



The Journal of the Britain Zimbabwe Society

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Robert Gabriel Mugabe: 1924–2019 Kuziwakwashe Zigomo and Julia Gallagher on the life of Zimbabwe's first president

Robert Mugabe, who led Zimbabwe to independence in 1980 and ruled it for 37 years, has died at the age of 95.

Reviled by many who saw him as anti-democratic, an abuser of human rights, who presided over one of the world's most dramatic economic collapses, he was also admired as liberation leader, and a defender of African values against Western neo-imperialism – a father not just of Zimbabwe but of African nationalism.

The real Mugabe was a mixture of the two: a towering political operator, he controlled party and country with a mixture of cold brutality, brilliant strategy and disarming flashes of sympathy. Mugabe seemed unchallengeable until the final years when failing health and what was seen as the undue influence of his wife Grace contributed to his downfall in a military takeover in 2017.

A generation of heroes

Mugabe belonged to the generation of African liberation heroes. He outlived most of his own generation, including the veteran heroes within his own political party, ZANU-PF.

As the world's longest-standing president, his success is often attributed to his skill in 'balancing the scales' of power within his own political party and amongst opposition groups by pitting factions against each other. He would study his political rivals, and weigh up their strengths and weaknesses, not only with his political competitors, but also with the broader civil society and amongst international partners. He could bestride the agenda on a whole raft of issues including land reform, ethnicity, race, citizenship and belonging, identity,

neo-colonialism and economic development, indigenisation, religion and politics, democracy and African values.

Mugabe's policy on land reform was particularly controversial. The issue of land had, since the colonial period, been sensitive and multi-dimensional. Restoring land to the autochthonous population was enormously important. To the many Zimbabwean peasants who were given land after independence and following the fast-track land reforms in the 2000s, Mugabe was a father and a provider.

The land issue also helped underpin Mugabe's authority in more directly material ways, helping to co-opt traditional Elders and Chiefs within the state's agenda, and cementing the patronage networks that would ensure him control over the population and continued electoral support.

Authoritarian and violent measures

But Mugabe resorted to authoritarian and violent measures to maintain his power. Opposition and many civil society groups point to the undermining of democratic principles and human rights, the erosion of the freedom of the media, his repression of civil society, labour and individual rights. They argue that his misguided economic programme, designed to keep his party in power, came at the cost of widespread hardship.

Land resettlement took place within the context of a noisy and often vitriolic relationship with both Britain and other Western donors. His stance on land, on white farmers, on the opposition parties and on the West in general, tended to be rolled into one as he positioned himself as a

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nationalist leader. Western leaders were nearly always wrong-footed by this strategy.

Mugabe had enormous standing across Africa. His version of Pan-African ideology and political philosophy in many ways shaped the region. He served as the Chair of both the Southern African Development Community (SADC) and the African Union (AU), demonstrating significant regional support.

However, African leaders have remained divided on Mugabe. Some would have liked to see him go, particularly at the height of Zimbabwe's political and economic crisis. But many acknowledged him as a national hero in the liberation struggle, and his pan-African legacy and fight against neo-colonialism continues to resonate and to impact on the African continent.

Early life

Robert Gabriel Mugabe was born on 21 February 1924 in Matibiri Village near Kutama in the District of Zvimba. His father Gabriel, a Malawian-born carpenter, and mother Bona Mugabe, already had three sons, Michael, Raphael, Donat. Two sisters, Bridget and Sabina, were born after Robert.

Robert's early life was shaped by discipline, hardship and perseverance. On the death of his oldest son Michael, Gabriel left the family and Bona raised the remaining children alone.

Bona had a particularly close relationship with her fourth son. A devout Roman Catholic, she believed the studious Robert was destined for the priesthood, and attempted to groom him for this role, saving the little food they had in the house for him and favouring him over his siblings, believing that he would one day become a great leader.

It was not only Bona who believed that Robert was a 'holy child'. The head of his rural mission school, Jesuit Priest, Father O'Hea, took Mugabe under his wing. O'Hea fed Bona's beliefs about her son, telling her that he had received revelations from God of Robert's destiny.

Robert was reserved and withdrawn as a boy. An avid reader, he embarked on multiple self-imposed study programmes which, later, helped him acquire six degrees while in prison. He obtained a scholarship to continue his studies at the University College of Fort Hare in Pretoria, South Africa in 1949, and then went on to a teacher-training programme in Ghana in 1957.

There he met his first wife, Sarah Francesca Hayfron (later known as 'Sally' Mugabe or 'Amai' meaning 'Mother').

Political involvement

Ghana, newly independent in 1957, was an exciting place. Inspired by the charismatic leadership of Kwame Nkrumah, nationalist movements were forming all over the continent, not least in Rhodesia-Zimbabwe, and Mugabe was heavily influenced during his time there.

On a visit home from Ghana in 1960, Mugabe became

involved in politics. His in-depth knowledge of politics, eloquent nature and impressive public speaking skills were quickly identified by the nationalist leaders of the time, the National Democratic Party (NDP). He gave his first political speech in July of that year, addressing about 7,000 protestors against the arrest of two of their leaders. In this speech, he expressed his desire that 'the Ghanaian experience be seen as a model for all African states ... the effective blending of all classes which would be necessary for the nationalist movement to succeed'.

However, with more prominent leaders, such as Joshua Nkomo and Ndabaningi Sithole, then leading the nationalist movement, Mugabe still had to make his mark. His first opportunity came with the disintegration of the National Democratic Party (NDP) and formation of ZAPU (Zimbabwe African People's Union) under Nkomo's leadership, which gradually led to the break-away faction of ZANU (Zimbabwe African National Union), formed in August of 1963 under Sithole's leadership.

These parties came to represent the country's two main ethnic groups, ZAPU the minority Ndebele and ZANU the majority Shona. Mugabe became ZANU's Secretary General, part of the core leadership group along with Herbert Chitepo and Enos Nkala.

Clearing the way to leadership

Political tension rose in Rhodesia as the white minority government resisted the decolonisation that was reshaping Africa. In 1964, the government banned the operations of all nationalist parties and many of the nationalist leaders, Mugabe included, were detained. The Unilateral Declaration of Independence (UDI) followed in 1965.

For Mugabe, 1964 marked the beginning of a decade in prison. There, he acquired several further degrees and used his teaching skills to educate other inmates. He had to endure the news of the death of his first, and then only, son – Michael Nhamodzenyika ('the troubles of the nation') Mugabe, in 1966 at the age of three. Many have argued that the refusal of the colonial regime to grant him permission to attend the funeral shaped Mugabe's animosity towards the white Rhodesian Government and Britain.

Mugabe developed a range of political skills during the independence struggle. He proved skilful in playing on ethnic and ideological rifts within the nationalist movement during the early 1960s, exploiting rivalries and arguments to rise within the party and cement his power base. The assassination of Herbert Chitepo, elected Chairman of ZANU in 1964, and a viable successor to Sithole, and the mysterious death of Josiah Tongogara in 1979, cleared Mugabe's way to the leadership. Suspicions persist about his involvement in both incidences.

From 1975, he proved his leadership skills by organising and training the guerrilla forces in Mozambique during the height of the War of Independence, supported by Edgar Tekere – a member of ZANU's Central Committee at the time – and his first wife Sally. He also relied on the

support of his assistant, Emmerson Mnangagwa, who would later be his right hand man following Zimbabwe's independence and throughout much of his political career.

This period was critical in establishing his leadership credentials and war hero status amongst the guerrilla forces and within the ZANU-ZANLA nationalist wing of the Party. By the time of the Lancaster House talks in 1979, Mugabe was the unrivalled leader of ZANU. In Zimbabwe's first elections, the party won 57 seats to ZAPU's 20 and the ANC's three.

'Golden years'

Mugabe was now the leader who was to take on the role of Prime Minister from 1980-1987, and then President of Zimbabwe in less than a decade. This early period would, for many, mark the 'golden years' for Zimbabwe.

For black Zimbabweans, Mugabe's early administration brought significant gains. Most rural communities were given health facilities in walking distance from their villages, secondary school enrolment rose from two to 70 per cent in ten years, with literacy levels increasing from 45 to 80 per cent.

For this generation, Mugabe was a national hero who freed them from the colonial forces, and the leader who granted them economic opportunities, political freedoms and civil liberties they had not experienced before. Mugabe also enjoyed considerable international acclaim, admired for his commitment to mass welfare, his steadfast endurance under pressure from a hostile South Africa, his active and ultimately successful interventions in Mozambique and Angola and his generous stance towards the white community.

Economically, Zimbabwe was relatively successful in the first decade of independence, and was often referred to as the 'bread basket' of Africa.

However, there was also a brutal, repressive approach, seen most clearly in the suppression of dissent in Matabeleland during the 1980s.

Gukurahundi ('sweeping away the chaff'), initially launched to flush out the ZAPU-ZIPRA 'dissidents', included the torture, mutilation and systematic execution of an estimated 20,000 Ndebele civilians. This, along with Mugabe's rumoured role in assassination attempts on his main political rival Joshua Nkomo, and a continuing neglect of Matabeleland, fuelled ethnic divisions, which continue to this day.

Further controversy

Personal controversies also made a mark. One was Mugabe's affair with his much younger secretary, Grace Marufu. He had one child with Grace before Sally's death, named after his mother, Bona, followed by Robert Junior. A third child, Chatunga Bellarmine, was born after their marriage, which took place in 1996.

