CHAPTER 8

Absent white fathers: coloured identity in Zambia

by

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Colouredness in Zambia, formerly the British colony of Northern Rhodesia, needs to be understood within the context of a racist ideology that portrayed it in pathological terms as an identity fragmented between conflicting positive traits derived from its European ancestry and negative traits derived from its African lineage. Coloured people were thus viewed as racially degenerate, and despised as illegitimate. These attitudes were not exclusive to Zambia but common to the entire subcontinent, especially South Africa with its substantial coloured population. The Zambian experience differs from that of South Africa, however, in that the majority of Zambian coloureds are the descendants of colonial British men and African women, and that colonialism arrived relatively late with Zambia being colonised only towards the end of the 19th century. The Zambian coloured population is much smaller than South Africa’s. Zambia’s Population and Housing Census form for 2000 did not include a separate coloured classification. This exclusion by Zambia’s Central Statistics Office makes it difficult to evaluate how many people in Zambia currently identify as coloured. However, according to James Muzondidya, Zambia’s coloured population represents only 0.3 per cent of the national total.
The coloured presence in Zambia is a legacy of British colonialism and what I term the ‘absent white father’. The latter refers to the absence, or ambiguous presence, of white fathers’s names in public documents relating to their ‘mixed-race’ children. Historical records reveal the absence of white fathers’s names in public records relating to coloured children was, to a certain extent, encouraged by the Northern Rhodesian colonial administration. This is clearly demonstrated in a letter Tom Page, Member for the Eastern Electoral Area, wrote to the Secretary for Native Affairs advising him as follows:

Compulsory registration of births of coloured children with the names of the alleged fathers is open to serious abuse. I think that Native Authorities might be instructed to note and keep a record of the births of coloured children without any reference whatever to the fathers and also to keep a record of the deaths. Here again the enquiry might be made as to whether anything in this respect is being done in other countries which are faced with this problem.5

The ‘mixed-race’ presence in Northern Rhodesia and other parts of the British Empire was considered a source of great embarrassment and shame that needed special treatment.6 The absence of their fathers’ names in the public record meant that their coloured children were branded as illegitimate. This stigma resonates down to the present day and continues to have repercussions for Zambian coloured people. It, for example, creates difficulties for ‘mixed-race’ descendants of absent white fathers to claim political, social and legal rights – including the rights of inheritance and citizenship in the homeland of their European ancestors.

My interest in the nature of Zambian coloured identity was initially sparked by curiosity about my own family history because I am the descendant of a British adventurer, Dr Sidney Spencer ‘Kachalola’ Broomfield, celebrated as one of the pioneers of Northern Rhodesia. In the late 1920s, Broomfield mysteriously left Northern Rhodesia, abandoning his mixed-race children, who never learned why their father left or his fate. Broomfield’s behaviour was not uncommon, though. It reflects the experience of many Zambian coloured families.

The disavowal of mixed-race children by European fathers is a common characteristic of colonisation in other parts of Africa, Southeast Asia and Australia.7 In the Australian context, Fiona Probyn makes the point that ‘[w]hite fathers were disavowed and often the subject of public
and legal censure ... and at the same time, they were in a sense protected, monitored and sponsored by government policies which surrounded them.\textsuperscript{8} By these means, she explains, ‘white fathers were both agents of assimilation ... and irritants to segregation’. Probyn suggests that white fathers’ only contribution to their Aboriginal families was sanguineous, through the provision of their ‘blood’. Yet this act of miscegenation contributed to their own invisibility, their children’s visibility and, for many, their subsequent removal from Aboriginal society.\textsuperscript{9} By contrast, in the Zambian context, the visibility of white colonial fathers as pioneers, administrators and officials rendered their Anglo-African descendants invisible. Their children have been erased from the public record, history books and family genealogies. My interest in Zambian coloured identity was piqued by the way the original denial of paternity, or the abandonment of their families as in the case of Broomfield, by absent white fathers, impacted on the lives and identities of subsequent generations of their descendants.

In this study I use auto-ethnography as an analytical tool to situate my family history within the social experience of Zambia’s coloured community. Discussing auto-ethnographic films, Catherine Russell explains that ‘autobiography becomes ethnographic at the point where the film-maker understands his or her personal history to be implicated in larger social and historical processes’.\textsuperscript{10} Essentially, an auto-ethnographic text reveals the doubling coexistence of the collective and individual experience. Mary Louise Pratt (1992) makes the point that:

\begin{quote}
[i]f ethnographic texts are a means by which Europeans represent to themselves their (usually subjugated) others, auto-ethnographic texts are those the others construct in response to or in dialogue with those metropolitan representations.\textsuperscript{11}
\end{quote}

In other words, auto-ethnography is the autobiographical response of the subjugated to European or metropolitan representations.

Accordingly, I compare my family history to Broomfield’s autobiography and the archival and historical record of Zambia as a way of exploring the complexities of coloured identity in Zambia.

