



The Journal of the Britain Zimbabwe Society

BZS is 40! See page 15 for details of a special 40th anniversary meeting on 12 June 2021

What Kind of In-patient Psychiatry for Africa? Derek Summerfield reports from Zimbabwe

Global mental health is an expanding field. Yet little or no attention has been paid to evaluating the culture of psychiatry prevailing in in-patient services across Africa.

In Zimbabwe, in-patient psychiatry has been heavily pathologising, with over-reliance on the diagnosis of schizophrenia and on antipsychotic polypharmacy (using multiple medications simultaneously for one person). It is not helpful that the next generation of African doctors are learning unmediated Western psychiatry, with little credence given to background cultural factors and mentalities shaping presentations. Some of the psychiatric and social consequences of this for patients in Zimbabwe are discussed here.

A continuing legacy of colonial times

Ingutsheni, in Bulawayo, is one of a handful of great psychiatric asylums built by the British in the colonial era across Africa. Today, it has around 725 in-patients, most admitted involuntarily, and the majority have been there for years, even decades. Ingutsheni's role in the regulation of a subject people was something the psychiatrist Franz Fanon, writing in and about Algeria during that country's war of independence, called the 'pathology of colonialism'.

For the past three years I have been a visiting lecturer in psychiatry at the National University of Science and Technology School of Medicine in Bulawayo, the country's second medical school.

I observed that, at Ingutsheni, medical notes are often scanty but what stood out to me is the indiscriminate use of 'schizophrenia' as a diagnosis, and that, whatever the diagnosis or length of stay there, virtually all patients are on ongoing antipsychotics, invariably as well as anticonvulsant medication, for unclear clinical reasons.

These medicines have chronic side-effects such as Parkinsonism and dystonias (movement disorders in

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which a person's muscles contract uncontrollably), which are commonly visible on the wards. There are also interactions between psychiatric medication and the HIV treatment needed by many in-patients.

People admitted after an event that might be time-limited – such as cannabis-induced intoxication or psychosis, or an episode of family conflict and violence to property – are often discharged on open-ended antipsychotics. There is no clinical case for this. Yet, if they stop taking the medication, their families bring them back to the hospital, presuming that the doctors have deemed continuing use to be crucial to their health. A further admission to restart unnecessary medication follows.

I do not mean to point at the few doctors currently in post, rather at the continuing legacy of the psychiatric culture imported during colonial times.

The blanket use of an imported diagnosis such as 'schizophrenia' brings with it the negative reputation it has had in Western societies – the assumption that the condition is chronic and an association with disability in social roles and work.

The senior sister on the 'rehabilitation' ward told me that two-thirds of her patients, typically long-stay, were psychiatrically fit for discharge but that their families were reluctant to accept them back because

Continued on next page

Psychiatry: continued from previous page

of stigma and the assumption that they would always need medication and never be productive.

These perceptions also reflect the desperate times almost everybody is living through: widespread poverty and food insecurity, with the formal employment rate standing at around three per cent, and public services barely functioning.

The manufacture of a chronic psychiatric patient

These factors, in combination with the overuse of the diagnosis of schizophrenia, contribute to the manufacture of a chronic psychiatric patient, whose place in the world is lost as their stay in Ingutsheni lengthens.

Yet in the 1970s the World Health Organisation (WHO) international pilot study of schizophrenia (which assumed a unitary condition worldwide) found that psychosis in non-Western countries (Nigeria, India, Columbia) seemed to have a better outlook than in the West (USA, Denmark).

In Africa there are more cases of short-term, reactive psychosis or other stress-driven presentations which should not be called 'schizophrenia'.

At Ingutsheni, fourth-year medical students clerk patients (examine them and record their details) and present them to me and another lecturer in clinical seminars. Medical training is a formal engagement with modernity and the students know implicitly that indigenous knowledge is outside modernity's limits.

As a consequence, they tend to discount patients' references to African interpretations of adversity – which emphasise external agency via bad spirits or ancestors – and to remedies such as the use of traditional healers. These are understood to be outside the framework of proper psychiatric assessment.

For example, in one case, the patient's predominant complaint was that 'my ancestors want me to suffer'. This is a culturally unremarkable attribution for adversity in Zimbabwe (as generic here as 'it was God's will' might be elsewhere). But the student understood that there was no place for this in the (imported) psychiatric textbooks. Instead she interpreted the complaint as evidence of formal mental illness, a paranoid psychosis, as the textbooks – not written with Africans in mind – seemed to dictate. Similarly, stand-alone 'hearing voices' largely reflect a culture-bound idiom of distress in Africans and not mental illness. But in Ingutsheni, and doubtless elsewhere in Africa (and, I have found, in the NHS too), auditory hallucinations alone in socially distressed people are assessed as denoting active psychosis requiring antipsychotics. This is what happens when cultural

background is ignored and the Western psychiatric canon is considered definitive.

A call to challenge 'global mental health'

A crude and homogenised version of Western psychiatry may well operate across the continent in in-patient settings and elsewhere, regardless of context.

As mentioned above, this is a pathologising system, relying heavily on polypharmacy. It plays out in a continent whose central dynamic is poverty and hunger. Is this culture of psychiatry, which is passing to the next generation of African doctors, fit for purpose?

Medical school curricula should legitimate the part played by indigenous forms of knowledge, getting students to see that socio-culturally shaped understandings are not merely incidental, but at the heart of the illness experience. There is no one 'schizophrenia', and no one 'psychology'.

As the Ingutsheni cases demonstrate, these issues create real consequences for patients and their families across Africa. Framing the question of what kind of in-patient psychiatry would best suit Africa's realities is the WHO-supported drive to encourage the 'scaling up' of Western-style mental health services worldwide.

