

Acclaimed Zimbabwe play “Rituals” performed in South Africa



The Zimbabwean play “Rituals” produced by Rooftop Promotions and directed by Daves Guzha, which has just ended a tour in South Africa, is a brilliant political satire that seeks to encourage the communities to overcome the culture of fear and silence that stems from political violence. Crisis in Zimbabwe Coalition facilitated the performance of the play at seven different locations in Johannesburg including at the South Africa Council of Churches headquarters, the Central Methodist Church that houses thousands of Zimbabweans who have fled political conflict and economic meltdown, Hillbrow Theatre and in the township of Diepsloot.

The play, written by acclaimed playwright Stephen Chifunyise, was inspired by horrific and widespread electoral violence in Zimbabwe of 2008 which affected thousands of people, some through death, grave injuries and other human rights abuses.

The play seeks to provoke people to initiate forums of dialogue on how to begin the process of healing. According to Dewa Mavhinga, Regional Coordinator for Crisis in Zimbabwe Coalition, the “Rituals” well-received play is opening new frontiers for advocacy through theatre. Paul Verryn, the Bishop of Central Methodist Church commented that the play exposed the cancer of violence that has spread in our society while also giving different ways for the Zimbabwean nation to heal.

Although Zimbabwe has created a Ministry of National healing, to the common folk there is still a great political gap to be filled between different political parties and the common folk. In the discussions held after the play, Zimbabweans identified themselves not as a people of Zimbabwe but through their political par-



ties which negated the theme of the play.

Furthermore, they only identify violence orchestrated by other parties while justifying the violence from their party thereby making national reconciliation next to impossible.

Witwatersrand University provided an audience with a different view on achieving national healing in Zimbabwe. They felt that healing the nation or designing a healing mechanism for Zimbabwe for only the 2008 political violence is not enough if the nation is to achieve lasting peace among each other and heal. They pointed out that Gukurahwindi is still a disturbing factor in the Ndebele community. Incorporating the Gukurahwindi issue will be most ideal in achieve healing and reconciliation in Zimbabwe. The play seems to aptly express that citizens should not only wait on politicians to begin healing but that the power to reconcile lies with the common man. Guzha expressed the same view when he said,

“Until citizen power is entrenched in us there will not be any national healing and reconciliation”.

The “Rituals” play seems to imply that healing and reconciliation can be achieved using cultural norms. According to Daves Guzha, the people of Zimbabwe should not disregard the importance of using culture in the process of reconciliation and thereby begin healing as a society. In partial agreement, Munjodzi Mutandiri, from National Constitutional Assembly said the play has an overemphasis on African traditional culture as an instrument for healing thereby overshadowing other beliefs like Christianity which is followed by more than half of the population.

“The aim of the play is to educate people on how they can get over their excruciating political experiences,” said Guzha. The play therefore exposes the inherent culture of violence in Zimbabwe while offering an alternative way to peace and reconciliation. Political violence in Zim-

babwe has a historical significance which has been nurtured throughout the years by political powers and has been acquiescence by the Zimbabwean people and then embraced as their political culture. Tafadzwa Muzondo, the media officer for Rooftop promotions believes that, because of the fear that is essentially associated with participating in politics, the “Rituals Play” as a live media will encourage people to speak out against political violence as they can draw courage from the actors who put their lives in constant prosecution in order to inform the people of a better way. Mavhinga echoes the sentiment of most Zimbabweans who watched the play in hoping that since the play has provoked debate around issues of violence, justice and reconciliation, positive action will follow the debate.

By Regina Pazvakavambwa – Crisis in Zimbabwe Coalition Regional Office Media Intern

ABOVE: A crowd of Zimbabweans and South Africans enjoy “Rituals” in Diepsloot, Saturday, 16 July

LEFT: Discussion Panelists at the Johannesburg Central Methodist Church (from left) Bishop Paul Verryn, “Rituals” Director & Producer Daves Guzha and Journalist Stanley Kwenda.-crisis in zimbabwe coalition regional office

Moyo's vile attack of Ambassador Lindiwe Zulu repugnant, unacceptable

Coordinator's
Note



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It was with extreme shock and utter disbelief that I read in the latest edition of the state-controlled but ZANU-PF aligned weekly, the Sunday Mail, a vicious attack on Ambassador Lindiwe Zulu, International Relations Advisor to president Jacob Zuma and member of the Facilitation Team for the Zimbabwe political negotiations mandated by SADC.