**Broomfield’s life**

When I first read *Kachalola or the Mighty Hunter*, the autobiography of Dr Sidney Spencer Broomfield,\textsuperscript{12} it was with the expectation that I would
discover both my ancestor’s background and his special legacy to me. It
came as a surprise that he did not acknowledge his family, and made no
mention of his children, white or mixed-race. Although in his private
life in Northern Rhodesia Broomfield openly acknowledged his Anglo-
African children, he did not do so in his public life. They do not appear
in his autobiography or even in his last will and testament.\textsuperscript{13}

Broomfield is my great-grandfather and his son, Stephen, fathered
my mother Nellie.\textsuperscript{14} Our family has limited information about my
grandfather Stephen’s mother, and my mother Nellie told me that her
father never spoke of her. Apparently, Kachalola removed his children
from their African mothers and took them to live with him on his farm.
My siblings and I were born, and lived the greater part of our lives, in
Zambia. My father, Francis Japhet Milner, was born in Nyati, Southern
Rhodesia in 1934. He was the offspring of a Lithuanian Jewish man,
Joseph Milner, and a Zulu woman, Esther Cele. My father migrated to
Northern Rhodesia in 1951, where he met and married my mother in
1956. We lived together in Zambia until his death and subsequent burial
in Chingola in 1986. In 1994, I migrated to Australia having married
an Australian national, Robert Thornton, whom I met in Zambia. Ten
months after arriving in Australia we relocated to Bangkok, where we
lived for four years. In 1998 we returned to Australia and settled in
Brisbane. Shortly after that, I solved the 70-year-old family mystery of
what happened to Broomfield – he died at the Royal Brisbane Hospital
on 24 October 1933 and was buried at Toowong Cemetery in Brisbane.

Broomfield states he was born in the south of England in July 1847
and that his mother died in childbirth on the day he was born. His death
certificate states he was born in Hampshire, England. Broomfield reveals
that when he was nine years old he was sent to London to live with his
father. He does not state with whom or where he lived until then. In
his writing, Broomfield presents himself as an intrepid transcontinental
traveller and adventurer. He claims that, after his first trip – to Africa in
1868 as a 21-year-old – he continued to travel, trade and explore the world
for an additional 66 years. His exploits took him as far afield as South
America, Southeast Asia, India, Ceylon, China, Australasia, the Dutch East
Indies, New Guinea, and East and South Central Africa. After extensive
travels in Australia, including a two-year-long overland trek from Victoria
to the Northern Territory, Broomfield’s decades of adventure and travel
abruptly ended with his death from pneumonia and cardiac failure.\textsuperscript{15}
Broomfield’s book provides a sparse family account. He does not mention any siblings, though he claims he inherited money from his mother when he came of age. He also states that he was estranged from his father. Broomfield presents himself and his family as wealthy. He implies that he studied medicine at Edinburgh University.\textsuperscript{16} After contacting numerous universities in Scotland and England, I have been unable to find any evidence to support this claim. However, W V Brelsford, a Northern Rhodesian administrator and academic, alleges that ‘he first appeared, as Sydney Spencer, in Southern Rhodesia in 1892 ... There was a Dr Broomfield also in Southern Rhodesia who was an entomologist. He disappeared and somehow Spencer took his title and name. One version of this happening is that the real Dr Broomfield left his estate to Spencer who took the name of his benefactor, and that as Broomfield he got an American doctorship for five dollars following some correspondence course’.\textsuperscript{17} I have not been able to confirm Brelsford’s allegations, and there is no record of birth for a Sidney Spencer Broomfield. However, I have been able to obtain a birth certificate corresponding to Broomfield’s date of birth for a Sidney Edgar Spencer of Oxford Street, London and a copy of my great-grandfather’s death certificate stating his name as Dr Sidney Spencer Broomfield.

According to Broomfield’s Anglo-African granddaughter, Mavis Burt, her mother Dolly, Broomfield’s daughter, often spoke of his great wealth.\textsuperscript{18} Documents at the Brisbane City Council Cemetery Administration Office state that Broomfield died bankrupt, and was buried in a pauper’s grave in 1933 in Toowong Cemetery. However, five years after Broomfield’s death, records at Toowong Cemetery reveal that a person identified only as ‘Broomfield’ purchased his grave and erected a headstone.\textsuperscript{19} The person who purchased Broomfield’s grave was most probably a family member, who demonstrated his or her familiarity with him by inscribing his headstone with his epithet, ‘Kachalola’.

Throughout his autobiography, Broomfield maintains that he was a doctor, big-game hunter, abolitionist and entomologist. He claims that, as he travelled in the various tribal lands of Northern Rhodesia, he became known for his prowess as a hunter. He exhibits great pride in his epithet ‘Kachalola’. He wrote: ‘But I think it was a later trip that the name Kachalola was first given to me, because I had a lot to do with bringing the tribes together. I have been told by some natives that it means “to bring together” and by others “the great hunter”’.\textsuperscript{20} Brelsford suggests that the origin and meaning of ‘Kachalola’ is unknown, and provides the following
explanation: 'Chiripula Stephenson, a Northern Rhodesian administrator and contemporary of Broomfield's whose etymology was often suspect, states it meant 'rumbling in the belly', while P H Selby, a colonial official, claimed it meant 'woolly and unkempt'. A granddaughter of Bruce Gray, a contemporary and associate of Broomfield's, explained that in Nsenga 'Kachalola' in its crudest sense is used to describe a man who 'likes women'. Unfortunately, our family oral history is unable to provide any further insight, apart from the fact that Broomfield was always referred to as Kachalola by his family and friends, and a town in the eastern province of Zambia is named 'Kachalola' in his honour.22

**Colouredness in Zambia**

It is important to recognise the significant role of colonial sexual relations in the creation of Zambia's coloured community. According to Ronald Hyam, sexual desire performed many functions in British colonialism. Hyam states that British men initiated sexual relations with indigenous women in Africa and Asia for their mental well-being, the alleviation of loneliness and boredom, and because they could indulge in their sexuality in a way they could not at home.23