African governments are urged to invest in such services, yet they have pitifully little money even for physical healthcare – in Zimbabwe per capita expenditure on health is one of the lowest in Africa.

Moreover, what wider costs may accrue when non-Western mentalities carrying culturally embedded and time-honoured forms of understanding and redress are displaced by imported approaches based on a 'technical' view of mind which is assumed to be universal?

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Book Review

Blue Remembered Sky: Jill Boswell on Charlie Comins's memoir of growing up at Ingutsheni psychiatric hospital in the 1950s

In this complex and absorbing book, the author sets herself several tasks that may not at first glance seem readily related.

We start with what might be her first therapy session with her counsellor, Sandi, and ends with her final one. This suggests that the process of self-discovery has for the author been closely bound up with exploration of many other lives in the Zimbabwe – or Rhodesia – of her past life.

Much of the book concerns Comins' childhood in her white colonial family in Bulawayo, where they lived for 16 years in the grounds of Ingutsheni psychiatric hospital, where her psychiatrist father, Lionel, worked.

The book is valuable for the freshness of the descriptions of life. The contrast between white privilege and black deprivation isn't a new story, but Comins gives it immediacy through her sharp-eyed child's curiosity. Political awareness grows as her perceptions mature.

Comins has a gift for rendering childhood experience, and to this she adds an unwavering honesty, never superimposing the perspective of her adult self on to the child's. This may make the reader flinch: as when Charlie finds her nanny's baby left alone, and deliberately knocks the child over. Charlie flees from the screams and hides under her bedcovers. We infer her jealousy of a baby that spends most of its day cuddled on its mother's back: so unlike her own state of neglect by a mother often out of touch with her daughter's needs. Yet the baby is given no name, not even a gender; telling us of the dehumanising of black servants, even those living in intimate contact with their employers. The casual racism that the child Charlie absorbs is conveyed with no trace of self-justification.

Isolation

Painful in a different way is her account of her family's social and cultural isolation, perhaps because of where they lived: most local white families seem to have shunned them. Charlie and her younger brother Yael are close companions, adept at devising games and pastimes together.

But tensions within their own family have a potent isolating effect on the children. With their two much older sisters, they learn to keep mostly out of reach of their harsh and unpredictable father, and manage mostly without maternal care from their beautiful and (it is implied) unhappy mother. For adult company



they seek out the house servants: 'It made no difference that we couldn't understand a word they were saying, for they never shooed us away.'

Comins has stringent criticisms of the regimes at the Ingutsheni hospital, coming to realise that many patients there were treated with harsh anti-psychotic drugs, while

ECT and even leucotomy were freely practised. This seems to have applied to any patient, but the black ones, whose living conditions were atrocious, had the least sympathy.

A powerful thread

Lionel's personality and domestic behaviour form a powerful thread through the book: he is portrayed as a sometimes violent and always intimidating presence. The reader may detect some implied parallels between the dreadful treatment of hospital patients diagnosed as mentally ill, and the fear and confusion of children who were often told they were deluded or stupid. There is evidence he may have treated them with psychotropic medication to keep them quiet.

After the children have grown, married and left the country, their shared memories make clear how much the impact of his frequent violence and bullying remained with them all. Under the influence of her warm and sensitive counsellor, the adult Charlie could set out to discover and to understand more about her origins. For her, the racist colonial structure of her country's 20th-century history is entwined with the complicated and unhappy relationships in and immediately around her family of origin.

Learning more about her parents' own early lives, she writes that she has felt more able to face the pain and injustice in her own past. In doing so, she has gained a measure of peace and some understanding.

Blue Remembered Sky by Charlie Comins New Generation Publishing, 2020, ISBN 978-1789558609, £8.99

Jill Boswell grew up in Cape Town. She has lived in London for many years, practising as a psychoanalyst until her recent retirement.

Names In Zimbabwe's State Capture: Ruth Weiss analyses a report on Zimbabwe, published in South Africa

I keep going back to the South African *Daily Maverick* publication earlier this year of its explosive revelations of Zimbabwe's State Capture through the corrupt network of politicians, military, secret service personnel, high civil servants and business people.

This situation dates back to Mugabe and thrives under Mnangagwa. Such beneficiaries are named 'rent-seekers', a term that refers to those seeking undeserved or unearned profit.

The report, *A Study of Cartel Dynamics*, explained that cartels had been formed, which hamper honest business transactions and rob citizens of a better life. The state, it says, is responsible for over-pricing, which means less medicine, fewer kilometres of roads, more inadequate education and less private consumption for citizens, while the cartels absorb billions.

This development 'contributed to deliberate missteps by public officials in policy-making which have led to significant deterioration in the macro-economic environment.' The overpricing of goods and services procured by the state from cartels also delivers low value for money for taxpayers and citizens.

Sakunda: one of many examples

One of the many examples given is an illicit payment of Z\$3.3-billion made in 2019 to Sakunda, a fuel company accused of monopolising fuel supplies and which owns the pipeline from Beira to Zimbabwe. Sakunda was supposed to receive Z\$330-million instead of Z\$3.3 billion. To meet the shortfall, the Reserve Bank printed money, which 'caused the overnight devaluation of the Zimbabwean dollar by 90 per cent, eroding the incomes and savings of millions of Zimbabweans'.

A name that keeps turning up is Kudakwashe Tagwirei, an ally and advisor of President Emmerson Mnangagwa, whom he described as 'a nephew'. He is the power behind Sekunda; the company said to have financed the 'Commando Agriculture'. Mnangagwa introduced this project during Mugabe's time to increase agricultural production, mainly the elite benefitted. According to media reports in 2018, Tagwirei gave luxury vehicles to President Mnangagwa, Vice-President Constantino Chiwenga, since deceased Minister for Agriculture Perrance Shiri and other ZANU-PF officials. In a later court case, Chiwenga admitted to receiving a Mercedes Benz and a Lexus via the Command Agriculture Programme.