Alongside this were increasingly evident excesses exhibited through massive government spending, private helicopter trips, and lavish birthday parties against the

backdrop of rapidly deteriorating economic circumstances and a repressive electoral system. The marriage became the focus of media attention, warping his public image.

By the mid-1990s, Zimbabwe's economy was in trouble. Years of drought, coupled with a dramatic and disastrous Economic Structural Adjustment Programme, which liberalised large parts of the economy, contributed to stagnation, rising prices and unemployment. The unscheduled compensation for war veterans in 1997 and Mugabe's costly military intervention in Congo in 1998 further undermined economic stability.

Land reform

The government faced increasing political pressure, which came to focus on land reform, an issue fudged at independence.

In the mid-1990s, most of Zimbabwe's best land remained with a small number of white commercial farmers, while the black rural population occupied less fertile and overcrowded communal lands. In 1997, Mugabe's government raised the unresolved question of compensation with the British government. The request was flatly refused.

By 2000, Mugabe was under pressure on several fronts. A new political party, the MDC, led by the charismatic trade union leader Morgan Tsvangirai presented the first substantial opposition. The MDC appealed largely to the urban population, and spoke out against the squeeze created by economic decline and growing infringements of civil liberties. It achieved a stunning victory in 2000 by leading a successful referendum campaign to defeat proposed constitutional reforms. Mugabe's core support base in the rural areas was where pressure over land reform began to build and when, in 2000, groups of war veterans began to occupy white-owned farms, the government gave tacit and then explicit support.

Crisis

By the mid-2000s, Zimbabwe had entered a period of acute crisis. Commercial farming had largely collapsed under pressure from the land seizures, and the government had resorted to printing money, generating eye-watering rates of inflation which made normal daily life virtually impossible.

The MDC's growing strength put pressure on a ruling party determined to hang onto power, and political repression and violence reached dramatic proportions. Operation *Murambatsvina* – in which large areas of urban housing were demolished – was launched in 2005.

Ostensibly a clean-up of informal urban housing, it was largely seen as an attack on MDC strongholds. The election campaigns of 2005 and 2008 were marked by widespread beatings and intimidation of opposition supporters. Millions of Zimbabweans left the country for safer prospects elsewhere.

Zimbabwe came under increasing criticism and

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‘Cultural nationalism’ and human rights

Mugabe’s enormous political skill can be seen in his ability to harness domestic and international events in the service of an agenda that spoke to colonial and post-colonial grievances in Zimbabwe and beyond.

One example is LGBT rights, which gained traction from the middle of the 1990s. Advanced initially by a white minority at the Zimbabwe International Book Fair, the cause became part of broader racial, cultural and religious questions, and was skilfully used by Mugabe to paint the opposition parties as pro-Western and un-Zimbabwean amongst a largely socially conservative population.

Zimbabwe is a religious country. Mainstream Christianity surged after independence and more Pentecostal and African Initiated Churches (AICs) also emerged. Mugabe managed to position the homosexuality debate as a culturally religious one, arguing that homosexuality was not essentially African or for that matter ‘natural’, but immoral, a Western construct and part of a neo-colonial agenda.

Mugabe’s position on homosexuality would continue to be a deeply controversial and dividing factor among not only African states and the donor community, but also within and amongst the Churches in Zimbabwe with avid supporters of the Mugabe regime – such as Harare Anglican Bishop, Peter Hatendi, and his successor, Bishop Nolbert Kunonga (ex-communicated in 2008) – taking a strong stance in the 1980s and 90s.

Other mainline churches which had aligned themselves to a more democratic agenda took a more confrontational position towards the state, and were then painted as pro-homosexuality.

The issue was also used to cement the idea that the MDC was advancing a neo-liberal and neo-colonial agenda, reinforced by the party’s growing support in the white commercial farming community and among Western donors. This made it easier for Mugabe’s regime to undermine the opposition’s public image, portraying it as a ‘puppet of the West’, significantly weakening it in the 2013 elections.

In the face of growing government corruption, a tainted land reform process, increasing economic hardship, and a vigorous opposition, ‘cultural nationalism’ became Mugabe’s method of bolstering support for the regime especially within the rural population, which still constitutes the vast majority of Zimbabweans.

The emphasis on a cultural form of nationalism also served as a subtle reminder of what life had been like for many impoverished and oppressed Zimbabweans under colonial rule, helping re-assert a feeling of African identity and patriotism amongst the black population.

It has also presented a challenge for the universal human rights and democracy debate in Zimbabwe. Where other African leaders have been seen to buckle under the pressure of international organisations advancing neoliberal and secular agendas in return for economic gains and developmental aid, Mugabe, for most of his presidency, stood firm.

This made him a controversial and admirable leader for some Zimbabweans, many of whom respected him for preserving African values and tradition in a secular new world order.

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sanctions from the West, and a further drying up of foreign investment. But Mugabe was able to present the West as a scapegoat for Zimbabwe’s problems, linking Western ‘neo-colonialists’ to the MDC and remaining white farmers, and drawing on his own credentials as a liberation leader to frame the political situation as the ‘Third *Chimurenga*’ or war of independence. This line played well amongst his supporters, and more broadly in the region.

Elections

Mugabe only ever officially lost one election – the constitution referendum in 2000 – but his victories in many of the others were tainted by accusations of rigging and intimidation, especially when he came second to Tsvangirai in the first round of the 2008 presidential elections.

The result – announced after weeks of delay – was inconclusive, and in the run-off between the two men that followed, the levels of violence forced Tsvangirai to flee the country and then withdraw from the contest.

In the muddled Mugabe victory that followed, regional leaders, led by South Africa’s Thabo Mbeki, stepped in to enforce a power-sharing arrangement under which Tsvangirai would serve as prime minister under Mugabe’s presidency. The Inclusive Government, as it became known, created an uneasy five-year period, in which Tsvangirai diminished in stature while Mugabe, drawing on years of experience and backup up by the security forces, consolidated his grip on power. Testament to his mastery of the political scene, Mugabe went on to win a decisive victory in the 2013 elections and became chair of SADC in 2014 and of the African Union in 2015.

Final years

Mugabe was due to stand again for the presidency in 2018. He never liked losing – indeed his wife Grace boasted that he would be re-elected even if he ‘stood’ as a corpse. Such was the power of the man who dominated his country since its birth.

His final years were dominated by succession battles within ZANU-PF. With former vice-president Joice Muzuru’s Gamatoto faction ousted in December 2014, the next couple of years were consumed with factional disputes between G40 allied to Grace, and Lacoste, allied to incoming vice-president, Emmerson Mnangagwa.

Whilst G40 was composed of some reformists, such as Jonathan Moyo, Saviour Kasukuwere and Patrick Zhuwawo, Lacoste was composed of the party’s ‘old guard’. Many had participated in the liberation struggle and prided themselves on having sought to restore the liberation ideals of the party. They included Constantino Chiwenga and Chris Mutsvangwa.

The disputes escalated when it was suspected that Mugabe was grooming his wife to succeed him, the most telling sign being the constitutional amendment to include the position of a female vice president. The possibility of a Grace Mugabe presidency, coupled with the abrupt ousting of Grace’s main

BZS 2019 Research Day: Creativity and Innovation – Research and Resilience in Zimbabwean Arts and Science 15 June 2019

This year's Research Day included a wide range of speakers, all of whom represented the remarkable innovative skills Zimbabwe has to offer.

BZS Chair Pauline Dodgson-Katiyo and Dr Miles Tendi (Oxford African Studies Centre) welcomed participants and took the opportunity to pay tribute to the late Shelagh Ranger, who died on 17 February. Shelagh was the widow of the late BZS founder, Professor Terence Ranger. The day's programme took the form of four panels, covering the arts and science, and a keynote speech on finance – see below. Most of this issue is devoted to the Research Day.

Keynote speech: EcoCash and Digital Financing

This year's keynote speaker was Natalie Jabangwe, the CEO of Ecocash Zimbabwe.

A computer engineer by profession, Natalie is also a published business technology columnist on online platforms who contributes to the worldwide body of knowledge and advises conglomerates on how to apply technology as a pillar for corporate innovation.

Ecocash is an online system of banking, she explained, that can be used with mobile phones, and which offers a range of services – including accessing airtime, paying for goods and services nationally within Zimbabwe and internationally, withdrawing cash and depositing money and – significantly – receiving money from the diaspora.



Natalie Jabangwe, the CEO of Ecocash Zimbabwe speaking at the BZS 2019 Research Day.

Photo © Rori Masiane.

First steps

Natalie graduated from Middlesex University in the UK and has an Executive MBA from Imperial College, London. As a student, a Leadership Exchange Scholarship took her to Spelman College, Atlanta, where she was an intern in the office of the mayor.

She has since been credited with helping to develop Atlanta's information technology security.

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rival, Mnangagwa, on 6 November 2017 proved to be the catalyst in unlocking a rapid chain of events that saw senior military personnel orchestrate a coup. Under pressure, Mugabe resigned on 21 November 2017, and Mnangagwa took over the presidency.

Mugabe's fall was greeted with celebration in much of the country. The liberation hero and veteran leader was confronted with the fact that his own people no longer wanted him in power.

The final two years of Mugabe's life were marked with bitterness and a rapid deterioration of his health. He did, however, dish out one final blow to his former right-hand man on the eve of the July 2018 elections. In a televised speech, he made it clear that he would not support Mnangagwa or Zanu PF.

