

## **“The Future of White Africa”**

**A conference co-sponsored by:**

**The Center for Race and Ethnicity  
The Center for African Studies**

**Rutgers University  
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In the late 1990s, the Zimbabwean government of Robert Mugabe ordered hundreds of white farm families to vacate lands they had occupied for generations, thereby unleashing a wave of violence in the Zimbabwean countryside that threatens to dismantle one of the last bastions of white privilege on the continent. Coming as they did so closely on the heels of the end of apartheid and the election of a majority government in South Africa in 1994, the events in Zimbabwe beg the question of what the future holds for white Africa. Not since the end of the colonial period have white groups experienced such dramatic upheavals, or been forced to confront so directly what it means to be “white” and “African.” This conference is designed to explore how different groups of white Africans have responded to the challenge of finding a place for themselves in the rapidly shifting social landscape that is Africa today. Three paper presentations demonstrate that affected white populations have dealt with the threat and reality of displacement in very different ways: by staying put and renegotiating land claims and labor relations under new terms (Zimbabwe); by relocating on the continent in search of a “fresh start”, new economic opportunities and social mobility (South Africans in Tanzania); and by embarking on the path of serial migration in search of a “surrogate Africa” outside the continent (Angolans in Portugal and New Jersey). The paper presentations will be followed by a panel discussion exploring the future of white Africa in a variety of specific contexts in the region.

### **Paper presentations**

**Kimberly DaCosta Holton**  
**Associate Professor, Classical and Modern Languages and Literature**  
**Rutgers University – Newark**

#### **“Angola Dreaming: Portuguese *Retornados*’ Post-Colonial Migration”**

The Portuguese who left Africa following the Independence of Angola, Mozambique and Guinea Bissau in the mid 1970s numbered over half a million people, and their return to Europe produced a five percent increase in Portugal’s total population. According to Rui Pena Pires (2003) these repatriates, termed *retornados* (returnees), quickly became “invisible as a collective” within Portugal. He attributes this to *retornados*’ successful economic reintegration into Portuguese society, government policies which discouraged group mobilization, and the financial and emotional support of family in native towns. This paper examines the faction of *retornados* who refused to integrate back into

Portuguese society after leaving Angola, and instead moved to the US. Their life histories conflict with Pires' findings, as they demonstrate an unwavering identification with Angola, an experience of social rejection in Portugal, and an embrace of serial migration in search of a surrogate Africa. This essay examines the socio-political dynamics, affective ties, and personal decision-making processes which catalyzed a triangular migrational trajectory between Portugal, Angola and the United States.

**Richard A. Schroeder**  
**Associate Professor, Geography**  
**Rutgers University - New Brunswick**

**“White spots: South African capital and racialized enclaves in Tanzania”**

Over the past decade, South African corporations have acquired controlling interests in Tanzania's largest bank, the national airline, the national brewery, the national electric utility, major hotels, gold and gemstone mines, hunting and photographic safari companies, telecommunications links, agro-processing facilities, retail food and grocery outlets, and countless other smaller businesses offering South African goods and services. This rapid influx of South African capital has brought with it a sizable white South African neo-settler population, which has received a decidedly mixed reception, given Tanzania's history as a staunch frontline state opposed to apartheid. This paper explores the cultural, social and political-economic dynamics set in motion by these developments through an ethnographic examination of South African-owned and -managed production sites (mines, hunting companies, hotels, etc.), and social enclaves (e.g. a rugby club, hotels, bars, and restaurants) that cater to an almost exclusively white and largely South African clientele.

**David McDermott Hughes**  
**Associate Professor, Human Ecology**  
**Rutgers University – New Brunswick**

**“‘Playing the game’ on Zimbabwe’s white highlands”**

The violent occupations beginning in 2000 recast commercial farmers as colonial settlers. They subsequently tackled the “settler problem” almost single-handedly. More frequently, this issue remains unaddressed and unrecognized, as Gooder and Jacobs argue in their history of white Australians’ attitude towards aborigines. The dilemma centers on the way in which former supremacists re-insert themselves into contemporary societies espousing pluralism. In Australia, majority status renders this question one of idle speculation for most whites. Euro-Zimbabweans have never had that luxury. Under colonialism, they mostly dodged the settler problem, obsessing instead about “the native problem.” Even independence did not draw whites’ attention to their own social position. Only the farm invasions forced whites to see themselves at odd men and women out. Such a self-assessment did not guarantee continued access to the highveld, but, in some cases, it seemed to dampen the outrage and violence directed against them.

In the Virginia area of Mashonaland East, those who won this reprieve live among blacks, farm among blacks, and engage with blacks in a fashion unprecedented in the history of large-scale white agriculture. Those who remain in Virginia “play the game” of constantly negotiating with powerful blacks. That is to say, they inhabit a pluralist society – but without enjoyment. The murderers of Dave Stevens and other whites remain at large, liable to take up farms in Virginia or elsewhere. In private, Virginians fear, not just those individuals, but blacks in general. Although unsettling in an interview, such sentiments cause less material harm than one might fear. Euro-African prejudice no longer travels. Whites’ political and economic power barely extends beyond the farmhouse door. Moreover, farm-owners are getting along and forging economic relationships that allow themselves and their new neighbors to survive. Indeed, a certain social guardedness may help them to do so. If, as Paul Carter writes of Australia, boundaries are “place[s] of communicated difference,” then whites’ boundary-building represents a beginning, rather than an end. Hating the farmer next door is one way of acknowledging his presence. A deal across the fence – even an unfair one – locks whites and blacks into coordinated cultivation.

#### **Panel discussion**

**Julie Livingston, Dept. of History, Rutgers-New Brunswick**  
**Edward Ramsamy, Dept. of Africana Studies, Rutgers-New Brunswick**  
**Other panelists to be confirmed.**