Gold

Tagwirei's name cropped up in connection with the gold industry. Shortly after independence, the state acquired Sabi Goldmine through the Zimbabwe Mining Development Corporation (ZMDC) at a time of high gold prices. By 2002, the macroeconomic and political environment had deteriorated, while gold prices also dropped. The mine was therefore closed between 2002 and 2003. Gold prices recovered during the following years, but due to the continued poor macroeconomic and political environment, no investor was found to re-suscitate the mine. It was re-opened in 2016, with output at 240kg per year by 2018. The increasing price of gold attracted the interest of 'rent seekers'.

In mid-2020, when gold prices reached 25-year record highs, the media reported that the ZMDC was transferring its Sabi share to Landela Mining Venture, a subsidiary of Sotic International, owned by none other than Tagwirei. Allegedly Landela signed an agreement also to take over ZMDC's interest in three other goldmines.

Hospitals

Tagwirei turned up in the midst of the pandemic when he opened two hospitals, which charged fees and were no doubt aimed at the rich, who were no longer able to travel abroad for medical treatment, as they had done in pre-Covid 19 days.

When ZANU-PF youth leaders mentioned names of allegedly corrupt men, among these Kuda Tagweira, who had reportedly been involved in a Transport industry scandal, their allegations were not investigated: instead, they were removed from the party.

See <https://www.dailymaverick.co.za/article/2021-02-09-zimbabwe-explosive-cartel-report-uncovers-the-anatomy-of-a-captured-state/>

<https://www.dailymaverick.co.za/article/2021-02-10-daily-maverick-report-on-zimbabwe-state-capture-gains-international-attention/>

<https://www.dailymaverick.co.za/article/2021-04-06-zimbabwe-can-recover-but-the-opposition-and-the-region-particularly-south-africa-will-have-to-step-up-to-the-plate/>

Ruth Weiss, a longstanding BZS member, is a retired journalist based in Denmark, who spent two years in Southern Rhodesia reporting on sanctions-busting etc then post-1988 worked in Zimbabwe Her blog can be found at: <https://ruthweiss.net/about-ruth-weiss/>

The Impact of COVID-19 on Student Life: Hosea Tokwe describes the difficulties Zimbabwean students are facing

University and college campuses are supposed to be places where students can meet and study together, sharing information and cultural differences. But no longer – at least, not now.

Here at Midlands State University our Culture Week has always been a joyful time, often celebrated with song and dance – something that happens in many African universities. But then, last March, it all came to a halt and here, at one of Zimbabwe's leading universities, COVID-19 silenced everything. All the hustle and bustle of student life had stopped.

The university had to make the best of the situation, and adopted Google Classrooms as its e-learning platform. But pretty well everywhere in the world e-learning has had its drawbacks, and for young Zimbabwean tertiary students it was especially problematic, given that the cost of getting internet connections adds to the difficulty in receiving effective teaching and learning.

Academic impact

'Live' lessons were cancelled and lecturers were given training in how to use Google Classrooms. Students struggled to follow lessons in their homes, often in inadequate conditions, with frequent power cuts. Internet data is expensive, too. E-learning did not go down well with our students.

A further difficulty is that as industries and other companies cut back on staff, work placement opportunities are drying up, leaving students frustrated and unable to get quality professional experience.

Students approached the High Court through Zimbabwe Lawyers for Human Rights, challenging the government's decision to introduce e-learning in tertiary colleges during the lockdown.

They argued that its introduction was unfair, as the majority of learners were from poor backgrounds and that getting both the hardware and software they needed was extremely difficult, if not impossible. They stated in their court papers that 'The rights of tens of thousands of students to proper education is under threat in that such students are presently unable to access e-learning.' (<https://www.newzimbabwe.com/midlands-state-university-students-challenge-e-learning/>)

The case is still to be heard.

Psychological impact

It is not just learning that's the problem – there are social and psychological difficulties, too. There are

many stories of students being traumatised when classmates, lecturers and family members become ill.

Sudden changes to the university calendar makes things even worse. Instead of having students coming to university for a whole semester to enjoy conventional teaching and learning, Midlands State University has introduced a crash programme it describes as a 'Roadmap' approach where students come for two weeks of lectures sitting for examinations.

'This thing is so confusing and without direction,' students say. It's made especially so because the 'Roadmap' is sent via Social Media or University's website by the Academic Department, and students often simply don't know what is supposed to be happening.

The result is worry, panic, and anxiety. Many students are suffering serious psychological strain from the uncertainty about how they will complete their studies. There are stories of increased risky behaviour, such as drug abuse.

Social impact

Collaborative learning has, of course, been disrupted as students have to learn new ways of working together online. This migration to a virtual learning environment has removed group cohesion which in essence is supposed to embrace *ubuntu*. The suspension of networking through exchange programmes and sporting activities has killed socialisation.

Economic impact

There is also increased economic distress for students: with fewer work opportunities both for them and for their parents, along with the the high cost of online data bundles. Adding this to tuition fees leads to costs way above students' means.

Instead of focusing on their studies some students are seen trading what they can in the streets – including farm produce. (The more adventurous are into poultry production!)

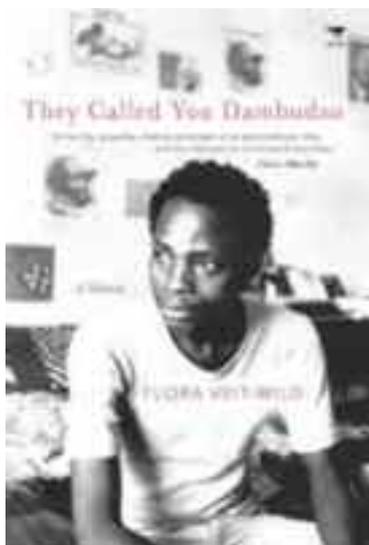
As I write, governments all over the world are having to grapple with the effects of this pandemic.