Robert Mugabe's death heralds the end of a profoundly important chapter for Zimbabwe, and for the whole of Africa. He was the last, and in many ways one of the most important, of the continent's liberation leaders.

Kuziwakwashe Zigomo is an MPhil student at Royal Holloway University of London, conducting research into political and religious leadership in Zimbabwe.

Julia Gallagher is Professor of African Politics at SOAS, University of London. She has published two books on Zimbabwe, Zimbabwe's International Relations: fantasy, reality and the making of the state and Why Mugabe Won: Zimbabwe's 2013 elections and their aftermath (co-authored with Stephen Chan).

Further comments and obituaries:

Wilf Mbanga (MENAFN – SomTribune): <https://menafn.com/1098981917/Yes-we-loved-him-once-Robert-Mugabe-Obituary>

Stephen Chan in The Guardian: <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2019/sep/06/robert-mugabe-obituary>

Alex Magaisa The Big Saturday Read: <https://www.bigsr.co.uk/single-post/2019/09/06/Big-Saturday-Read-The-death-of-Robert-Mugabe>

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In 2012, she was asked by Econet Wireless – (‘a diversified telecommunications group with operations and investments in Africa, Europe, South America and the East Asia Pacific Rim’) in Zimbabwe to head the business and market development of EcoCash, Africa’s second largest mobile financial service.

Since its launch, it is estimated that the platform has handled over US\$4,5 billion with over 170 million transactions processed. (<https://www.pindula.co.zw/EcoCash>)

A cashless society?

Ms Jabangwe claimed to be overseeing a move towards the kind of cashless society that is still in its early days in Europe, with 80 per cent of Zimbabwe’s adult population registered with Ecocash. In addition to being useful and flexible, she said, a digital system can go some way to stabilising the country’s currency by making it harder for the government to simply print money.

At the core of this presentation was the point that innovation is essential to building the economy. But she did not believe this could or should be state-led. She linked the power of the diaspora to innovation (Ecocash’s parent company is the product of the diaspora, having been founded by Strive Masiyiwa a London based Zimbabwean entrepreneur, and graduate of Cardiff University.)

Digital innovation, she said, can benefit a huge range of aspects of the economy – healthcare, marketing, communications are all benefiting from Zimbabwean diaspora innovations. She said:

With innovation and the help of the diaspora, ‘We can create the Zimbabwe we want to see. While you are in the diaspora, pick a cause and really run with it. Young Zimbabweans are full of potential.’

She said that, often, ‘you will fail, but you can learn from that. Don’t stay cushy in the UK: network, connect and amplify. Be noticed, launch unapologetically in a big way. World class training can bring world-class innovation – ‘we can innovate our way out of poverty.’

In discussion after her talk, Natalie addressed issues around gender representation – ‘we must mentally resist patriarchy, drive for appointments on merit, and at a very practical level, support women’s saving clubs’.

Other questions from the floor reflected concern about online security, and the difficulties of working online when the government closed down the internet.

Ultimately, Natalie felt that success, despite all the difficulties, could come with confidence on the part of the people – which went beyond having confidence in the president. Success should not all be down to government, she emphasised.

https://pindula.co.zw/Natalie_Jabangwe#Econet_Wireless

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Strive_Masiyiwa

Follow-up

Ms Jabangwe’s presentation was highly optimistic. For less up-beat analyses, see the following sites:

<https://qz.com/africa/1671195/zimbabwe-power-blackout-hits-ecocash-vulnerable-economy/>

<https://internationalbanker.com/finance/currency-problems-persist-in-zimbabwe/>

and two links to the same radio programme:

<https://www.bbc.co.uk/sounds/play/w3csz3r4>

and *Are sanctions to blame?* on Apple Podcasts

See also page 6 of our June issue: *Zimbabwe’s Zombie Dollar: (it’s dead but still alive)* by Tomas Brickhill). See also letter on page 16 of this issue.

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Victor de Waal

Kathy Mansfield Higgins

Representatives of: Stevenage-Kadoma Link

Association; Zimbabwe Association

Note: There are vacancies on the Executive: please contact Pat Brickhill if you are interested in joining it.



Young Researcher Award

The Research Day was the occasion on which the BZS, in partnership with the Oxford African Studies Centre, presented its Young Researcher Award. This year's winner was Dr Roselyn Masamha, who is based at the University of Hull, for her work on the politics of knowledge production in relation to an African identity within nurse education. Photograph © Rori Masiane

Panel 1: Policy, Design and Innovation in Science

Dr Louise Bezuidenhout, Dr Julius Mugwagwa and Dr Geoffrey Banda

Dr Louise Bezuidenhout: *Labhack: A Creative Solution to Laboratory Equipment Shortages*

Dr Bezuidenhout, who has a special interest in life-science research in developing countries, especially sub-Saharan Africa, spoke of ways to overcome the lack of equipment for students to use in practical work.

Dr Bezuidenhout explained that effective undergraduate science education involves a combination of theory and practice – students must be able to carry out laboratory experiments and put the theory they learn in lectures into practice. But, in Zimbabwe, as in many African countries, science education is compromised by a lack of laboratory equipment .

But hands-on training is vital: undergraduates need the opportunity to learn to conduct experiments, to use equipment and to make mistakes. A lack of ‘proper’ equipment means that either they do not get this experience, or have to work in very large groups.

Large amounts of equipment are necessary – but ensuring undergraduate teaching laboratories have enough of this is expensive and unlikely to be a priority for Zimbabwean institutions or even foreign funders. Thus, there is little to suggest that the current situation will change: grant-funded structures tend to be project-specific and infrastructure funding is often not permissible. Added to that is the fact that the equipment used in the global north is actually more expensive in Africa because of transport and import costs. (She quoted the cost of a PCR (polymerase

chain reaction) machine used in molecular biology as costing £6,000 in Oxford – but £26,000 by the time it reaches Harare.)

Other challenges include the fact that repair and maintenance are both expensive: equipment comes with proprietary reagents that are expensive to import; and designs often do not fit the infrastructural challenges they have to meet (such as fluctuating power provision of overloaded circuits).

‘Something needs to be done’

There is also the problem that many institutions have very specific ideals of what a lab should look like: that is, they should look like laboratories in the global north, and this means little is done to fix, adapt or repurpose existing equipment. Things that could be used sit idle.

Dr Bezuidenhout quoted students and teachers as highlighting this: ‘... when it comes to practical, that’s where there is a problem ... it’s just like pushing them to go through without actually doing.’

And students, when they graduate, may be theoretically proficient but unprepared for STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics) professions ... it means we’re getting “half baked” students at the end of the day.’

So it’s evident that something needs to be done.

As an STS (Science and Technology Studies) researcher, Dr Bezuidenhout had always been interested in this problem, ‘particularly because I believe we are overlooking some key opportunities that could make a significant difference.’

‘The first,’ she said, ‘is that Africans are experts in

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frugal innovation and “making a plan”. I don’t think anyone in the audience will quibble with the idea that African innovators can make a plan out of pretty much anything.’

Also, she knew that creativity and ability within student populations is under-appreciated. She felt that the undervaluing of creative innovation in Africa was reflected in the low uptake of the ‘Open Hardware Movement’ – which involves individuals making their own low cost versions of laboratory equipment. It is used a lot in ‘citizen science’ communities in the global north, but is becoming more influential in academia as well. (<https://opensource.com/resources/what-open-hardware>)

Labhack

Dr Bezuidenhout explained that, while working in Zimbabwe, she began thinking about the proven creativity within the general public and in academic communities. She came up with an idea – what about students making their own equipment? After all, she believed that experiencing using any equipment at all was better than waiting for (and probably not getting) the ‘right’ equipment. Making it would also help students understand how it works, and give them experience in co-operating in teams, as well as documenting and encouraging critical problem-solving.

This was when she and Dr Helena Webb from Computer Science in Oxford, designed Labhack: a space for students to experiment with Open Hardware (<https://www.labhack.net/how-it-works>)

It was an undergraduate challenge for students to build low cost equipment only from materials

available to them in their home context.

Ten interdisciplinary teams competed, hosted by the Harare Institute of Technology. Science clubs from local schools also took part.

The design challenges focused on creating easy-to-use, low cost equipment (for under \$100) using materials they could find in their own learning environment. The object was to foster collaborative problem-solving and to get students to think creatively about how to enhance their learning experience.

‘We set them three challenges: polymerase chain reaction (PCR) machines, centrifuges and magnetic stirrers’.

There were also interactive workshops on 3D printing, 3D imaging, RRI (Responsible Research and Innovation), Arduinio programming and Open Hardware. There were also social events and hands on workshops – including using a \$10 microscope.

‘The students really unleashed their creativity,’ said Dr Bezuidenhout and reported that they came in well under \$100 with, for example, a centrifuge made from cardboard, another using a kitchen blender and a bioreactor using coffee.

The object was not to produce prototypes that could be marketed (which would take a lot of time and investment), but simply to get students to realise that they can creatively address shortages in their own environments, and, by working in interdisciplinary teams, enrich their learning experience by getting to grips with the machines that make science work.

‘We want them to realise that there are many ways you can add value to your own education, and that you don’t always have to wait for someone else to provide you with the tools.’