Brelsford describes Kachalola Broomfield as 'one of the most colorful characters ... of Northern Rhodesian history' and implies that he was notorious for his sexual exploits with African women. He mistakenly writes that 'Kachalola had at least eight or nine wives in the Feira district alone and he left thirty-six half-caste children ... Descendants still alive today call themselves Broomfield and not Broomfield'.24 Broomfield justifies his and other male settlers' sexual relations with indigenous women by citing the scarcity of white women in the colonies. This, together with the expense of keeping a white woman in a place like Northern Rhodesia, meant that many white men found it more practical to form sexual unions with indigenous women. Such alliances, he asserts, established white men's sexual virility, thus commanding the respect of the colonised. He contends that the advantages for white men of establishing sexual alliances with native women far outweighed the disadvantages, as white men benefitted both sexually and financially. According to Broomfield, indigenous women were useful for establishing congenial relations with African chiefs and as intermediaries through whom white men could gain political and trade concessions. They were also an effective and pleasant way in which white men could gain access to vital knowledge and learn the local languages and customs. In Broomfield's words, African women were white men's 'feather bed dictionaries'.25
Contrary to Broomfield’s assertions of the value of interracial sexual alliances, he denounced indigenous women because of the social and sexual retrogression they produced among white settler men, who were supposedly defenceless in the face of their charms. Broomfield reproached African men for offering indigenous women and girls as gifts or bribes and as commodities that could be purchased by white men. Broomfield’s opinion about indigenous women exemplifies the consensus of white men in Northern Rhodesia.26

Furthermore, Broomfield shows no compunction about claiming that ‘native girls were only too eager to take on a white man’ and that since ‘the contract was not binding they could be discarded at any time’. Broomfield exonerates himself from criticism by arguing that ‘[native women] are plentiful and easy to get, and they have a charm of their own, a good many white men of all classes fall to them’. His allegation is supported by the existence of coloureds who are acknowledged locally in Zambia as the descendants of former Northern Rhodesian pioneers, colonial administrators and officials. The list includes prominent men such as E H Lane-Poole, described by Brelsford as a ‘Balliol man who had rowed bow for his college and whose father was a professor at Oxford’, and Sir Alfred Sharpe, whom Gann and Duignan identify as Rhodes’s emissary. Others were J E Chiripula Stephenson, colonial administrator; Dr Alan Kinghorn, a medical doctor who arrived in Northern Rhodesia to research sleeping sickness; Sir Percy Sillitoe, a police officer based in Lusaka who was later appointed Director General of Britain’s Security Service, MI5; and Dongolosi Thornicrft, District Commissioner at Old Petauke. Broomfield’s observation reveals the impunity with which certain white men abandoned their coloured children.27

In contrast to some of these men, Broomfield’s frank disclosure of his attitude towards African women is exceptional. According to Gann and Duignan, colonial white men who openly admitted to consorting with native women were rejected as reprobate. Chiripula Stephenson experienced this when ‘his open and unashamed marriage and cohabitation with native women enforced his resignation from his prestigious colonial posting by his senior colonial officers’.28 The open secret of colonial white men having mixed-race children confirmed these children’s shadowy existence.

As an eight-year-old, my late grandmother, Eliza Maria Broomfield, was forcibly removed from her African mother by Jack Cowie, an associate of Broomfield’s. Cowie would later tell her that he did this because she was half-caste and as such she should not live with ‘natives’. 
My grandmother often told me that it was not uncommon for white men to live openly with their indigenous or coloured wives and children in black society, but they would not do so among their fellow white settlers. If a white settler unexpectedly visited such a family, the African wife and ‘half-caste’ children were not permitted to show themselves. They had to hide. Such women were known as a ‘kitchen wives’ or ‘cooks women’. My grandmother’s observation is supported by Gann and Duignan, who write about white men in Northern Rhodesia putting ‘away their African mistresses’. These women’s status within such family units, as preparers of food and providers of sex, was regarded as insulting, shameful and humiliating within African society.²⁹

In colonial archival records, mixed-race progeny and their African mothers, where acknowledged, typically remain nameless. This is the case with my paternal Zulu grandmother Esther Cele and her mixed-race children, my father Japhet and his three siblings, Aaron, Michael and Rebecca. The children’s father, Joseph Milner, a Lithuanian Jew by birth and British subject, died in Southern Rhodesia in 1939. Joseph’s death certificate, dated 18 February 1939, states that at the time of his death he was ‘unmarried’, that he was survived by four ‘illegitimate’ children whose names were unknown and that his children’s mother was ‘native’.³⁰ Joseph Milner’s children remain nameless in archival records and, until recently, their existence was unknown to other Jewish family members. After many years spent searching for my Jewish family, I discovered them in South Africa. I contacted them, informed them of our relationship and naively expected an affirmation of our common ancestry. Their initial excitement turned to perplexity and dismay when I informed them of my ethnic and cultural multiplicity.

White paternity greatly affected coloureds’ lifestyle in Northern Rhodesia. Fathered by white men and mothered by black women, mixed-race progeny were seen by colonial society as an affront to race, nature and God, and as such were not considered the rightful heirs of white men. This is confirmed by my paternal uncle Aaron Milner, a former Home Affairs Minister in Zambia:

Northern and Southern Rhodesia colonial laws did not allow white men or women to marry a black person. Such marriages were performed under the tribal African tradition ... [C]hildren, born under such arrangements were then called ‘illegitimate’ having no paternal rights to the inheritance of their father’s property ... Some white fathers, as mine did, took
steps to register the birth of their children with the Colonial Native Commissioner’s Office ... under their surnames. It was not uncommon for the remaining white relatives to force the native mother and her mixed-race offspring to change their surnames through coercion and bribery.\textsuperscript{31}

