



Richard T. Greener & “THE WHITE PROBLEM”

a talk by **Christian K. Anderson**

Department of Educational Leadership and Policies UofSC

Richard T. Greener argued that racial inequality is a “white problem” – something that whites had created and must take responsibility to resolve. In his 1894 essay, “The White Problem,” he wrote that, “Slavery has been abolished in America; the trail of the serpent, however, yet marks the ground.” Greener’s observation was not an abstraction but rooted in his own experiences. He was the first Black graduate of Harvard (1870) and was hired as professor of philosophy at the newly desegregated University of South Carolina in 1873. While in South Carolina he regularly spoke out for civil rights and would often face hostile and even violent crowds. Once a member of the Red Shirts (a terrorist organization similar to the KKK) pointed a gun at him and a state senator intervened and pulled him to safety. The University was closed and he and all other professors and students were forced out in 1877 and it would reopen for whites only in 1880. This talk will discuss “The White Problem” and address how Greener’s life informed his writing it. What lessons can still be drawn from the essay today? Are there connections to be made to contemporary discussions of Critical Race Theory?

Friday, February 11th, 3:30pm
Close-Hipp Building, Room 201
University of South Carolina, Columbia

PHILOSOPHY



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