The vitriolic, extremely distasteful and utterly offensive attack carried in an opinion titled ‘Lindiwe Zulu should just shut up! - Lindiwe is not a SADC spokesperson,’ was apparently provoked by Ambassador Zulu’s calm statement of the SADC position that, contrary to certain views expressed on the issue, elections in Zimbabwe, “should be held when the environment is conducive, when all parties are happy and when the institutions that are supposed to run the elections are in place.”

What peace-loving, sane Zimbabwean would condemn someone for

calling for elections to be held when the environment is conducive to holding free and fair elections under conditions of peace, non-violence and when the right institutions that run elections professionally are in place? Jonathan Moyo is a senior member of ZANU-PF who sits on the Politburo, therefore, what he says cannot simply be dismissed. If Moyo is not speaking for ZANU-PF then the party should immediately apologize to Ambassador Lindiwe Zulu and reign in the errant Moyo. I hope there are people in ZANU-PF who are examining Moyo’s motives in this relentless attack on Ambassador Zulu and on SADC at a time when the region is trying to assist the people of Zimbabwe to return to a normal life away from political conflict, polarization and strife.

Jonathan Moyo’s senseless, counter-productive and self-defeating attack on Ambassador Lindiwe Zulu is not isolated. For several months now, Jonathan Moyo has recklessly dished out toxic

venom targeting Ambassador Lindiwe Zulu, a strong and courageous woman to whom all Zimbabweans owe a big thank you for her efforts and those of the rest of the Facilitation Team and president Zuma in conflict mediation and in seeking to bring Zimbabwe back from the brink. I sincerely hope that millions of Zimbabweans share these sentiments that we ought to thank people like Ambassador Zulu who are putting in countless hours to support a very difficult peace process in Zimbabwe that is marred by incessant bickering and is taking painfully long to restore normalcy to Zimbabwe.

It takes immense commitment, patience, dedication, and passion for the greater good of the people of Zimbabwe for outsiders like Ambassador Zulu, who, under normal circumstances, can simply choose to have nothing to do with us, to toil daily with the hope that one day the Zimbabweans will truly enjoy the fruits of independence and democracy. Ambassador Zulu is not

employed to be a Facilitator on Zimbabwe, she is an International Relations Advisor whose plate is full with other problem areas in Africa and beyond, and yet she sacrifices her time and energy to support our cause. Jonathan Moyo please, give Ambassador Zulu a break. To Ambassador Zulu, the Facilitation Team, president Zuma and SADC I say, thank you for your sterling work on Zimbabwe, please do not be deterred, keep up the good work and stay with us until we are out of the woods.

No amount of insults, vile language or mudslinging will take away the truth of the matter that Zimbabweans should only go to elections when the environment is conducive and under conditions materially different from those of 2008 where there was widespread violence and intimidation predominantly against members of the MDC.

It does not need a robotics scientist to note that credible, free and fair elections in Zimbabwe are not feasible in 2011 given

the reforms that must be undertaken first. Although some reforms like ending hate speech can happen immediately if there is political will, many others, such as concluding constitutional reform, legislative reform, security sector re-alignment or cleaning up the voters’ roll, need considerable time if things are to be done properly. Therefore, outside of being delusional, cynical, insincere or completely removed from reality, the inescapable conclusion is that will not be any elections in 2011 that SADC would support and stand-by.

Now is the time for us to stand together as a people to reject all attempts to divide us or to take us back to the dark days of polarization, hatred and violence. Let us focus on the important task at hand of developing and implementing a roadmap that will take us in a new, progressive direction.

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Creating a safe space for Women's human rights defenders as equal partners in activism

I have just been looking at the spaces that I work in as a women human rights defender and it is interesting to note the dynamics that define these spaces and the treatment that we receive by virtue of being women. It is undeniable that women human rights defenders are actively involved at the frontline of human rights activism at par with their male counterparts. However, their experiences and those of the men are different due to a number of reasons. Security issues are of concern when one does such work and all kinds of abuses are hurled at you because you have decided to defy the local cultural norms of being “the subservient woman”. The space is undeniably male dominated and the levels of testosterone are so intimidating that as a woman human rights activist, one has to be very strong and keep focused on the work lest one becomes derailed by the sad happenings of the very space that purports to represent human rights. I will look at three things (defining women’s roles in society, trivialization of women human rights defenders work and their status as equal partners) that are important to the women human rights activists so that as fellow activists, there can be a pooling together of ideas and resources so that a difference is realized in this human rights work.