Euro-African children, such as my father and his siblings, Aaron, Michael and Rebecca, were acknowledged by their Lithuanian Jewish father but not by other white relatives. The Rhodesian government classified them as illegitimate. Joseph Milner’s children were denied the status of being born in a legitimate union by the colonial office and their Jewish family, and this ensured their painful stigma of illegitimacy and poverty. My father and his siblings were sent to Embakwe, a Catholic missionary school in Plumtree, Southern Rhodesia, which Hugh Macmillan and Frank Shapiro describe as ‘effectively an orphanage’.\textsuperscript{32}

The coloured presence in Northern Rhodesia instigated public debate among colonists about their social and political status in the territory. The prevailing attitude was one of contempt for coloureds, and identifying with their fathers or associating with settler society was discouraged. A few colonists, however, had sympathy for coloureds and saw them as deserving of full acceptance into colonial society. For example Mr A W Edwards-Jordan, a settler from Fort Jameson (present-day Chipata) felt sufficiently strongly about the issue to bypass the local administration and address his concerns directly to the Secretary of State for the Colonies in London:

I have the honour to bring to your notice the political status of the Euroafricans in Northern Rhodesia. These Euroafricans born of a European British subject, and an African mother, are graded by this government, sometimes as Natives, other times as Coloureds or halfcastes, and as British Protected Subjects. They claim, and I support the claim, that they are British Subjects, entitled to a British Passport, and the honour of British citizenship [sic] Our Government has consistently postponed and evaded the issue...\textsuperscript{33}

Settler society in Northern Rhodesia was scornful of white men who lived in concubinage with African women. Phillip Mason, founding director of the Institute of Race Relations in London, describes such sexual relations as ‘a matter of physical gratification and no more’. Mason further contends that the arrival of white women in these colonies made
white men realise the enormity of their sexual transgressions, and that they came to regard their colonial interracial exploits with indigenous women with ‘horror, repulsion and deep remorse’. Mason reveals the sentiments of white women in Northern Rhodesia who seem to have been the bulwarks of racial segregation. He quotes the secretary of the [Northern] Rhodesia Women’s League as follows:

It is not generally known that in 1903 (before women of Rhodesia had the right to vote) the Immorality Suppression Ordinance was passed, making it a criminal offence for a white woman to cohabit with a native, while the reverse relationship of white men and native women continues to remain outside the cognizance of the law. All thoughtful people are agreed that such mixed intercourse was degrading to the white race and has a very evil influence on the black.34

Northern Rhodesian white settler society’s displeasure about cohabitation between white men and African women was primarily because the relationships produced ‘half-caste’ children and this gravely concerned colonial society as coloureds were perceived to be a threat to white racial purity. Despite this attitude, miscegenation continued, as evidenced by the large number of coloured descendants of British men and African women who live within and outside Zambia.

In most conventional colonial narratives, coloured people are disparaged as illegitimate. Floyd and Lillian Dotson as recently as 1965 maintained that “Eurafricans” in Central Africa are products of casual and mercenary encounters. The Dotsons, however, do concede that ‘coloureds in Central Africa have customarily assumed the name of their [British] father, and among the most common names of the older generation of “coloureds” appear those of pioneer officials and administrators of the first rank”.35 This acknowledgement goes against the presumption of casualness. The main point of reference for the majority of Zambian coloureds when it comes to obtaining information about their British ancestors is Brelsford’s The Generation of Men. It highlights the significance and legacy of the absence of white fathers in the public record of their coloured children.

Northern Rhodesian interracial cohabitations between white men and African women were usually sanctioned with the payment of bride wealth, commonly known as lobola. This was not the ‘sale of African women’, as Sidney Broomfield implies.36 Lobola should be seen within
the context of African morality. For this reason, the children born within these marriages were not considered illegitimate by African society—most especially if they were in long-term, traditionally sanctioned marriages with African women.

The daughter of a prominent British settler in Northern Rhodesia agreed to speak with me about her childhood memories in Northern Rhodesia on condition that she remains anonymous. She informed me that lobola should be regarded in the same way as white people awarding a ring to their betrothed. The payment of lobola is a pledge made by a man to a woman and her family, a commitment to a longstanding relationship within the confines of marriage. In Northern Rhodesia, traditional unions sanctioned through lobola were regarded as legal, both tribally and in ‘native’ courts of law. Lobola was in fact practised by Africans in accordance with their traditional moral codes. In most instances, the long-term traditional marriages between colonial white men and African women included all the elements of conventional European marriages, except the sanction of Christian churches and the Northern Rhodesian colonial government. During the colonial era in Zambia, the practice of lobola between white men and indigenous women appears to have been the principal reason why the colonial government and settler society denied legitimacy and British citizenship rights to the children born in these interracial unions.

According to the Northern Rhodesian Marriage Ordinance of 1940, coloured children born in a union of a ‘native’ mother and non-native father were illegitimate. They could not claim British ancestry in spite of being born of British fathers. Instead, they were deemed ‘British Protected Persons’. They were designated with the same social status as their African mothers. African leaders in Northern Rhodesia, and most especially Kenneth Kaunda, resisted being classified as a ‘British Protected Person’. They argued that, first and foremost, they should be given the dignity of being permitted to be citizens of their own country, Northern Rhodesia. In this regard, Kaunda appeared unsympathetic to their plight, accusing Euro-Africans of being ‘misled’ by British ‘propaganda’. He expected the sons and daughters of African women and European men to renounce their European fathers, and thereby their European ancestry and any political privileges this way have entailed. Kaunda implied that it was necessary for Euro-Africans to do this in order to demonstrate their commitment to the African nationalist movement.