Like everyone else in the world, we desperately hope the situation will soon get back to normal and that, until this finally happens, our students will overcome their difficulties and be able to focus on their studies.

Hosea Tokwe is Chief Library Assistant at Midlands State University, Gweru

Book Review

They Called You Dambudzo: a memoir by Flora Veit-Wild: Pat Brickhill on the memory of an extraordinary writer and the woman who loved him



After much private speculation and public questioning Flora Veit-Wild has written an unusually frank memoir of her life.

She tells the story of a fascinating life in its own right, but one that has generated much interest from the community of readers and writers of African literature in general, and

those of Zimbabwean literature in particular.

Flora and her husband were one-time members of the Communist League of West Germany and left-wing activists in their youth. Although they completed teacher training they were unable to obtain teaching or other jobs in the German civil service because of their past. Flora eventually found work at a private school away from the eyes of the security organisations.

Arriving in Zimbabwe

The couple were part of a solidarity movement that supported the liberation struggle in Zimbabwe, and Victor Wild had a photograph of himself on stage with Robert Mugabe at a ZANU rally in Germany.

In spite of this connection, it was not the main reason they travelled to Zimbabwe. Victor wanted to conduct research supporting his interest in the effects of imperialism, and post-colonial countries. He found training work and would later become Secretary of the German Society in Zimbabwe. Flora had embarked on a writing career, and enrolled for a journalism correspondence course.

Meeting

Dambudzo Marechera and Flora Veit-Wild did not know to one another before Zimbabwe became independent and Flora had not seen his writing before they met. Flora arrived in Zimbabwe in December 1982. Dambudzo had returned from the UK in February of the same year.

Flora describes herself as 'coming from a liberal household where other relationships were possible within a marriage'. This view of relationships is

relevant because Victor and Flora had an open marriage. Dambudzo and Flora's volatile and unpredictable love affair took place with the full knowledge of Flora's husband. This fact has been given rise to much speculation, especially in Zimbabwe where relationships like this are commonplace but never openly or honestly addressed.

The first meeting

Flora's first sight of Marechera is at a Writers' Workshop at the inaugural Zimbabwe book fair – held at the National Gallery in Harare in August 1983. Her first face-to-face meeting with him takes place in the Zimbabwe Publishing House office of Charles Mungoshi, where Dambudzo invites her to meet him in a local hotel later that evening.

Soon afterwards they begin their love affair and Flora's life becomes inextricably bound up with that of Marechera. Their connection did not end when their romantic liaison ended. I would argue that while their love affair changed it never ended.

'Two heartbeats'

The memoir is described as one having 'two heartbeats'. Flora begins and ends the memoir speaking directly to Marechera. Much of the book focuses on her relationship with him up to the time of his death. She retells her story in sometimes graphic detail, making both herself and Dambudzo vulnerable in all their human frailties.

Dambudzo Marechera is often cited as Zimbabwe's most outstanding and controversial writer. After his death, Veit-Wild became the reluctant custodian of his legacy. Once she assumed the role, she explored Dambudzo's life from his youth to his time at the University of Rhodesia and at Oxford, in London and his return to Zimbabwe. She was perfectly placed to conduct the necessary research; with interviews, collecting letters, photographs, information and manuscripts.

Marechera's original notes and writings were given to the National Archives in Harare.

Together with Hugh Lewin, Flora established the Marechera Trust in Zimbabwe with Michael Marechera (Dambudzo's older brother) as chairman.

Flora has written several books on Marechera over the years and is recognised as being an expert although she modestly says that it was in writing the

memoir that she could reflect on their story and would ‘know him better during her writing, understanding his writing better, his poetry better’.

Emotional distance

Flora saw herself as having a ‘double persona’ for years and says she needed the emotional distance through the passage of time to be able to merge the two parts of her life. This book was not started until 2010 – more than two decades after Marechera’s death.

The writer Chiedza Musengezi describes the memoir as a ‘relentlessly honest self-examination’ adding that Flora does not ‘shy away from uncomfortable truths’. This memoir recounts their bitter-sweet, volatile love affair with brutal honesty. There were times when I felt almost like a voyeur reading the private moments of their passionate love interspersed with their fiery, angry fights.

A Zimbabwean poet and writer, Philani A. Nyoni, in his review of Flora’s memoir, *Flora & Faunus*, describes it:

In its depth it is a requiem for doomed love as any a Montague and Capulet ever kissed; except, when our lady lay with him and tasted his lips and more, the poison flooded her blood, but let her live long enough to stop running from the anguish of mortal separation – much deadlier than what coursed virulent in her blood – so she could cut herself open, exhume her soul for us to see his name indelibly etched on it.

I admire Flora immensely for addressing her naivety during her relationship with Dambudzo.

She emphasises these are *her* memories of their relationship, linked to images that remain, either in her memory or remembered through letters, photographs and writings, and that Dambudzo’s views would no doubt be different.

Alienation

Dambudzo Marechera died without a will and alienated from his family. He spent much of the last year or so of his life alone in his Avenues flat (financially supported by Flora, Victor and the late Marilyn Poole) writing or drinking in nearby haunts.

Flora says her having the keys to his flat were a ‘symbol of trust’, and immediately after his death, she removed all his writings. Some critics accuse her of benefitting from Marechera’s legacy, of being a vulture feeding on the carrion of his legacy.

