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Zandi Sherman is a PhD student in Women's and Gender Studies at Rutgers University. She has a master's degree in Global Studies, jointly awarded by the Universities of Cape Town and Freiburg. She currently teaches courses in Gender Studies with a focus on the genealogy of feminist theory and critical race studies. Her research is focused on public infrastructures, which she uses as objects through which to consider the production and endurance of race in South Africa. Her PhD research focuses on two public infrastructures - mining compounds and water management devices to think about how the technical and political registers at which they function coincide. She considers both how neoliberal governance undermines infrastructures' function as a public good, as well as how infrastructures have historically functioned as the backbone of extractive economies and as instruments of biopolitical management of population.

Kimberley closed compounds as racial infrastructure

Colonialism left in its wake vast infrastructural networks that continue to shape the patterns of extraction and mobility in contemporary Africa. This debris is not limited to material remains, but also the epistemic and ontological regimes embedded in, and enabled by these infrastructures. Kimberley, now a largely unremarkable mining town, was, in the 19th century, a global infrastructure hub. The 'City of Diamonds' had transportation and electricity networks more advanced than most of the world's major cities. With the introduction of the closed compound, Kimberley's mines fundamentally transformed the infrastructural landscape of colonial rule across Africa. The Kimberley compounds were designed and managed by various technical experts, architects, engineers, doctors etc. These experts were tasked with designing enclosures that would maximize labour productivity, and balance economic constraints with mortality rates. In so doing, they relied upon and produced racialized theories of the body - disease, diet, hygiene, and physical strength. Indeed, as their technical blueprints circulated across Africa and Europe, so too did the racial logics embedded within them. This paper takes these publications and reports as the objects through which to explore how the racial and technical emerge alongside one another. The compound, most often studied as an infrastructure of racial domination, has rarely been recognized as productive of emergent notions of 'race.' Where the experts framed their work as turning on the observation of 'the native races'; in fact, in the design and management of these compounds, those very experts were producing the racial truths they claimed only to uncover. These massive carceral complexes now sit abandoned, out of site. However, the racial infrastructure that developed with and through their administration, endures.