However, it is important to recognise that a number of British men, particularly those who remained in Zambia, did not distance themselves
from their Anglo-African children and grandchildren. This is evident from the way in which some British settlers defied government policy regarding the education of coloured children. From the late 1920s onwards, the Northern Rhodesian government refused to build separate schools for ‘half-caste’ children in the territory. The administration argued that separate schools would encourage ‘half-castes’ to think of themselves as separate from African society. They would then become an ‘artificial’ class of people that would not be accepted by either European or African society in the territory. The government wanted coloured children to attend African missionary schools to encourage their being ‘reabsorbed’ into African society. This assimilationist strategy for resolving the ‘half-caste problem’ in the territory remained in place until the late 1950s. Several British men, some of whom had formerly served as colonial officials, resisted this assimilationist scheme by building schools on their farms and employing teachers to instruct not only their own Anglo-African children and grandchildren but those of other settlers as well.

Karen Transberg Hansen dismisses Chiripula Stephenson’s romance with his first African wife as mere ‘infatuation’, but romances between white men and African women were not as implausible as she implies, and many older coloured people speak about the loving relationships they enjoyed with their white fathers and grandfathers. Recently in Australia, an elderly woman formerly from Zambia spoke to me about the loving relationship her British father shared with his African wife, who was the daughter of a prominent African chief. After paying lobola, her father swooped down from his horse, picked up his bride and carried her on horseback to his home. The marriage produced nine Anglo-African children.

This woman also spoke to me about the public debates which raged in colonial Zambia about the social and racial classification of ‘half-caste’ people such as herself. She told me that, during the 1950s, there was much discussion in colonial Zambia about what status and categorisation mixed-race people should hold. According to her, the term ‘Eurafrican’ was particularly controversial. The racial and cultural classification of Eurafrican or Euro-African was commonly used in the 1940s and early 1950s in Northern Rhodesia. John Gropeter defines Eurafrican as people who have one parent who is predominantly European and one who is predominantly African. The interviewee said the white settlers determined that the term ‘Eurafrican’ should be used to describe Europeans born in Northern Rhodesia. According to her, white settler
society appropriated the term to eliminate any confusion with people like herself. Since then, Eurafricans in Zambia have been referred to by, and have subsequently adopted, the South African term ‘coloured’. In the late 1950s in Northern and Southern Rhodesia, the term ‘coloured’ became more commonly used to describe mixed-race people, who in turn adopted the term in preference to the derogatory and offensive ‘half-caste’ and ‘darkie’.

Historical books and journals glorify British men in Northern Rhodesia as colonial trailblazers. Brelsford, numerous British contributors to the Northern Rhodesian Journal and writers of other historical publications are biased in their reports about illustrious British colonial officials, administrators and farmers – men such as E H Lane Poole, H S Thornicroft, Frank and Jack Goddard, Dr Alan Kinghorn, Richard Thornton and Josilyn de Jong. These reports deliberately avoided discussing the men’s marital status and sexuality, choosing to ignore the long-term relationships many of them enjoyed with African women. They instead promoted these men as upstanding colonial citizens and glorious pioneers of empire in Northern Rhodesia. While a small number of historical texts do concede that ‘half-caste’ progeny in Zambia are the descendants of British men, they suggest that these children are evidence of the tarnished character of these men. In these historical narratives coloured people remain anonymous. These histories do not provide any insight into the social and political experiences of African descendants of British men.

Mixed-race child removal also occurred in Northern Rhodesia. One of its victims told me that because her mother was African and her father was British, the welfare department labelled her an orphan, which gave it authority over her life to dictate with whom and where she could live. She informed me that, during the school holidays, coloured children such as herself would either remain in St John’s mission or, if the nuns permitted, they could spend their holidays at a fellow coloured student’s home, provided that the student’s parents were both coloured. These children were discouraged from going to their African mother’s village. The informant told me that it was only in adulthood that she was reunited with her African mother, and then she found that she was unable to communicate with her as she had never learnt her mother’s language. The perpetrators of forced child removal believed they were acting in the best interests of the mixed-race children. They felt such action would enable the children to assimilate more easily into white colonial society.
In the social hierarchy of Northern Rhodesia, coloured children were left in limbo. British colonial administrators were split into two camps, one of which argued that it was necessary to create an intermediate status for coloured people, while the other did not agree. Ibbo Mandaza identifies H S Thornicroft and E H Lane Poole as two prominent British officials in Northern Rhodesia who supported a separate status for coloureds. It is commonly known that both men had fathered coloured children. Thornicroft initiated and supported the Euro-African Association, and Lane Poole, the provincial commissioner of Mongu, wrote to the Northern Rhodesian colonial government arguing that coloureds 'preferred' their own community rather than being assimilated into white or black society. Lane Poole further argued that to leave coloureds within their African kinship groups would corrupt them with an 'inferiority complex with almost inevitable complications in the future'.

Many of the first and second generation of Zambian coloureds were abandoned by white fathers at the end of their colonial adventures and careers. Zambian coloureds originate from varying districts and ethnic groups. For example, in 1940 the largest number of Coloured persons lived in the eastern province of the territory closely followed by the northern province. It was not an uncommon practice for white men to leave the district and not explain their true intentions to their African families. This seems to have been the case with Dr Alan Kinghorn, who 'dumped' his African wife and four coloured children, Andrew, Jean, Elizabeth and Meston, on his farm Kantenshi in Isoka in the Northern Province of Northern Rhodesia. Kinghorn found employment in Livingstone, but did not inform his African wife. He instead married a European woman with whom he had one daughter named Jane, who later became a prominent magazine editor. Although the fate of Kinghorn’s coloured children was sad, it seems that they were fortunate as they were well looked after by their African stepfather. Colonial administrators revealed that other abandoned coloured children were not as fortunate when their white fathers left them in their African mothers’ villages. It was claimed that these children were often subjected to ‘harsh treatment and abuse’ by the native authorities.