I share the view of poet, writer and cultural activist, Philani Nyoni, who says in his review:

Cemetery of Mind, a posthumous collection of Dambudzo Marechera’s poetry compiled by Flora, retrieved from his flat, saved from fire and oblivion as his spirit breached the stratosphere. Perhaps, had she left them there, they would squirm and wither in the flame of a junk heap, much like one he had vultured for encyclopaedias and comics with the twins when he was a boy. Perhaps she should have left them there, then she wouldn’t be accused of vulturing off his life and legacy. But who is to say she isn’t ‘Amelia’? [the subject of his love-poems] Certainly not the reader of this book. Words that pass between poet and muse are often in soliloquy, sometimes the muse writes back, and today is one of those days.

HIV

I would have liked more photographs in the memoir. Towards the end the story meandered a little and lost some momentum. Perhaps it was a more draining read than I realised.

Flora describes the discovery of her HIV status (which she never discussed with Dambudzo) and the effect it has had on her life. Anti-retrovirals were not in use in 1987.

Back in Germany Flora suffered attacks of clinical depression which she describes as ‘The Lady in Black’ (I couldn’t grasp whether the fairy tale puppets she makes are therapeutic).

A shared journey

The memoir is an emotional rollercoaster of a journey and I’m truly impressed with Flora’s superb writing, and for sharing the journey with her readers so honestly and so vividly.

They Called You Dambudzo: a memoir: Jacana Media (Pty) Ltd, South Africa, March, 2021
ISBN-10 : 1431430498, ISBN-13 : 978-1431430499

Flora & Faunus: Philani A. Nyoni Reviews Flora Veit-Wild’s ‘They Called You Dambudzo’: <http://fokusmag.co.zw/index.php/2021/04/20/they-called-you-dambudzo/>

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Cemetery of the Mind by Dambudzo Marechera is published by Africa World Press (New edition 1999)

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Book Review

Then a Wind Blew: Pat Brickhill on Kay Powell's novel about three women's experiences of the last days of Rhodesia



Set just before the end of the war of liberation, *Then a Wind Blew* is described in its publicity material as a 'fascinating, ambitious and brave novel'.

Kay Powell describes unfolding events in the dying years of Rhodesia, with an emphasis on how

the women of the country suffered in the war.

These are personified by three very different women: the racist white mother Susan Haig, the white nun Beth Lytton, and the black freedom fighter Nyanye Maseko.

Sons and sisters

One of Susan Haig's sons joins the notorious Selous Scouts, while the other signs up reluctantly to the fire force unit. Beth's nephew visits from the UK and joins the Central Intelligence Unit (now the CIO) after only a week in the country. His development would have produced a character with more depth. (Powell worked on Ken Flower's memoir, *Serving Secretly*, published in 1987, which describes his work during the Smith regime.)

Twin sisters Nyanye and Kundiso join the struggle after Rhodesian troops raze their village as punishment for feeding and assisting the guerrillas. Their mother disappears and is feared killed by the security forces. Kundiso, already a *mujiba* helping *vakomana*, persuades her sister they should cross the border into Mozambique and join the struggle.

Nyanje has some qualms about the decision, feeling less committed than the militant Kundiso. She is troubled by incidents of forced sex, beatings and hardships in the camp, which are mentioned briefly.

Three locations

Then a Wind Blew takes place primarily in three locations: a 'European village' surrounding Isakata

chrome mine where the ex-pat Susan and her family live; a ZANU guerrilla camp in Mozambique where Nyanye works as a nurse; and St Anselm's, a rural African mission near Isakata, where Beth, a British woman, is part of a religious community.

Unconnected except through the place they live, or once lived, the women are linked when a brutal incident occurs.

Language and attitudes

The author is familiar with Rhodesian white society and events during the Zimbabwe liberation war. She captures compellingly the language and attitudes of hostile white Rhodesians towards their subjugated black fellow-citizens.

Events at St Anselm's mission described in *Then a Wind Blew* mirror those that occurred during the war at St Francis' African Church near Rusape, where novelist Patricia Chater lived within the religious community and where Baba Basil Nyabadza, the priest, was murdered just as in this novel.

A mood of anticipation

Kay Powell's novel is an absorbing story with many references to historical conflicts and atrocities – perhaps too many are crowded into the novel.

It includes numerous characters, but some are slightly formulaic or underdeveloped. I found it lacked the balance of Shimmer Chinodya's *Harvest of Thorns*, which covers similar ground.

But this reviewer's observations of this are very personal, and are not intended to detract from this exciting debut novel which captures a mood of anticipation from the black population and despondency from the white population in Rhodesia – as Zimbabwe was born.

'Only destruction'

While reading Kay Powell's *Then a Wind Blew* I remembered the words of Vietnamese writer Bao Ninh, speaking in an interview about the Vietnam war, who said 'In war no one wins or loses. There is only destruction.'

Then a Wind Blew, Weaver Press, Zimbabwe, 2021, ISBN 9781779223838

Pat Brickhill is a writer and secretary of the Britain Zimbabwe Society

Remembering Joshua Mahlathini Mpofo (1939–2021): Pat Bryden looks back on the life of a friend and former freedom fighter, who died in March

In 1973, as a part of the Birmingham Campaign for Justice in Zimbabwe, I was privileged to come to know (the late) Ratie Mpofo, then completing physiotherapy training in Birmingham. At the time, she was very engaged in trying to secure the release of her husband, Joshua, from detention in Zambia, so that he could join her in England.

Those who remember the Birmingham campaign will recall how we worked with Zimbabweans of all political persuasions who were studying in the Birmingham area or who were in exile for political reasons. For those of us non-Zimbabweans, it proved to be a time of learning and friendship.