Scaling up

Labhack coverage was scaled up after the Zimbabwe event, with one event in Pretoria in 2018 and a series of events in the SADC region planned for June to

The award-winning design from the Zimbabwe LabHack, from Team Smevfy: a desktop centrifuge with programmable settings. Photo © Louise Bezuidenhout.

December. The aim is to increase the awareness of Open Hardware as a driver for change.

More support from institutions for Open Hardware is needed, as is a recognition of the importance of getting African voices into design discussion.

These Labhack events led to the conclusion that, ‘African voices’ saw a degree of neo-colonialism in the design of equipment and laboratory spaces: if the standards for these are always set in the global north, Africa will always be catching up – which makes it important to look for other ways that effective STEM education contexts can be constructed.

Dr Bezuidenhout noted that by allowing the global north to set the standards in STEM education, we are under-using a rich seam of amazing creativity and ingenuity.

She asked, ‘Are there other ways effective STEM education contexts can be constructed – and does STEM education always have to look a certain way? And, finally, are we missing out on opportunities to redefine standards of excellence?’

Dr Louise Bezuidenhout joined INSIS (the Institute for Science, Innovation and Society, Oxford University) as a research fellow in February 2017, and is currently working on the Changing Ecologies of Knowledge and Action (CEKA). Louise remains an honorary lecturer at the Steve Biko Centre for Bioethics at the University of the Witwatersrand (South Africa) and is active in advocating for better education on Open Data for scientists.

Dr Geoffrey Banda: *The TIBA (Tackling Infections to Benefit Africa) Partnership and Pharmaceutical Manufacture in Zimbabwe*

Dr Banda described how tackling infections, especially those caused by neglected diseases is critical for building up resilient health systems.

His talk discussed the research in Zimbabwe by TIBA – a large collaborative research programme led by the University of Edinburgh with nine African countries, mostly in East and Southern Africa. Dr Banda focussed in particular on the preparations for paediatric praziquantel clinic trials (for the treatment of schistosomiasis – also known as bilharzia) to be held in Zimbabwe. This was the research that led to the changing of the WHO (World Health Organisation) treatment guidelines for children under five

years old, drawing attention to the gap in paediatric formulations. He also discussed the history of pharmaceutical manufacturing in Zimbabwe and how the technological and innovative capabilities built earlier enabled Zimbabwe to be one of the first African countries to manufacture antiretroviral drugs, and briefly discussed the challenges the industry faces.

For more about TIBA, see:

<http://tiba-partnership.org>

<https://www.scottishglobalhealth.org/projects/tackling-infection-to-benefit-africa-tiba/>

<https://www.pediatricpraziquantelconsortium.org/news-events/african-led-tiba-partnership-tackling-neglected-diseases>

<http://tiba-partnership.org/news/news-brief-july-2018>

Dr Geoffrey Banda is a multi-disciplinary researcher interested in the intersection of health and food security.

Dr Julius Mugwagwa: *Research and Innovation: Exploring Opportunities for Re-optimising Zimbabwe’s Economic Growth*

Dr Mugwagwa began by saying that scientific knowledge and technological innovation are essential for supporting economic development.

That includes building social wellbeing and protecting the environment – which can be seen in the way Zimbabwe has, over the years, developed and/or adopted and deployed different kinds of innovation, with different levels of impact on the economy.

Dr Mugwagwa’s approach was both historical and contemporary, exploring how public and private organisations can optimise their approaches for assessing the relevance and impact of innovations at local, sector and country levels. In the last two decades, he admitted, despite having so much potential, Zimbabwe has experienced so much retrogression. Now, to achieve growth, the Zimbabwean economy needs resilience, creativity and innovation.

The need for spaces

‘The arts and sciences are key in these issues,’ Dr Mugwagwa said. ‘For me, these connect with my interests around health systems, technologies, innovations, development, space, pace and direction.’

He explained that he had a particular interest in ‘spaces’ – local or global – as arenas for practice, and as lenses through which to look at and challenge assumptions behind ways of thinking and doing research and innovation.

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It cannot be ‘research and innovation as usual’. There is constant need to explore and deploy and strategies and measures to align innovations with national development policy choices. Economies now exist in a rapidly changing world, in which, among other dynamics, markets are emerging and re-emerging in unpredictable ways and boundaries between local and/or global supplies and markets are increasingly blurred.

To confirm Zimbabwe’s historical and current deployment of innovations for societal wellbeing, Dr Mugwagwa listed some insights from his recent research on spending in health care in Zimbabwe and South Africa, which revealed various responses to health delivery challenges being used to get the best from limited and shrinking resources.

These included innovative organisational health staff training and deployment models, establishing health data collection partnerships with mobile phone companies; the decentralisation of diagnosis and treatment options for non-communicable diseases such as cancer, and community involvement in the management of health facilities.

A history of innovation

Zimbabwe’s rich history of innovation goes back at least to the beginning of the last century, when the then Department of Agriculture was investing in hybrid maize as far back as 1903 along with developments in livestock farming, tobacco growing and other innovations between then and the 1930s. At independence in 1980, Zimbabwe seemed poised for rapid economic growth, with one of the most diversified and advanced manufacturing sectors in Africa, with extensive links between manufacturing and key economic sectors, especially mining and agriculture.

Even now, Zimbabwe still has a relatively well-developed education system, and a respected long-standing tradition of promoting research and development (UNESCO, 2014). Dr Mugwagwa believes that Zimbabwe still also has significant latent infrastructural, institutional and intellectual capital to do locally relevant yet world-leading research.

Challenges

But there are challenges and realities which necessitate rethinking and re-imagining how the country deploys research and innovation. We must ask, Dr Mugwagwa said, whether Zimbabwe’s Science Technology and Innovation (STI) agenda is policy- or problem-driven and examine the bureaucratic processes for approving research; we must address

institutional rivalries and ‘overlaps’, de-cluttering space and getting away from a situation in which intentions are good, but delivery gets bogged down by unnecessary and self-reinforcing inefficiencies.

On an immediate, practical level, we need to address persistent problems, such as limited research uptake. A responsive, relevant and resilient Zimbabwean research and innovation system will emerge from an interplay between research on/about Zimbabwe (context matters); research in Zimbabwe (location matters); research with Zimbabwe (relevance matters); research for Zimbabwe (needs matters); and research from Zimbabwe (contribution matters). A lot of research and innovative activity is already addressing these areas, which would benefit from intentional, directed and coordinated efforts in documenting, curating and sharing such activities with relevant sectors of the economy.

A dynamic set of realities

There is a dynamic set of realities that forms the background and foreground of what a good innovation policy should be able to deal with. Zimbabwe has a large informal economy, high unemployment rates and new farmers. How do we develop and capture research and innovation within, with and for these sectors? An efficient innovation policy recognises the need for risk-taking, experimentation and innovation and makes sure that this balances agility with systematising, formalising, and specifying how things are done. It leverages heritage and legacy issues while balancing between modernisation and preservation. These balances are much harder to attain and sustain in dynamic and rapidly changing contexts such as that in Zimbabwe, yet such contexts are fertile grounds for innovation.

This puts pressure on the wider political and economic environment to ensure the availability and linkage between complementary factors for innovation such as education systems, managerial capital, business climates, financial markets and the needs of consumers.

Where do we go from here?

An innovation system invariably exercises stewardship over many and various policies and communities. The dynamic and heterogeneous context for Zimbabwe begs reflection on whether a centralised innovation system is the best organising framework for the country. Does it do enough to recognise that there are many kinds of innovation required (formal or informal, hidden or in the open)? There may be a

need to revisit some of the existing institutional architectures and mandates to validate their fitness for purpose. In agriculture, for example, is the Department of Research and Specialist Services geared for the needs of new farmers? If not, how can it be made so? There is also need to look again at existing policy and practice – why, for example, must it take three years for nurses to get a certificate of good standing when the country so badly needs skills to keep the health delivery service running?

Final reflections

Zimbabwe needs to develop and deploy predictable and consistent structures, pathways, lessons and goodwill to draw from elsewhere and from the country's rich history

to shape current innovation systems.

Zimbabwe, like other countries going through economic turmoil, offers itself and the wider world opportunities for rethinking innovation systems – including the role of the diaspora, and the formal, informal and private sectors.

Decisions and efforts need to be channelled towards documenting, curating and rewarding innovative practice. The country's economy has demonstrated immense resilience, and needs now to leverage these for recovery and inclusive growth.

Ultimately, there is indeed an imperative for Zimbabwe to do research and innovation differently.

Dr Julius Mugwagwa is Innovation Systems Scholar, University College London.

Panel 2: Resilient and Relevant: A Conversation About Time and Space for the Zimbabwean Diaspora

Dr Julius Mugwagwa and Roselyn Masamha

A Discussion

This interactive presentation was a critical reflection on the roles that Zimbabwean diaspora populations can play in shaping economic and societal development trajectories in Zimbabwe.

Building a case for recognition and harnessing the difference, resilience and relevance of these populations, the presentation argued for a conversation around time and space as vantage points of knowledge co-location and co-creation which can enhance individual and societal progress.

Using case studies of Zimbabweans in the UK and in Zimbabwe, the presentation explored people's current locations in different professional settings, how they had to adjust from roles they played in Zimbabwe and how these adjustments could be a source of lessons as Zimbabwe tries to adjust into new and dynamic socio-economic contexts. It was envisaged that these adjustments and shifts could be assets that would enable a different, yet relevant contribution to an evolving Zimbabwe by the diaspora.