According to Tom Page, the treatment of coloured children depended on their mother’s tribal affiliation and that particular tribe’s customary laws. He pointed out that coloured children born to an Ngoni mother and white father who were subsequently abandoned by their white fathers in their mother’s village were looked upon by the other
villagers as ‘an Ishmael (not the children of the covenant). Not wanted, despised as being without a father, very often neglected and badly treated, a possible obstacle to the subsequent marriage of his mother’. Page revealed that coloured children were subjected to ill treatment by their fellow Ngoni tribesmen because, according to the customary law, children belonged to their father. Therefore, the absence of white fathers had harsh social consequences for the children. On the other hand, Page noted, coloured children born to Achewa mothers and white fathers who were subsequently abandoned by their white fathers were accepted by their mother’s tribe because, according to Achewa customary law, children belonged to their mother.55

In Northern Rhodesia, the legal and social status of coloureds was the subject of continuous debate in the 1940s. Page highlighted this to Sandford, the secretary for native affairs who was also chairman of the coloured status committee:

There is first the general statement made in the Interpretation Ordinance which lays down that certain Coloured persons are, in the eyes of the law, ‘Natives’, all others being ‘non-natives’. In the Marriage Ordinance a coloured person with only a trace of European blood is definitely excluded from being ‘Native’. Finally there is the dictum that illegitimates take after the mother. As Coloured persons of the first generation born in N. Rhodesia are illegitimate they rank as ‘Natives’ irrespective of their manner of living. The offspring of Coloured marriages are still ‘natives’ after their fathers who are ‘Natives’. They therefore come under the category of British Protected persons and not British subjects ... The child of illicit union contracted in Northern Rhodesia but who happens to have been born in S. Rhodesia or other British possession (not Protectorate) and who comes to live in N. Rhodesia is a full British subject even though living as a Native.56

In Northern Rhodesia, white paternity was not the only determinant of coloured identity. A person’s lifestyle was an important consideration. In 1942, Sir John Waddington, the governor and commander-in-chief of Northern Rhodesia, set up a commission of enquiry to investigate land policy in the colonial territory. The report, sympathetic to the plight of coloureds, also revealed their unstable social and political status in the colony. The land commissioners informed the government that coloureds’
racial classification and social status in Northern Rhodesia were too flexible, and recommended that they be re-evaluated:

[T]he Coloured question is one of great complexity and we do not feel that the present definition of a Coloured person can be regarded as entirely satisfactory, based as it is, in actual fact, solely upon material possessions. No person without means, and little opportunity for employment, can live according to European standards but it does not necessarily follow that he wishes, or should be compelled, to adopt native standards and to be classed as native. We feel that this question needs further consideration.\textsuperscript{57}

Financial criteria also determined coloureds’ status and identity. This made their status unpredictable because it depended on an individual’s material possessions and their maintenance of a European lifestyle. This emphasis on material possessions and lifestyle gravely concerned Northern Rhodesian coloureds, primarily because they had limited opportunities to find work and thereby maintain a European standard of living. Coloureds’ economic disadvantages were a constant threat to their racial and social status in Northern Rhodesia.

Coloureds lived with the constant fear that their racial classification and status, along with the limited privileges these offered, would be taken from them and that they would be reclassified ‘native’ – like their African mothers. The ‘native’ categorisation and status in turn would assure further social, economic and educational disadvantage. In British colonial Africa, coloureds witnessed the debased treatment meted out by the colonial administrators to Africans, and it would seem that this greatly contributed to their dissociation from Africans. In addition, their European fathers who were in ‘marriages’ with their African mothers insisted that their children not associate with Africans. The coloured children, like my grandfather Stephen, were told they were \textit{musungu}, which means ‘white’, or that they were ‘half-caste’ and coloured, but not African, which denoted blackness and inadequacy. My grandfather would call himself a \textit{musungu half-caste}, meaning he was ‘white, half white and half black’. By calling himself a \textit{musungu half-caste}, he emphasised his white genealogy. The first and second generations of Zambian coloureds were constantly warned by their white fathers, black mothers, the ruling white minority, mission school teachers and fellow coloureds not to socialise with Africans, as it would contaminate and socially degenerate them. These conflicting ideas about their racial identity resulted in coloureds being culturally estranged and
displaced – not belonging to either culture, African or European. Franz Fanon describes the phenomenon as ‘an inferiority complex that has been created by the death and burial of its local cultural originality’. 58

In Northern Rhodesia, it was common knowledge that fair-skinned coloured individuals who realised the predicament of institutionalised poverty were able to gain social mobility and attain a higher standard of living, but at great cost to themselves and their families. If they could pass as European, they did. ‘Play whites’, as such people were called, joined white social clubs, were promoted into managerial jobs which were reserved for white people and lived in white housing areas. Coloureds who played white had to reinvent themselves as white in speech and manner – which meant, in most cases, disowning their past, family and community. 59

In the 1950s and 1960s, the intermediate status of coloured people in Northern Rhodesian society ensured feelings of conflict. They attributed their limited privileges to the white ruling minority to whom they felt indebted. Their privileged status contributed to an estrangement with their African families and also prevented them from establishing relationships with them. The aspiration of attaining a European lifestyle and the allure of a superior social status meant that coloureds embraced European culture. They hoped that Europeans would accept them, but they were often exposed to further humiliation and vulnerability, as their ambitions were frequently rejected. Coloureds’ marginalisation and alienation contributed to their forming their own culture, an amalgamation of British and African cultures. Rejected and abandoned by white fathers, Northern Rhodesian coloured people formed their own social community. Elizabeth Robertson eloquently defined her experience growing up ‘mixed race’ in colonial Rhodesia as ‘bonding in our abandonment’. 60