Arriving in the UK

I first met Joshua the following year, when Ratie and I drove to Heathrow to welcome him and several comrades who had been detained with him.

Ratie, with a group of others, had lobbied for places in colleges and financial grants to enable these men to study, some through her Lutheran church connections and, later, by persuading the British government, through Joan Lester, then Under-Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs.

After Joshua arrived in the UK, they both worked tirelessly to secure places and support for the others from his group. Part of Joshua's story is recorded, both in Owen Tshabangu's book, *The March 11 Movement of ZAPU*, and by Joshua's own: *My Life in the Struggle for the Liberation of Zimbabwe*.

'The first academy of political knowledge'

Joshua had been politically active since his schooldays at Inyathi Secondary School, which was progressively open to students debating political issues, even forming their own 'political parties'. He calls Inyathi 'the first academy of political knowledge'.

He became involved in underground militias, joining ZAPU, and, when it was banned, he took part in the PCC (People's Caretaker Council). UDI was coming and Garfield Todd's plan for social transformation was disrupted, blocking peaceful progress towards majority rule.

Joshua was detained for 30 days as a troublemaker when Ian Smith's declaration of independence was made in November, 1965. Soon after his release, Joshua met Ratie Shumba, who was to become his wife of 47 years. He described her as 'a wonder girl', and they were married in 1966. Their first child, Nonhlanhla, was born the following year.

However, Joshua could not abandon his involvement in the struggle, suffering further arrest for distributing leaflets. He eventually fled the country to Zambia, to ZAPU in exile, and was sent with others for military training in the Soviet Union, returning to work in signals in Zambia.

Joshua and many of his fellow-combatants were disturbed by certain traits they saw in the leadership, and wanted a more effective military strategy, hoping there could be some rethinking. They set up a 'Revolutionary Council' to try to bring about this in conference, Joshua was one of a triumvirate leading this. The Conference failed to bring about change, and the men behind it were arrested by the Zambian paramilitary police.

The group never showed anger towards their Zambian jailers, and at all times, writes Joshua, showed respect for the Zambian people, including the leaders.

However, the group itself split, and some joined ZANU, others FROLIZI (The Front for the Liberation of Zimbabwe) – working towards an 'internal settlement' – and some the ZAPU mainstream.

Working in the UK

Negotiations proceeded: following correspondence with the Zambian authorities and the lobbying of Ratie and others in England, Joshua was released to join his wife to study. He found a place at Fircroft College, part of the Selly Oaks Colleges. Meetings and political thinking continued during their time in Birmingham, and then in York, where Joshua did a B.A. in Social Studies. Later, he did an MSc in Swansea, graduating in 1980, in time to vote in Zimbabwe.

Although Joshua registered for a Ph.D. at Leeds, illness prevented him from completing this.

The family, now with a son, Velakude, as well as Nonhlanhla, returned to Harare. Joshua did some field research for the University of Zimbabwe and then, in 1983, became a civil servant, working in the Prime Minister's Office under the Minister for Cooperative Development, to develop 'a strategy for collectively owned enterprises'.

He was inevitably faced with problems. He was sent to do the most difficult of tasks: to report on the Gukurahundi. He did so as someone from the affected region, knowing relatives affected, but was very open about his role, and wanted to be totally objective with 'no cover up and no exaggeration'.

It must have been a dangerous task, but it was accepted as a good report. Promises of a full, in-depth enquiry did not seem to materialise, although the ZAPU-ZANU Unity Accord was made in 1987.

When Ratie moved to Cape Town, in 1993, first to complete her doctorate at the University of Western Cape, then remaining to become Professor and Dean of Studies, Joshua and the family moved too; Veronica having been born meantime.

They were a hospitable, welcoming family, always good company. Tributes to Joshua at his funeral

Continued on next page



Joshua and Ratie Mpfu on a trip to Scotland in 2004.
Photo © Pat Bryden

Joshua Mpfu: continued from previous page

emphasised the couple's strong partnership, and Joshua's warmth and love of his children and grandchildren.

A freedom fighter

Joshua writes in his book: 'A freedom fighter ... is an individual who cares about and protects life of the people in terms of their wellbeing in every sphere of social action, including the right to life as an unquenchable gift of God or nature, freedom and safety from all hazards, natural or man made.'

This is how he himself lived and was.

My Life in the Struggle for the Liberation of Zimbabwe, Joshua Mahlathini Mpfu, Authorhouse Bloomington, USA. 2014 ISBN 978-1-4969-8323-7 52129

Pat Bryden is a BZS member, retired teachers and teacher educator, living in Edinburgh.

Obituary: Sister Janice McLaughlin

Sister Janice McLaughlin, who died on 7 March in the United States, spent most of her career in Africa, much of it in Zimbabwe. What follows is a shortened version of an obituary published on the website of her 'mother' house, the Maryknoll Sisters Center, Maryknoll, New York.

Sister Janice McLaughlin was born on 13 February, 1942, in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania to Paul McLaughlin and Mary (Schaub) McLaughlin.

In 1960, Janice graduated from St. Lawrence High School, Pittsburgh, PA. She then attended St Mary of the Springs College in Columbus, OH from 1960-1961.

On 2 September, 1961, she entered the Maryknoll Sisters Congregation, Maryknoll, NY. She made her First Profession of Vows on 24 June, 1964 and her Final Profession on the same date in 1972 in Kitale, Kenya.

Between 1964 and 1968, Sister Janice worked in the Maryknoll Sisters Communication Office, where she also organised the 'War Against Poverty Program' in Ossining, NY. She continued her studies between 1967 and 1969, earning a Bachelor of Arts Degree in Theology, Anthropology/Sociology from Marquette University, Milwaukee, Wisconsin (She later received a Master of Arts Degree and a PhD in Religious Studies from the University of Zimbabwe, in 1992.)