The ideas of difference, resilience and relevance have long permeated the stories of Zimbabweans in the diaspora. As a diaspora, Zimbabweans regularly share experiences of sustained struggle and of constant compromise that demonstrate a different kind of resilience and of battles to stay relevant.

Being different: the advantages

The sustained belief that, as a people, Zimbabweans can do something different is useful in creating hope

in a discouraging climate. When we start to compare where Zimbabwe is against other more developed countries, it is easy to think that we will never get there. But we think this only if we intend to follow exactly the same route to progression as these more developed places did, which would take years.

We can instead do things differently, and focus on a smarter approach. Automation, for example, is key to this – through lived experiences in the diaspora, we now have a different understanding of time from the one we held before our exposure to other cultures and different time rules. Time is money, time is ideas, time is possibilities; an ability to manipulate time rather than allowing time to manipulate us.

We can make use of artificial intelligence and other new technologies, capitalising on our location and our access to information and relationships that we have now built with people from other nations, to enable us to present Zimbabwe in a more balanced way than the often-one-sided media representations.

Zimbabwe is also different in the sense that, until recently, it was seen as a relatively peaceful place. It is our hope that recent atrocities will be a blight of our past rather than the basis for our future interactions and the value placed on human life and suffering.

We are cautious that this view can be contested by other Zimbabweans, whose history is not reflected 'the good old days'. Petina Gappah, in 'An Elegy for Easterly', reminds us that, for some Zimbabweans,

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the ‘good old days’ never existed. We hope that our individual and collective exposures in the diaspora will create sustained comfort in our own identity and respect for differences (in vocations for example – let’s face it, many never saw cleaning, or even plumbing, as valued professions!), engagement across cultures, empowerment of people and broader social cohesion. There are, of course, inter-generational differences and tensions that need to be turned into opportunities.

Being different: the setbacks

The notion of ‘we are different’ is one reason why, as a Zimbabwean population, we have often failed to harness the power of collaboration with other Africans: an incredibly unhelpful perspective where a broader inclusion approach could have been significantly beneficial. From Zimbabweans in the UK who live in different regions we have learned much that we did not know about our fellow Zimbabweans.

That same ignorance permeates our assessment of other Africans. We recall even as children holding a belief that we were better than them – a sense of superiority which ironically, we had just fought to rid ourselves of in the struggle for independence. Yet here we were exerting that same dominance.

It was evident in the derogatory terms we used for Mozambicans, Malawians and Zambians in particular. It was there in our claim to higher rates of literacy, better English, better infrastructure, more positive representation by the West, clinging to the constantly reiterated ‘breadbasket of Africa’.

Thus, our focus on our so-called progressiveness blinded us to its fragility. Now we seek refuge from our own crisis in ‘less progressive’ neighbouring countries – in Mozambique, in Zambia, Namibia, Tanzania, South Africa and Botswana – with their ‘poor’ infrastructure, broken English and ‘backwardness’.

We need to try to understand each other’s histories, how we became what we are, and to comprehend that success as a people from the African continent comes from working together.

Necessity-induced resilience

Living transnationally across different societies, each with their own often competing demands, there are stories of dislocation alongside sustained connections and resilience within the Zimbabwean diaspora as is seen as in other diaspora through:

- struggles to raise children within and against the surrounding culture;

- workplace tensions, lack of progression, not being accepted;
- financial difficulties, balancing remittances and living expenses;
- belonging both at work and with the society
- deciding whether to leave or to stay?

These realities have forced migrant individuals and communities alike to build resilience through some kind of ‘innovating in adversity’ responses, including the building and deployment of competence, confidence, connection, character, contribution, coping, and control strategies.

Relevance

The notion of relevance is a basic human need; to matter, to be able to make a sustainable contribution. How to make ourselves relevant is a question that confronts diaspora communities. The first step is to begin to see each other as resources rather than competitors. We need to rid ourselves of the unhelpful tension between the Zimbabwean diaspora and Zimbabweans at home exercised through the popular ‘zvirikufaya’ memes which present the competing arguments:

- ‘We are better because we left’ versus ‘we are better because we stayed’.
- ‘We are the ones on the ground so our understanding of the situation is better, you are too far away versus ‘we are a healthy distance away from the situation and so can view it with perspective, you are too close to see things objectively’.

Instead, a more beneficial conversation would be to acknowledge that different positionalities are an advantage to each other – we can understand these contrasting positionalities as a tool for collaboration, we can begin to think and talk about how we can use these coalitions effectively. At present, this is happening on a small scale, mainly in relation to individual material and financial rewards. There is more to be done towards creating inclusive societal value leveraging our different geographical locations. There is a new social fabric to co-create within the realities of diaspora and home fronts that are likely to be present for a long time.

Our different locations should not spawn feelings of being better, but should serve as sources of creativity for collective effort, national goodwill and resilience.

Dr Julius Mugwagwa is Innovation Systems Scholar, University College London, and Dr Roselyn Masamha is this year’s winner of the BZS Young Researcher Award (see page 7).

Panel 3: The Arts Journey From Past to Future

Anna Mudeka, Valerie Kabov, Dr Pam Zigomo



The session began with a recital from musician Anna Mudeka, a singer and mbira virtuoso. Photo © Rori Masiane

Valerie Kabov: Introduction To an Enigma

After more than a decade of adversity, which left its art scene isolated and under-resourced, Zimbabwe's small but resilient art community has rebounded.

Aspiring artists came to Harare for training, mainly at the two key art schools: the National Gallery Visual Art Studio and Harare Polytechnic.

The National Gallery spearheaded international engagement with the Zimbabwe Venice Biennale Pavilion, which has been staged continuously since 2011, while initiatives like the First Floor Gallery began a regular programme of international art fair participation in 2012, creating consistent and high quality engagement with international art audiences, with Village Unhu following suit.

This flowering echoes that of other African countries, but Zimbabwe is unique. Its population is only 14 million, it is emerging from a period of dire economic straits, has not much of an art market and no international quality tertiary teaching institutions. Yet its artists like Misheck Masamvu, Moffat Takadiwa, Gareth Nyandoro, Wycliffe Mudopa and Virginia Chihota punch well above their weight internationally

What, then, is behind this success?

The conventional Eurocentric view is that missionaries such as Canon Peterson, who founded the Cyrene Mission School in Bulawayo in 1939 and Father

Groegerat of the Serima Mission in the 1940s, introduced modern painting into Zimbabwe, with a view to painting churches, believing that African artists could reach the same heights as Europeans.

Later, in 1957, Frank McEwan, the first director of the National Gallery in Rhodesia established the Studio Workshop, sponsored by British American Tobacco, and fostered stone sculpture alongside painting. This produced some notable artists and resulted in an exhibition, 'New Painting from Rhodesia', at the MoMA (Museum of Modern Art in New York) in 1968.

Independence proved a significant rupture. As artists and artworks sponsored by colonial endeavours were losing favour there emerged a need for new forms and movements for a young country.

Two pillars of contemporary art, Helen Leiros and Tapfuma Gutsa played a crucial role in keeping the art sector alive. Their work was augmented by the inspirational flurry of activity produced by Chiko Chazungunguza and Cosmos Shiridzinomwa at Harare Polytechnic Fine Arts department.

The economy plunges

As Zimbabwe's economy plunged at the beginning of this century, the Gallery Delta's singular effort was key to survival of contemporary art. Helen Leiros's encouragement is behind the burgeoning international careers of artists now in their mid-to-late 30s, such as Lovemore Kambudzi, Misheck Masamvu, Gareth Nyandoro, Admire Kamudzengerere, Richard Mudariki, Virginia Chihota and Portia Zvavahera.

Leiros's passion for teaching and painting preserved the history of and respect for the medium, despite almost overwhelming difficulties. Artists like Thomas Mu, Louis Meque, Thakor Patel remained relevant and influential despite the problems of finding educational expertise and, indeed, materials.

Making one picture can cost an artist more than a month's rent: the choice between eating and painting is real. Yet art schools persevered – turning to painting with acrylics and even poster paints and focusing on accessible media like card-print and found object sculpture.

Through the works of Misheck Masamvu, Gareth Nyandoro and Portia Zvavahera, international audiences have come to know new Zimbabwean painting punctuated with powerful metaphoric figuration and bold gestural statements, an. this ethos of place also informs the works of their younger colleagues.

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The strength of painting in Zimbabwe has been cemented by new artists forging ahead but also collaborating with and mentoring those following them.

Among them, Wycliffe Mundopa, Gresham Tapiwa Nyaude, Mavis Tauzeni, and Helen Teede are outstanding for their expressive commentary.

For Mundopa, 'this suffering is what makes us' – a sentiment that pulsates through his paintings. Drawing out his admiration for the Dutch Masters, Mundopa makes us feel that, if they had been living in Harare today, their paintings could have been like this.

Also informed by life in Harare, but more satirically motivated, Gresham Tapiwa Nyaude's practice is the epitome of the tongue-in-cheek street-smarts of his native Mbare. Visually translating slang and vernacular, Nyaude works in waves – exorcising each subject to exhaustion before subjecting a new victim to his keen wit.

Helen Teede, apparently an outlier as an abstract artist, is immersed in her country's landscape – which enables it to become a crucible for social commentary.