Whereas in South Africa race laws upheld the privilege of whiteness, in Zambia the colour bar was imposed not by law but rather by custom. John Gunther points out that in Northern Rhodesia, white settler society, especially white South African immigrants, imposed an industrial colour bar and that this ideology eventually spilled over into every aspect of Northern Rhodesian Africans’ social lives. 61

In the 1950s, coloureds requested separate housing from the Northern Rhodesian government. The colonial government acceded to their demands and built houses specifically for coloureds. These housing areas became known as the coloured quarters. In most cases, they were
situated on the margins of white society on the outskirts of industrial towns along the railway lines. In a recent interview, my mother Nellie Milner spoke to me about her colonial experiences. She described the houses in the quarters as small and in close proximity to one another. She also stated that, within the quarters, there was a social club and schools. In addition to segregated housing areas, coloured men were confined to specific areas of employment in the Public Works Department and Rhodesia Railways, with limited opportunities for promotion. Coloureds’ segregation and exclusion, although initially state imposed, evolved into a self-imposed separation, beginning with my grandparents’ generation. They married within the Zambian and Zimbabwean coloured community. This preference persists among the present generation of Zambian coloureds both in Zambia and abroad. Such marriages ensure that the community remains a complex web of familial and kinship connections.

Living within the confines of their own social group gave coloureds a sense of security and community, but it deprived them of far more. This segregated, alienated lifestyle was inherited by subsequent generations. From the segregated hospitals where they were born to the segregated schools for coloureds, the pattern persisted into adulthood in the segregated housing areas in which they lived, and their employment in racially segregated jobs. In this way the colonial government and coloureds themselves ensured their alienation and marginalisation from both white and black society.

In Zambia, the memory of absentee white fathers such as Kachalola Broomfield may have started to fade. Their legacies can, however, still be discerned in the social, cultural, racial and political experiences of the current generation of their coloured descendants. The most notable manifestation of this heritage after independence has been the ongoing emigration of Zambia’s Anglo-Africans to Great Britain. This exodus became pronounced with Zambia’s economic decline from the early 1970s onwards. Anglo-Africans’ dispersal from Zambia to the UK has also partly been prompted by the legacy of the absent white father. Cultural theorist Stuart Hall suggests that there ‘can be no simple “return” or “recovery” of the ancestral past which is not re-experienced through the categories of the present’. In other words, the Zambian Anglo-African social category and coloured identity are ‘artefacts’ of their colonial past, and many have felt the need to return and recover their ancestral past in order to make a coherent story of their current social and cultural predicament. They have experienced the diasporic described by Hall as ‘not the so-called return to roots but a coming-to-terms-with our routes’.
The migration of Zambian Anglo-Africans to Britain suggests that in the postcolonial situation they have come to see themselves as part of the British diaspora. The contemporary migration of coloureds from Zambia to Great Britain and other global destinations would indicate that they have not only crossed political borders demarcating nation states, but also crossed ‘diasporic convergences across ethnicities, cultures, religions and nationalities’ by reclaiming their British ancestry, which they were discouraged from asserting during British rule in Northern Rhodesia. In contemporary times, these children’s stigma of illegitimacy appears to be insignificant should they choose to claim British citizenship. British citizenship laws are sanguineous in that the children and grandchildren of British people who can irrevocably prove their British ancestry can claim ‘right of abode’ in the UK, and many Anglo-Africans have done this. They have claimed their birthright – British citizenship. In the last 30 years, the British government has changed its earlier stance of not acknowledging the ‘mixed-race’ descendants of British men born in its former colonies, and awarded them equal access to British citizenship. Also during this period, social expectations changed. Today children born outside of marriage have equal rights to those born within marriages. Illegitimacy is no longer the stigma it was in the colonial era. Another factor is that during the colonial era, coloureds were not able to access British archival records. However, in the present these records are accessible, and coloureds have been able to retrieve and piece together their family histories through birth and death certificates, letters, wills and other such documentation relating to their British ancestors.

Conclusion
The fundamentals of the coloured phenomenon in Zambia are its ‘Britishness’, ‘recentness’ and ‘separateness’. Zambian coloured people identify themselves in these terms primarily because of the commonality of their origins. They were born in Zambia as the descendants of colonial white men and African women. In colonial Zambia, coloureds lived as coloureds among coloureds – people like themselves – of African, Asiatic and European descent who shared their predicament of social alienation. The legacies of Anglo-Africans’ colonial experience are their cultural displacement, migration and diaspora. In the Zambian context, the diasporic and return migration features further complicate colouredness. However, these two features are important in understanding the distinctiveness of the coloured experience in Zambia. Diaspora, in
particular, deepens the complications and entanglements of colouredness in Zambia, wherein coloured is both white and not white. The visibility of whiteness, and particularly white genealogies of British ancestors, has currency for Anglo-Africans in Zambia. It enables them to ‘return’ to their ‘imagined’ homeland of Great Britain. Coloureds’ return migration to Britain is partly a cultural repossessing; it is a reclamation by those who have been culturally displaced and the creation of a coherent story of their Zambian past. More than a century after the onset of British colonisation, it has been estimated that as much as half of the total Zambian coloured population have retraced the footsteps of their British ancestors back to their ‘imagined’ homeland, Great Britain.