There is a certain definition that a “real and proper” woman is supposed to fall under. When women rights defenders begin to become outspoken, resilient and vibrant, they defy such a definition and are insulted from all corners of the human rights sector. It is important to note that women’s rights are human rights and that in this respect, wherever one works as a human rights defender, they get to protect the rights of other human beings despite them being male or female. On that note the male human rights defenders should realize that in as much as they may be comfortable in the patriarchal dominated spaces, it is equally important to ensure that the rights of their female counterparts are protected. Such rights include the right to freedom of speech, association, assembly and integrity. It also is

about ensuring that women’s gender and sex roles are taken into consideration in all the work that activism entails and such roles are defined according to the different work that human rights defenders do.

Women need to be realized as equal partners in human rights activism. It is important that where issues of security are concerned, women’s fears are taken seriously and some safety nets of all sorts are created. This may range from support groups, medical assistance, psychosocial support, post exposure prophylaxis, only to mention but a few. It is the duty of the men and women involved in human rights activism to ensure that the women communities that they serve and work with have their rights protected and that in the course of their work, their rights are not violated. On the micro-levels, it is crucial that the space that we work as human rights defenders caters to a large extent to such safety nets creation. This may include but are not limited to having a women’s rights defender’s desk, sensitizing fellow activists on the gender dynamics that are involved when looking at women’s human rights defenders and the development of effective referral systems that will be ready to address any women human rights violation at different levels.

Having said all this, it is important that you and I reflect on the kind of work that we do and ensure that woman’s human rights defenders issues are not trivialized but given the top priority level that they deserve. Here, we are not looking at just the macro-levels of activism but it comes down to the micro-levels that include the very rural woman who we so often engage as a human rights activist.



However, even though she may be passionate about transformation, she may need our help in terms of addressing her security in both the public and private. Thinking of this will enable you and I to ensure the safest space possible for women human rights defenders. The next time you are up and about with your work, make this reflection an integral part of your work and you could be a champion for women human rights...the time to show solidarity is now!

By Grace Chirenje-Nachipo (pictured), an activist.

UPCOMING
ACTIVITIES:

- > SADC Summit; Luanda, Angola (14-19 August)
- > Seminar: Managing Transition; University of Kwazulu-Natal, Durban, South Africa (30 July). This event is organised by Zimbabwe Solidarity Forum, Solidarity Peace Trust, South African Council of Churches and Crisis in Zimbabwe Coalition

Negotiators sign elections roadmap with timelines

Negotiators for Zimbabwe’s three main political parties, ZANU-PF and the two MDC formations, on July 6 agreed to, and signed an elections roadmap with timelines. However, the roadmap submitted to the principals (Mugabe, Tsvangirai and Mutambara) still contains areas of disagreement and deadlock. The Roadmap to Zimbabwe’s elections is described in the signed document as defining ‘milestones and signposts that must be executed and implemented before the next harmonized elections.’

Timelines for finalizing the constitutional reform process up to the national referendum were left to the Constitutional Select Committee of Parliament (COPAC) to determine with a proviso that presidential assent to the approved constitution (if approved) should be given within 60 days from date of referendum. On media reforms, the parties agreed that licensing of new broadcasters should be achieved within 120 days from 1 August 2011 and establishment of the Media Council of Zimbabwe within 60 days from 1 August 2011.

Enactment of agreed electoral amendments was to be done within 45 days from 6 July 2011 while voter education, voter registration and the process of preparing a new voters’ roll was cumulatively given a total of eight months.

Areas of deadlock include the staffing of the Zimbabwe Electoral Commission (ZEC) which the MDC-T wants done afresh (to ensure non-partisanship) while ZANU-PF insists there should be no changes to ZEC staff. Further, ZANU-PF is opposed to a submission by the MDC formations that security forces should be instructed to ‘issue a public statement that they will unequivocally uphold the Constitution and respect the rule of law in the lead up to and following any election or referendum. ZANU-PF insists this is not an election matter.