Conversely, Mavis Tauzeni uses painting, card-print and other forms to create feminine directions in a highly testosterone-driven field. Deeply personal, Tauzeni's imagery oscillates between the surreal, futuristic and dreamy and has created space for female artists like Miriro Mwandambira, Keresia Mukwazhi and Shalom Kufa to work with materials relevant to Zimbabwean young women.

Sculpture

In sculpture, Tapfuma Gutsa's influence is tangible as a role model and in terms of insight into the properties of materials. Gutsa remained rooted in Shona tradition and spirituality but, in introducing novel materials, opened the door to younger artists to move beyond the anthropo- and zoo-morphic approach to sculpting and to incorporate metaphysical and conceptual elements within abstraction.

Through Gutsa's influence we can understand the extraordinary feature of emerging art in Zimbabwe – how artists dovetail with issues of conceptual practice and philosophy of their western peers, despite their immense resource disparity.

But this historical narrative cannot comprehensively explain the level of talent and quality of art production in Zimbabwe, as these are contiguous with the culture, values and passions of the people.

At its core, Zimbabwean culture is characterised by an ability to appraise life philosophically, with a

measure of detachment, manifesting itself in many aspects of Zimbabwean tradition, from the immense importance of avoiding conflict and preserving social relationships, to the sophistication and conceptual structuring of Zimbabwean proverbs, monotheistic spirituality and belief in the sacredness of human life. This culture underpins the incredible optimism and perseverance of Zimbabwe's people and its artists.

The outcomes have been most startling in sculpture. Moffat Takadiwa, in particular, from 2010 onwards, developed a coherent practice in conversation, with his materials and their use and misuse in the daily urban lives of Zimbabweans. Using garbage dumps as a source for his materials, Takadiwa emerged with a new language, where found objects became intimate partners in storytelling. His most internationally acclaimed works are assembled with the intricacy of Persian carpets, and expressed in patterns simultaneously ancient and expressively contemporary.

Younger sculptors, like Wallen Mapondera, Takunda Regis Billiat, Troy Makaza and Julio Rizhi took on this new approach, each evolving his own relationship with chosen materials and themes. For Mapondera, it is based on fabrics, strings and cardboard; for Billiat it is cow horns and hooves and telephone receivers, books, beads and wire and textiles. For Makaza it is intensely vibrant silicone and for Rizhi it is seductively luminescent molten plastic.

Commitment and perseverance

Another unique feature of the tiny Zimbabwean contemporary artist community is that almost every internationally successful artist has remained in the country.

This courageous loyalty has also meant that the older artists have taken up the challenge of mentoring the younger generation, with new impressive talents such as Amanda Mushate emerging from the mentorship of Gresham Tapiwa Nyaude, Epheas Maposa, under the wing of Mishek Masamvu and artists at Admire Kamudzengerere's Animal Farm studio.

The commitment and perseverance of contemporary artists in Zimbabwe to succeed on their own terms is exemplary. This has been an invitation to delve under the cover of preconceptions, stereotypes and misdirections in order to develop an approach towards understanding of the factors shaping this remarkable contemporary art movement.

Valerie Kabov is co-founder and Director of Education and International Projects at First Floor Gallery.

Pamela Zigomo : *Exploring the Open Space where Art for Charity Events Can be a Catalyst for Transformation*

Professor John Gaventa, Director of Research at the Institute of Development Studies, University of Sussex, has proposed three main spaces for participation*.

He talks of *closed spaces*, for decision makers; *invited spaces*, which are sanctioned and created by policy makers to engage with the public; and *claimed spaces* or *informal spaces*, created by the public to challenge oppressive systems.

These spaces are influenced heavily by the existing power relations in the societal structure.

Open spaces

This paper starts from this perspective and then proposes that there are *open spaces* at the intersection of the arts and the economy, specifically the visitor economy, where Zimbabwean visual artists are acting as catalysts for change and creating alternative narratives around the country's destination marketing activities.

In Zimbabwe, destination marketing strategies created in the closed spaces have followed the widely accepted format adopted by many nations in the global south, where the messages and images use colonial perspectives which focus the gaze of the visitor on beautiful, empty landscapes with iconic landmarks, big game and associated hunting or safari activities.

Zimbabwean bodies in these images are often displayed from a deficit perspective of either producing part of the spectacle of performance or as petrified subjects in need, awaiting assistance from the foreign visitor. These images and messages unfortunately prompt a response from visitors that is often exploitative and unsustainable.

Some artists based in Zimbabwe and the diaspora work in the margins to challenge these narratives by sharing the stories and images of the charitable projects they are engaging with. These projects hold much potential as they appeal to emerging sustainable and responsible segments of the tourism market.

Collecting data

A qualitative research approach was used to collect and analyse data, including online content and focus group interviews with local artists. Initial results indicate that the arts sector faces some key challenges regarding effective operating networks and spaces

for collaboration. If we scrutinise the Zimbabwean visual arts sector, we can still see multiple levels of closed spaces – where policy makers create restrictive censorship and taxation laws that affect the creative output and economic status of both gallerists and artists.

Problem spaces

Private gallerists, exhibition designers and curators also work in their own closed spaces to decide on the cultural product they will place value on and the artists they will support. We are also seeing a decrease in the number of claimed spaces – indigenous artists have tried to create their own claimed spaces by setting up galleries and studios in informal settlements, but the government has destroyed these in city clean-up exercises like Operation Murambatsvina/Restore Order in 2005 and the more recent action against street vendors and informal traders in 2017.

Invited spaces are also problematic given the reduced levels of trust between the government and the public. They are viewed with limited credibility as events like the Arts and Culture Indaba are created for policy makers to engage with artists but – given the existence of oppressive laws such as the Censorship and Entertainment Control Act, the Public Order and Security Act (POSA) and the Law and Order Maintenance Act (LOMA) – artists are cynical of any true change arising from these spaces. Claimed spaces can also become problematic when viewed negatively as spaces of revolution.

The findings of the research also indicate that in the interplay between arts and national development, the myth must be debunked that economic transformation is a zero-sum game where only policy makers and commissioned experts in closed spaces can bring about change.

Opportunities

An opportunity for transformation lies in establishing open spaces where Zimbabwean visual artists can establish their own spaces for change and create more intentional local and international collaboration networks that enable them to lead in giving back to their communities as well as contribute to the nations wider economic development.

Dr Pamela Zigomo is Senior Lecturer in Event Management at the University of Greenwich

*Gaventa 2006 *Finding the Spaces for Change: A Power Analysis* https://www.powercube.net/wp-content/uploads/2009/12/finding_spaces_for_change.pdf

Panel 4: Borders and Cultural Exchange

Lisa Sidambe, Rob Lehmann and Imogen Brodie; Dr Lennon Msishi

Lisa Sidambe, Rob Lehmann and Imogen Brodie: *The Policy work of Nhimbe Trust in the Context of Cultural Policies Worldwide and The Young Vic's Exchange Programme with Nhimbe Trust*

This panel of the day began with a discussion about the relationship between the Bulawayo-based Nhimbe Trust and London's Young Vic Theatre Company.

Nhimbe Trust is a non-profit non-governmental organisation that works at the intersection of culture and development to foster local socio-economic development. Its mission is to advocate for public policies that recognise, enhance and foster the contribution that cultural industries make to Zimbabwe's socio-economic development. Its programmes have consistently contributed to action in youth and women empowerment. It is committed to pioneering work that defends freedom of artistic expression. Through legislative and grassroots action, it advocates for national policies that recognise, enhance and foster the contribution the arts can make.

A relationship emerges

Rob Lehmann and Imogen Brodie from the Young Vic described their relationship with the Trust, which began in 2013, when Josh Nyapimbi, Executive Director of the Trust received a Commonwealth Fellowship, which entailed spending a number of weeks at the Young Vic. The idea of an international cultural collaboration emerged, culminating in an exchange programme for young creatives in Zimbabwe and the UK.

In 2017, seven young women from the UK took part in a theatre exchange programme with seven local women in Zimbabwe creating *The Unified Women*: and produced a unique theatre piece exploring themes such as migration, conflict and feminism.

More recently, in 2019, the Young Vic and Nhimbe Trust co-produced a project called *Umotlo* with 12 young people from the UK and Zimbabwe, exploring Zimbabwe's complex relationship with Christianity and colonialism. This was led by dual British and Zimbabwean national theatre director David Gilbert. The presentation explored the ongoing relationship, challenges and possibilities – an international partnership entails.

International co-operation

In highlighting the successes of the cultural exchange programme to date, Rob Lehmann and Imogen

Brodie emphasised the importance of international cultural cooperation as a conduit of innovation, and an enabler of resource sharing, capacity enhancement and cross-border interaction.

Lisa Sidambe focused on Nhimbe's policy work, and in particular, the role of culture in enhancing transitional justice mechanisms. Her aim was to ask, when a community's history has been defined by narratives of conflict and has been a product of oppression or injustice, how do individuals reconcile their whole being with past injustices, and make sense of the injustices of both the past and the present?

Her paper sought to answer such questions through the lens of culture and cultural democracy.

She considered how the ecology of culture can be made vibrant in lived cultural spaces where protracted conflict and systemic oppression have reconfigured cultural identity and a sense of cultural belonging.

By questioning whether people write their own cultural narratives or exist in cultural frames that already have been predetermined and imposed, Lisa's presentation engaged an experimental process of exploring how cultural policies and strategies can capture transformational shifts around how policy responds to injustices (past and present) and the cultural distinctions that are instrumentalised to further oppressive systems.