Working in Kenya

In 1969, she studied Swahili in Makoko, Tanzania and moved to Kenya in 1970 and spent the next seven years serving as Communications Coordinator in the Catholic Secretariat Office for the Catholic Church of Kenya, Coordinator of the Communications Department of Episcopal Conference.

Sister Janice went to Rhodesia (as it then was) in 1977, in the midst of war, at the request of Rhodesian Catholic Bishops' Justice and Peace Commission to

serve as Press Secretary. Later, that same year, she was arrested for publishing fact-papers about the war, imprisoned and in solitary confinement for three weeks, then deported to the USA.

In 1979, Sister Janice went to Mozambique where she accompanied refugees from Zimbabwe. Between 1981 and 1992, she accepted a new assignment to Zimbabwe, and served in diverse positions there, including Education Consultant to the President and Publications/Curriculum Development Officer with the Zimbabwe Foundation regarding education and communications and helped to form the Zimbabwe Mozambique Friendship Association for Relief Aid (ZIMOFA).

Return to Zimbabwe

In 1992, Sister Janice returned to the Maryknoll Sisters in New York, but went back to Zimbabwe in 1998, this time to Harare. There, she was involved in adult education and peace building until 2009, when she was elected as President of the Maryknoll Sisters Congregation for a six-year term and returned to the US.

On 18 May, 2014 the Board of Trustees of Albertus Magnus College, New Haven, CT conferred on her the Honorary Degree of Doctor of Humane Letters for 'her work in Kenya and Zimbabwe for many years to promote peace and reconciliation and to advocate for the poor and for the rights of young girls to attend school.'

In 2015, after her term as President, she returned to Harare, volunteering in 'Africans for Catholic Social Teaching, with a strong commitment to work against human trafficking.'

She returned to the Maryknoll Sisters Center, New York in 2020.

With thanks to the Maryknoll sisters for permission to use this obituary.

Zimbabwean Gardens Away From Home

Mutsai Hove Bird and Carol MacKenzie bring something of Africa into their lives



Since the COVID pandemic started, many people have discovered the satisfaction of gardening – and, for Zimbabweans, there’s the added pleasure of growing plants – vegetables and flowers – that can bring them a welcome taste of home.

If you really want to get into vegetable-growing, it’s hugely rewarding if you can get access to an allotment, where you can grow more than you’re likely to manage in the average garden – if you have one.

Here, **Mutsai Hove Bird** tells us about her own allotment, and the pleasure – as well as the harvest – it gives her. (See the box opposite for information about getting an allotment.)

Q: What do you grow on your allotment that would be familiar to Zimbabweans?

I grow all sorts of vegetables which remind me of Zimbabwe. Some are exactly as we have them in Zimbabwe (but known by a different name) while others are similar to what we have there. Among the variety of vegetables I grow, there are a few which particularly remind me of Zimbabwe.

I grow kale from seed and perpetual kale, which we call *covo* in Zimbabwe, Swiss chard (spinach in Zimbabwe), squashes, pumpkins, rape, mustard (*tsunga*) and borlotti beans, which remind me of *nyemba*. I also grow sweet potatoes in my polytunnel, from cuttings.

Continued on next page

Getting an allotment

Allotments are small plots of land which non-farmers can rent and grow produce (usually vegetables) for their own use.

They are often owned by local authorities or charitable organisations, and they are communally run by the people who work the land.

They’ve been around in the UK for hundreds of years but, according to the National Allotment Society, ‘the system we recognise today has its roots in the 19th Century, when land was given over to the labouring poor for the provision of food-growing. This measure was desperately needed thanks to the rapid industrialisation of the country and the lack of a welfare state. In 1908 the Small Holdings and Allotments Act came into force, placing a duty on local authorities to provide sufficient allotments, according to demand.’ (National Allotment Society: Brief History of Allotments.

And there is still plenty of demand though how much varies from one part of the UK to another.

For those who were brought up, as many Zimbabweans were, with smallholdings in the family, they are a wonderful way to recreate the experience they may have grown up with: planting, tending and harvesting their own food.

But at the moment – especially since COVID-19, when many people found they had time on their hands and wanted to be out of doors – demand for allotments is high.

That doesn’t mean it’s not worth getting on a waiting list for one: you may be lucky faster than you expect – or you may be able to find someone who’d like to share the work on theirs, and the produce, too.

To find out more of what’s possible in your area, it’s worth doing a bit of local searching on line.

Some useful links are:

The National Allotment Society
<https://www.nsalg.org.uk/about-us/>

A government site:

<https://www.gov.uk/apply-allotment>

and an excellent blogspot:

<https://allotmentheaven.blogspot.com/2011/03/how-to-get-allotment.html>



Pictures; previous page, Mutsai Hove Bird on her west-of-England allotment, with maize and squash, above, a harvest basket; left: a kale shrub in spring. All photos © Mutsai Hove Bird

Q: Where do you get plants/seeds given import restrictions?

I am in touch with other members of the Zimbabwe community network for harvested seeds, and I get plants local seed and plant swaps, and flower shows. I've even taken cuttings from supermarket vegetables! Most seeds can be bought from conventional seed sellers or online if you know the plant's UK name.

Q: How much pleasure do you get from your allotment?

I love being at the allotment. My allotment has sustained me during the COVID lock down – somewhere to go to relax, exercise and enjoy nature while tending my vegetables. The allotment community is also part of the joy of going there – the changes in

the allotment holders' community often reflect migration patterns in the community I live in.

Q: Are you involved with your local allotment committee?

I am a member of my local community association and support their events especially plant sales and the annual show. Committee membership is supposed to be renewed annually, but once you're on, that tends to go on for a lifetime, or until you want to retire.