Endnotes

1 In loving memory of my father Japhet, my sister Alison, fondly remembered as ‘Sukey’, and my son Courtney. Mohamed Adhikari, my heartfelt thanks to you for your kindness, encouragement, extreme generosity, learned advice and friendship. Since a large part of this work is an outcome of my honours research project, a personal thank you to my BA (Hons) supervisors Belinda McKay and Fiona Paisley. For reading various drafts of this paper and for their encouragement and insightful advice I thank my present principal PhD supervisor Fiona Paisley, associate PhD supervisors Paul Turnbull and Sally Rickson, and my former PhD supervisor Felicity Grace. Many people shared their wonderful personal and family stories with me and I thank them all – in particular Mavis Burt, Caroline Goetzee, Judy Ethel Goddard, Elizabeth Robertson, Colin Kinghorn, Eric Wrightman, Harry Sillitoe and Aaron Milner. In this regard I am particularly indebted to my late grandmother Eliza Maria Broomfield, and my dearest mother Nellie Milner. I thank my darling husband Bob for his continual love and support, and my children Lyle, Dianne, Lavinia (who is my sister and adopted daughter), Greg, Cameron and Dion, and my dearest son Courtney, who is no longer with me but whose memory lives on in my heart. Last but not least, I thank the rest of my family, the coloured community of Zambia, and the Zambian Anglo-African diaspora in the UK and wherever else I have met fellow Zambians.


National Archives of Zambia, (hereafter NAZ), Status of Coloureds Committee (hereafter SEC1/581), T S Page to the Hon Secretary for Native Affairs, 24 September 1940.


Copy (in the possession of the author) of the last will and testament of Sidney Spencer Broomfield, 18 October 1930, Queensland Public Curator, Brisbane.

As far as my mother, her siblings and cousins, and their children and grandchildren are aware, they are the only surviving descendants of Broomfield. To date we have been unable to ascertain who, as Brelsford alleges, Broomfield’s ‘thirty-six half-caste children’ or their African mothers were. See Brelsford, *Generation of Men*, 70.

Broomfield, *Kachalola*, 1, 299, 300; *Courier-Mail*, 26 October 1933; death certificate, Sidney Spencer Broomfield, 24 October 1933 (Register of Deaths, General Registry Office, Brisbane).


Mavis Burt, personal communication, 20 April 2003.

John Spiller, administrator of Toowong Cemetery, in personal communication to Juliette Milner-Thornton, 9 October 2000.


Brelsford, *Generations of Men*, 66, 70. Stephen Broomfield’s children changed their surname from Broomfield to Bloomfield in the late 1950s while they were students at St John’s School in Salisbury, Southern Rhodesia. Their fellow coloured students had relentlessly teased them about their surname ‘Broomfield’, saying it meant ‘a field filled with brooms’. The family decided that the only way to stop the teasing was to change their surname to Bloomfield.
25 Broomfield, Kachalola, 18, 80–83.
26 Broomfield, Kachalola, 82; Dorson & Dorson, ‘Indians and coloureds in Rhodesia’, 61–75.
28 Gann & Duignan, Rulers of British Africa, 226.
33 NAZ, SEC1/581, Edwards-Jordan to Creech-Jones (nd). Indications are that this letter was written sometime between 1946 and 1947.
36 Broomfield, Kachalola, 81.
39 NAZ, SEC1/581, Page to Secretary for Native Affairs, 24 September 1940, 2. My grandfather Stephen Broomfield’s passport indicates that he was classified as a British Protected Person, the same status as his African mother. Stephen Broomfield, Northern Rhodesian Passport no. 16138, 1954 (in possession of the author).
41 NAZ, SEC1/576, ‘Education of coloured children general’, Mr John B Clark, the Director of European Education, Mazabuka to Chief Secretary Lusaka, 19 July 1937.
43 NAZ SEC1/575; Africa Studies Centre, Leiden University, Leiden, the Netherlands, ASC Afrika ke-301.185.12 (689.4), Northern Rhodesia Report of the Committee to Inquire into the Status and Welfare of Coloured Persons in Northern Rhodesia, 1950. Lusaka: Government Printer. Former colonial officials who did this include Messrs H S Thornicroft, R A Osborne and I W Gardner.
Hansen, *Distant Companions*, 91.


The *Northern Rhodesian Journal* was published from 1950 to 1965. Journal articles were written by colonists, and were historical and anecdotal in nature.


Mandaza, *Race, Colour and Class*, 392.

NAZ SEC1/581, 46/2, Page to Secretary for Native Affairs, 24 September 1940, 1.

E G, interviewed 16 August 2006; e-mail from Colin Kinghorn, 16 August 2006. The abandonment of African women and their coloured children was known locally as being 'dumped'.

NAZ, SEC1/581, 46/2, Page to Secretary for Native Affairs, 24 September 1940, 3-4.

NAZ, SEC1/581, 46/2, Page to Secretary for Native Affairs, 24 September 1940, 3-4.


NAZ, SEC1/3 278, 12, 13; NAZ, SEC1/1 582, *General Questions Affecting Coloured People*, 30 August 1942, 12.


It is important to note that the current generations of Zambian coloureds – the fourth and fifth generations since initial sexual contact between Africans and Europeans – are rejecting the earlier ideology with which their ancestors grew up. They choose instead to re-establish a relationship with Africa and their Africaness, and it is now common practice for coloureds to marry into the African community.

Personal communication, Elizabeth Robertson, 23 July 2003; NAZ, SEC1/3 278, *Land Commission*, 12, 13. Elizabeth’s father, retired British army officer Captain Robertson, was one of the white settlers who was commissioned by Sir John Waddington in 1942 to investigate land policy in Northern Rhodesia.


NAZ SEC1/581, 46/1; 46/2.

NAZ SEC1/581, 46/1; 46/2.