Lisa said, 'The BZS Research Day is a space that challenges assumptions, a platform that redefines research excellence and a forum that inspires innovation. It provided an unparalleled opportunity for me to contribute to a creativity hardware that I am sure will enhance Zimbabwe's development trajectory.'

Lisa Sidambe is Program Director of Global Affairs at Nhimbe Trust. Rob Lehmann is Head of Participation at the Young Vic Theatre in London, where Imogen Brodie is Director of the Young Vic's Taking Part team – see <https://www.youngvic.org/index.php/taking-part/what-we-do>

Dr Lennon Mhishi: *Why don't you carve other animals: Crisis, Creation and Conviviality*

Here, I am borrowing from Yvonne Vera's question: Why Don't You Carve Other Animals?

I used this as an invitation to tell the varied stories of Zimbabwean existence. Rather than be subject to the tyranny of forms of knowledge that centre on abjection

and the experiences of black suffering, I am interested in the possibilities of subversion, joy and conviviality, even as the material conditions of existence reinforce marginality and abjection. I proposed to do this through music, tracing, through the idea of crossings, the way particular kinds of sound and mobility in different contexts have shaped what we understand of Zimbabwe and Zimbabweans today – from the Pioneer Column to the armed struggle against colonial rule to our present experiences of migration and diaspora.

Exemplifying experiences

I played the song *Chitaunhike* by the Bhundu Boys to exemplify some of my experiences with music and being Zimbabwean in the elsewhere, and how these sounds can become a collapsing of time and space, evoking memory and figuring in the tensions of belonging and the continuous work of reconstructing ‘home’.

In exploring the place of music in shaping Zimbabwe’s elsewheres, I also referenced ‘Zim dancehall’,

a genre that finds early expression in the interactions amongst Zimbabweans and others of the Afro-Caribbean diaspora in the UK in the 1970s and 80s. This saw reggae artists from the UK performing in Zimbabwe, especially after Bob Marley’s performance at Independence. Several sound systems were later to morph into ‘Zim Dancehall.’

This reference is part of unravelling the complications of mobility and the tensions of belonging, and locating the histories of the circulation of sound that now shape forms of convivial existence.

I end with the question of what kinds of narratives and knowledge can be tools to thinking and writing Zimbabwe differently and productively, and are also responses to the relationships of power and knowledge that have shaped how we understand Zimbabwe.

Why, then, don’t we carve other animals?

Dr Lennon Mhishi is a post-doctoral research associate in Politics at the University of Liverpool.

REVIEW

Kathy Mansfield Higgins reviews Cook Off: a film written and directed by Tomas Lutuli Brickhill and produced by Joe Njagu

This is a wholly Zimbabwean film. And it is a triumph. It has been shown at international film festivals and won two prestigious National Arts Merit Awards (NAMAs) in Zimbabwe for Best Feature Length Film and Best Actress for the film’s lead, Tendaiishe Chitma.

All the actors and technical staff are Zimbabwean. It was produced, on a shoestring and mountains of optimism, by Zimbabweans.

But it is also a film with a universal theme: David against Goliath – except in this witty, funny and moving production, David is Anesu, a single mother, played by the marvellous Tendaiishe Chitma. And this illustrates one of the underpinning principles of what has been described as a ‘feel-good’ movie. It is feel-good with class – and principles.

A femisist film?

Women are central. Writer/director Tomas Brickhill says he has not made a feminist film – but it is fantastically feminist in its casting of women in non-stereotyped roles.

The central character is female, surrounded by strong female family and friends; the villain is female, as is the director and other staff of the TV show featured.

It’s not heavily underscored – it just shows twenty-first century life as it is. Women work and play and carry job responsibilities along with male counterparts, in Zimbabwe as in Britain. There are plenty of men in the film – good, bad and indifferent. And a wonderful boy – Anesu’s wise and mischievous son, Tapiwa – played with such verve and confidence by Eugene Zimbudzi. We all want sons like Tapiwa!

Although a love story emerges, the film passes the so-called Bechdel Test (Google it!).

This film also gives a counter-narrative to African stereotypes. It is not about famine or corruption or AIDS. There is no message about stigma or poverty. It is a film about life anywhere – of the resilient poor as they make ends meet, laugh and love and worry and make their way through life. It is a film about ourselves: taking risks, loving our children, misunderstanding our mothers, falling in love, being hard done by, and coming through. And it is a film about COOKING!

Authenticity

The action takes place in Harare’s working-class suburb of Budiriro and we enter the small houses, crammed with furniture; we ride in combis, a tsotsi ends a rotten day for Anesu by stealing her bag as she walks home.

We see an ancient Mazda 323, bouncing along the dirt roads, and the glamorous white coupe of the villain. We see Tapiwa’s mother supporting his athletic efforts – a metaphor for life’s lessons. Mothers can learn from sons.

It’s great to be in Anesu’s modest kitchen and watch the magic as she cooks, the implements she has at hand, her style and her smile – Nigella Lawson this is not! We also go out for dinner with her, glammed up to the nines by her worldly friend, Charmaine, played by a modish Charmaine Mujeri. Her dinner date is the lovely Prince, played by hip-hop artist Tehn Diamond.

Sebastien Lallemand’s cinematography is stunning –

Continued on next page

A tribute to Dumiso Dabengwa from David B. Moore

Zimbabwean liberation war hero Dumiso ‘DD’ Dabengwa, the former head of intelligence for Zimbabwe African People’s Revolutionary Army, the armed wing of Zimbabwe African People’s Union (ZAPU), has died aged 79.

In the late 1970s, Dabengwa faced two enemies: the Rhodesian forces and those of Robert Mugabe’s Zimbabwean African National Union (ZANU). In the 1980s South Africa and the United Kingdom joined those antagonists.

This tribute is inspired by a picture making social media rounds following Dabengwa’s death – probably taken in 1981 at the New Sarum airfield outside what was Salisbury. (It cannot be shown here for copyright reasons, but can be seen in the link given at the end of this tribute.)

Dabengwa is with Rex Nhongo, commander of the newly-integrated Zimbabwean military forces. The two soldiers symbolise the unity to be forged out of Rhodesia’s and the two nationalist parties’ security forces as they entered Zimbabwe’s democratic dispensation.

That task’s difficulty is shown by the possibility that the two were on their way to Entumbane to calm the battles raging between the two nationalist armies. They would fail – and would land on different sides of Zimbabwe’s post-liberation story. Dabengwa would be jailed by his erstwhile comrades. Nhongo would retire, rich and still a power-broker in his party – until his fiery death in mid-2011.

Interneccine violence

About five years earlier, an effort emerged to create a united ‘people’s army’ out of ZANU’s guerrilla forces, ZANLA and ZIPRA.

Nhongo had once been a ZIPRA soldier, but left during ZAPU’s devastating interneccine disputes in the early 1970s. With ZANLA’s commander in Zambia’s jails suspected of murdering the national chairman of ZANU, Herbert Chitepo, Nhongo was, by 1976, at the head of ZANLA. Thus he became the commander of the Zimbabwe People’s Army (ZIPA), supposedly an attempt to unite the two nationalist armies.

But his heart was not in it. He ordered his soldiers on, engaging the Rhodesian forces to kill ZIPRA fighters first. There were battles between the two armies in training camps. What should Dabengwa have done?

‘Cook Off’ Review’ continued from previous page

we are there in Harare in all its dawn and dusk glory, seeing it as the world-class city we hope it will be again.

Last, but perhaps it should be the first feature to be mentioned: the totally Zimbabwean soundtrack.

This and all other music are provided by Zimbabwean musicians. It cries out for an album release and provides the emotional storyline for the film – outstanding from the first beat to the last.

ZIPRA withdrew a good number of troops, but adhered to the agreement to unite the armies. But, before long, Robert Mugabe and Nhongo sidelined the group that really believed in the unity project. Dabengwa told Moore many years later that ZIPRA was too militaristic, ignoring democratic processes. He took a wait-and-see approach.

With the adherents to unity gone, ZANU’s anti-ZAPU sentiments opened further. The party’s 1978 political education tract claimed that ZIPRA forces planned to let ZANLA smash Rhodesia’s ‘racist state machinery’ single-handedly. Once victory was achieved, ZIPRA would ‘crash (sic) ZANLA and seize political power...’

Gukurahundi

These and other ZANU-related imbroglios made life very difficult for Dabengwa, a man entrusted with ZAPU’s intelligence. Yet with ‘freedom’ – hastened by Soviet assistance to ZIPRA – Zimbabwe became even more central to Cold War and South African intrigue. As Zimbabwean political scientist Miles Tendi attests, Dabengwa and Josiah Tongogara, then the top ZANLA general, played a key role with the ‘Patriotic Front’ (another effort at unity between the two main liberation parties) at the late 1979 Lancaster House negotiations that led to Zimbabwe’s new dispensation.

Dabengwa himself said in a mid-2018 interview that he and Tongogara thought they could push the unity idea beyond an agreement to maintain unity at diplomatic negotiations, but remaining separate for all other purposes. They wanted political unity. They carried out research among the soldiers, who indicated agreement. Yet Tongogara’s suspicious death as he drove to a Mozambican camp days later killed that dream: Gukurahundi was only steps away.

