprise to discover prominent witnesses before the Assaults Commission called for parental surrogates. A Pretoria Sub-Native Commissioner felt black women should be placed under the 'fatherly protection' of pass officials, while a woman member of the commission's panel urged that female householders exercise maternal discipline over their women servants.152 Without formal guardians or husbands to vouch for their virtue, they were seen as moral contagion in need of restraint. Over and above the need to find a safe and reliable substitute for the'house-boy' and thereby temper incidents of black peril, was the desire, common to both black and white, to chasten women who stepped beyond the bounds of established patriarchy and flaunted their independence of spouse, father or employer.

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151 EAC, PA Bell, pp.6,13
152 EAC, Rev DD Tywakadi, Undenominational Native Ministers' Association, discussion with Mrs Fuller, pp.38-40.