FLASHBACK: Morgan Tsvangirai (above) signs the Global Political Agreement (GPA) as Robert Mugabe (below) does the same.-zimbabweinpictures.com



In response to a call by MDC formations for an end to military and police abuse of the rule of law and an end to all state-sponsored violence ZANU-PF claims no knowledge of abuse or state-sponsored violence. ZANU-PF also denies that there are serving soldiers deployed across the country and there rejects calls for redeployment of the military to their barracks.

ZANU-PF is also opposed to calls by MDC-T to bring the operations of the central intelligence organization (CIO) under legislative control. The final point of deadlock is on election monitors where ZANU-PF has rejected the proposal by MDC-T for a presence of SADC and other African monitors 6 months prior to and 6 months after the elections.

The roadmap signed by negotiators confirms the widely held view that elections in 2011 are not feasible; if the roadmap is fully implemented properly then the earliest dates for elections will be after May 2012.

The areas of deadlock are the most fundamental and therefore it is critical that there is agreement on them. Given recent political statements by members of the military, it is absolutely essential that there be a security sector re-alignment sealed by a public statement by military chiefs committing to respect the rule of law. All soldiers currently deployed across the country should return to their barracks and should not interfere in the electoral affairs of the country. Experiences of the 2008 violent election have underlined the need for robust and long-term monitoring of the electoral situation in Zimbabwe.

It is hoped that SADC and the AU will insist on an early deployment of monitors to prevent violence and ensure peace.

By Dewa Mavhinga, Regional Coordinator, Crisis in Zimbabwe Coalition

CHARGE SHOPPING STATE WATERS DOWN TREASON CHARGES AGAINST GWISAI AND FIVE OTHERS



State prosecutor Edmore Nyazamba on Monday 18 July 2011 watered down treason charges against University of Zimbabwe lecturer and International Socialist Organisation (ISO) general-coordinator Munyaradzi Gwisai (pictured) and five other social, economic justice and human rights activists who were accused of plotting to topple President Robert Mugabe using “Egyptian style” revolts.

The treason trial which was supposed to commence on Monday 18 July

2011 at the Harare Regional Courts was postponed to 22 August 2011 after Magistrate Morgan Nemadire recused himself from presiding over the trial as he is known of one of the activists.

Harare Regional Magistrate William Bhila will now preside over the trial.

In a dramatic twist, Nyazamba served a new charge sheet to the activists’ lawyer Alec Muchadehama with altered charges.

Under the new charge sheet Nyazamba altered the treason charge that the six ac-

tivists namely Gwisai, anti-debt campaigner Hopewell Gumbo, Antonater Choto, the director of the Zimbabwe Labour Centre, student leader Welcome Zimuto, Eddson Chakuma and Tatenda Mombeyarara were initially charged with to a main charge of contravening Section 36 of the Criminal Law (Codification and Reform) Act for allegedly conspiring to commit public violence and three other alternative charges.

Gwisai, Gumbo, Choto, Zimuto, Chakuma and Mombeyarara face alterna-

tive charges of contravening section 187 as read with section 36 of the Criminal Law (Codification and Reform) Act for allegedly inciting public violence, contravening section 37 (1) (a) of the Criminal Law (Codification and Reform) Act for allegedly participating in a gathering with intent to promote public violence, breaches of peace or bigotry and contravening section 37 (1) (c) of the Criminal Law (Codification and Reform) Act for allegedly participating in a gathering with intent to promote violence, breaches of peace or bigotry.

Gwisai and the five social justice and human rights activists were arrested on Saturday 19 February 2011 together with 39 other activists during a constitutional and democracy lecture held in Harare.

Nyazamba alleged that the activists delivered speeches during the lecture encouraging participants to mobilize Zimbabweans to revolt against President Mugabe and his government.

Harare Magistrate Munamoto Mutevedzi freed 39 of the activists.

This is the second time that the State has altered charges against the six activists. In May Nyazamba told High Court Judge Justice Samuel Kudyia that Gwisai, Gumbo, Choto, Zimuto, Chakuma and Mombeyarara would no longer face trial on a charge of treason but for allegedly subverting a constitutional government in contravention of Section 22 of the Criminal Law (Codification and Reform) Act.

From the Zimbabwe Lawyers for Human Rights (ZLHR).