Dabengwa’s interview leaves little doubt about Gukurahundi’s roots. At independence, the British had already decided with Mugabe to carry out this genocide and to ensure that that no one of the Ndebele nation would be allowed to be Zimbabwe’s leader.

Conspiracy and persecution

On 9 May 1980, weeks after Zimbabwe’s 17 April freedom celebrations, Mugabe visited British Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher. He complained that ‘some’ in ZAPU wanted to continue the fight and the government might have to act against them.

Danny Stannard, Rhodesia’s Special Branch director,

PS If you want to know what on earth is the final culinary concoction created in the Cook Off contest, it’s Baked Alaska with candyfloss – ‘the most difficult dessert I could find,’ says Brickhill. Really? Another authentic, funny and remarkable touch in a film worth spending a couple of hours of your life watching.

Dr Kathy Mansfield Higgins is an independent consultant based in Milton Keynes

stayed on during the new era. With the then Minister of State Security, Emmerson Mnangagwa, he organised the transition of Zimbabwe's security services – precisely to keep the region Communist-free, Stannard told one of us in 2014. He thought Mnangagwa was the man for that job.

Stannard held Dabengwa in venomous disregard and was certain that in February 1982 his Soviet allies were rolling to the Entumbane barracks.

In March the ZAPU cabinet ministers, Dabengwa, deputy armed forces commander Lookout Masuku, and four other ZAPU officials were arrested and charged with treason. Arms caches had been 'discovered' on ZAPU properties.

In December 1982 a Whitehall officer wondered if the British should reconsider support for a regime seemingly hell-bent on eliminating ZAPU and its potential supporters. He wrote, 'if we refuse military sales and aid' Mugabe might approach the USSR – albeit reluctantly. Other reasons to keep Mugabe on side included selling arms and jet fighters, as well as paving the road to Namibian and South African settlements.

Treason charges for all but Dabengwa were dismissed in early April 1983. But as he and the others walked out of court they were jailed again under the Emergency Powers Act.

Peacemaking

By this time, the Fifth Brigade had been in Matabeleland for several months: Gukurahundi was underway with its terror, mass starvation, and murder. When they were released in 1986, ZAPU had to stop the carnage, agreeing to be absorbed into ZANU (PF). Dabengwa's reluctant agreement was essential; it took his authority, and that of Zapu leader Joshua Nkomo, to persuade the ZIPRA ex-combatants and the Zapu youth to merge.

The Cold War was on its last legs. Zanu (PF) had won its war for a one-party state. During the 1990s, with Nkomo as vice-president in the revised Zanu (PF) government, Dabengwa took on posts ranging from Home Affairs minister to managing the long-gestating but never funded Matabeleland Zambezi Water Project.

He left government in 2000. In 2008 he abandoned the ZANU (PF) politburo and revived ZAPU.

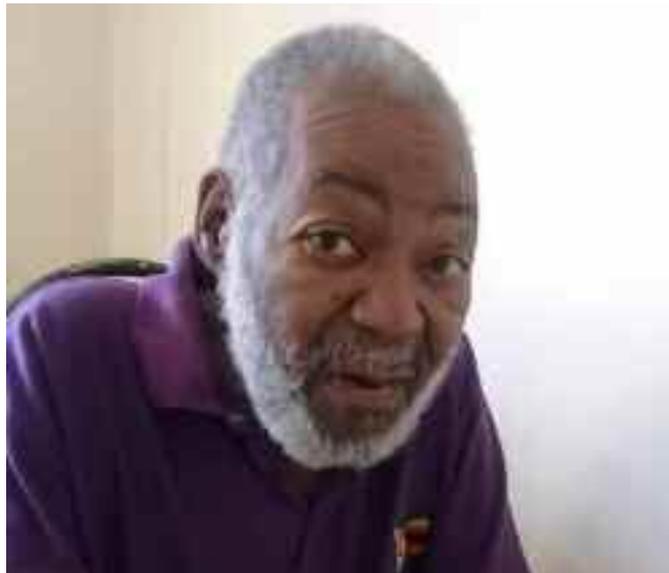
There cannot be a man deserving more to rest in peace than Dabengwa.

David B. Moore is Professor of Development Studies and Visiting Researcher, Institute of Pan-African Thought and Conversation, University of Johannesburg

David Galbraith, a retired Professor of English at University of Toronto and who spent the early 1980s in Matabeleland, contributed to this article.

This very slightly shortened version of a tribute that can be seen in full at <https://theconversation.com/a-tribute-to-zimbabwean-liberation-hero-dumiso-dabengwa-117986>. It is reproduced with the authors' permission.

Stephen Joel Chifunyise remembered by Peter Churu



Stephen Joel Chifunyise, photograph © Chipso Chifunyise

The lion of Gutu, Stephen Joel Chifunyise, Shumba Sipambi is no more. At around 18.30 on Monday 5 August 2019, Stephen succumbed after a brave battle with cancer at his home, surrounded by his family. He was 70.

Eulogies will now flow in from all over the world, such was the man's influence as an educationist, an arts administrator, an actor, dancer, cultural and policy expert, playwright, sportsman, father, grandfather, friend and mentor. Stephen represented the best of whatever he had set his mind at yet remained good humoured and accommodating, regardless of who sought his counsel or friendship.

Stephen was equally comfortable among artists whom he regarded as his peers, government ministers and other officials when he was director of arts and culture and when he was permanent secretary for the Ministry of Education, Arts, Sports and Culture. He was at home in the vaunted environs of leading world bodies such as UNESCO where he was a respected expert on culture, heritage, conventions and policies.

Legacy

Stephen has left a colossal legacy as a globally celebrated playwright with a remarkable output of over 70 performed and published plays.

Under his aegis, the Mbende Jerusarema dance was declared an intangible cultural heritage. In the 1980s, Stephen played a leading role in the introduction of Theatre for Development in Zimbabwe. At the same time, he, with another iconic late figure, Ngugi wa Mirii and friends, was instrumental in the formation of the Zimbabwe Association of Community Theatres (ZACT) which saw an exponential growth of community theatre in Zimbabwe's high density suburbs.

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Stephen was Chairman of the 1st Frontline Film Festival which eventually became the Southern African Film Festival. Together with his long-time friend and theatre accomplice, Robert McLaren, they set up the vibrant CHIPAWO which is a safe, creative space for children and young people. Generations of Zimbabwean creatives have been incubated at CHIPAWO.

Stephen Chifunyise dedicated his life to his craft, his culture and his African people. Beginning in Zimbabwe to Zambia and the rest of the world, the man meant different things to different people. He was a fountain of knowledge and wisdom.

Celebrating his gifts

As the lion roars no more, let us celebrate his life and the many gifts he has left us for that is the best way he would want us to remember and honour him.

Peter Churu is a Harare-based actor, director, producer and scriptwriter.

BRITAIN ZIMBABWE SOCIETY MEMBERS MEETING AND 2019 AGM

**Saturday 26th October 2019 1.30
for 2.00 to 3.00pm**

**Hilda Clark Room 3 Friends Meeting House,
173-177 Euston Road, London NW1 2BJ**

All members and friends of BZS are welcome

*Please see separate mailing for further details
of this meeting. This year, there will be no event
after the meeting, but BZS hopes to organise
an event soon focussing on the current
situation in Zimbabwe.*

Letter

The following letter is in response to an article on page 3 of our March edition of the Zimbabwe Review.

Re Joe Musekiwa Chikanya's conclusion on 'economic strengths in the new government':

1. Infrastructure investment

Can he give examples? The state press has reported many 'mega-deals' which turned out to be preliminary enquiries, which failed. Some projects started early in the year are now at a standstill, adding US\$2 billion to the national debt.

2. Fighting off corruption:

A few very small fish have been hauled to court: not the biggest offenders, who are at the top of ZANU-PF.

3. Open up for democracy

Can anyone seriously say this after the rigged election; state violence against any expression of people's grievances; the proposed new Act to replace POSA; the current treason trials of activists who attended meetings on human rights abroad?

4. Re-engagement with the west

If anything, British keenness on our 'strong man' has faded because of the democratic deficit despite all the efforts of Richard Dowden and the Royal African Society. Has he not seen the recent message from the EU to Zim government on this? They are waiting to see action on points 2 and 3.

5. Trade liberalisation

Means very little when we don't have money to buy or sell goods – except platinum and other minerals still in the ground. Basically, no one will trade with or lend to people who can't pay their debts, keep their promises or run a paras-tatal honestly.

OK, he was writing in March, so 3) and 4) could not have fallen into his view, but the rest of this was already obvious.

Fr Brian MacGarry, Harare

Britain Zimbabwe Society Membership Form

To join and receive regular newsletters, e-mail discussion forum and conference discounts please print off and send the form below to the membership secretary with your remittance to:

Margaret Ling 25 Endymion Road, London N4 1EE

Please enrol me/us in the BZS

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|----------------------------|--------|--------|-----------------|--------|--------|
| Ordinary | £18 | £21 | Unwaged/Student | £7.50 | £10 |
| Joint (two at one address) | £21 | £23 | Institution | £40 | £40 |

Membership runs by calendar year, renewals are due on 1 January each year.

Rate A applies to those who pay by Standing Order (please ask for a form to be sent to you).

Rate B applies to those who pay by cheque (made out to 'Britain Zimbabwe Society'), or online on our website: www.britainzimbabwe.org.uk/membership

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