I am grateful for the committee's support in our Community Open Gardens Day which donates funds to our Zimbabwe School Fees project.

Q: Does working on your allotment bring back happy memories of home?

I grew up on a subsistence farm in Mberengwa. I never appreciated growing vegetables the way I do now. I wish I had shown more interest in my mother's vegetable patch in Harare!

Q: Do you have a sense of achievement when you harvest the produce?

Picking and cooking fresh produce gives me a sense of achievement. Sharing produce with others is also satisfying. It's not unheard of for me to post rape to friends and family who live in other counties!

Mutsai Hove Bird is a dementia specialist nurse and charities review consultant – she has over 30 years' experience of working in health and social care. She is a trustee of Zimbabwe Health, Education and Sustainability Trust (ZHEST).

Carol MacKenzie was born in Zimbabwe in the late 1950s, where her English mother grew a beautiful garden of a mixture of English and tropical plants. Reversing her example, Carol grows what she can in the UK that will bring memories of home.

When I grew up and had a home of my own, I also had a mixture of English and tropical plants, though I did lean more towards the easier-to-grow cactuses and succulents.

When we came to England to live, in 2009, I tried various plants which I knew to be prolific in Zimbabwe, but because of the harsh winters, not too many of them survived outdoors, and I found that I had to have a large conservatory or similar, if they were going to survive.

I do grow many plants which I could grow easily in Zimbabwe: some ferns – the hardier ones, daisy bushes, lavender, geraniums and cosmos.



Bottle brush and Sabi Star

I also have a lovely little bottle brush (*Callistemon* – see above) in a large pot, and it blooms, attracting the bees, every year, without fail.

I bought a little Sabi Star plant (opposite – also known as *Adenium obesum*, or Desert Rose), and it was coming along nicely during our summer, but as soon as the weather turned cold, it died – I find that pulpy-stemmed or leafed plants do not grow very well for me.

Vegetable-wise, I don't go there, although I did try gem squash a few years back, but they were very bitter and small. A friend grows them commercially, somewhere near London, and they're just how they should be – large, ripe and sweet. I think he has the use of a large greenhouse.



Both 'bottle brush' (far left) and Sabi Star (above and left) can be grown in the UK, but need special care. Photos: © Carol MacKenzie

I know of another man who grows acres of mealies here, and has huge success. But for these things, one needs a decent summer, and not too much rain.

So I have my little garden, and my pots of geraniums, fuchsias, lavender and bottle brush go with me whenever I move home.

Carol Mackenzie adds, 'My mother was born in Leicestershire in the early 1900s, and I had the best of both worlds: English gardening, and Southern African gardening – cacti, succulents, rockeries built in every corner of the garden, and English plants everywhere else; and I followed suit.'

Sources for keen gardeners

As Mutsai Hove Bird says, it's not difficult to find a great many plants familiar to anyone who has lived in Zimbabwe and which, with varying degrees of care, can be grown in the UK. One site specialises in 'tropical' seeds – and has a South African section:

<https://www.tropicalbritain.co.uk/south-africa.html>

For kale (*chomolia* and *covo*) see:

<https://www.gardenorganic.org.uk/african-kale>

2021 BZS Inaugural Lifetime Achievement Award:

Pathisa Nyathi

2021 sees the launch of the inaugural BZS Lifetime Achievement Award (LAA), which will be offered on an occasional basis.

The LAA recognises longstanding excellence in a specific field. The 2021 LAA is based on arts and culture and BZS is delighted that the winner is Pathisa Nyathi, who will be known to many. This is in recognition of Pathisa's outstanding contribution to Zimbabwean life.

Pathisa has inspired generations of Zimbabweans in a career in which he has set, and continues to set, the standard as a writer, author, publisher, historian, community activist, cultural leader, and much, much more. Pathisa is the former Secretary General of the Zimbabwe Writers Union and former Education Officer for Matabeleland North. He has worked for Bulawayo City Council and is the former Chair of the Zimbabwe Academic and Non-fiction Writers Association (ZANA). He is also a regular columnist for various newspapers, and has presented at a number of BZS Research Days over the years.

Pathisa's numerous works include short stories, poetry and non-fiction: some of his best-known books include *In Search of Freedom*; *Masotsha Ndlovu* (1998); and *Lozikeyi Dlodlo: Queen of the Ndebele* (co-authored with Marieke Clarke, 2010). Pathisa is especially renowned for recording, preserving and communicating the history and traditions of the Ndebele; but he has also made his mark on wider Zimbabwean and African identity discourses.

He has also consistently spoken truth to power, and power to truth; and in so doing, has himself become a cultural icon.

Pathisa has graciously accepted his nomination for this award which, in this instance, will include an honorarium. Pathisa, who shows no signs of slowing down, will also be celebrating his 70th birthday later in 2021.

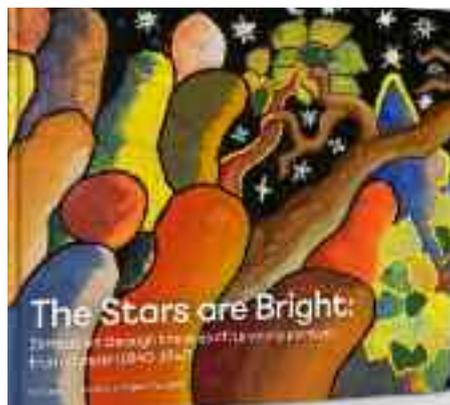
At this year's BZS Research Day on 19 June, there will be a brief LAA announcement, followed by a response from Pathisa. We are planning to have a specific LAA celebratory event for him in October, where he will discuss his life and work.

Knox Chitiyo, President, BZS

News

The Stars are Bright – the book

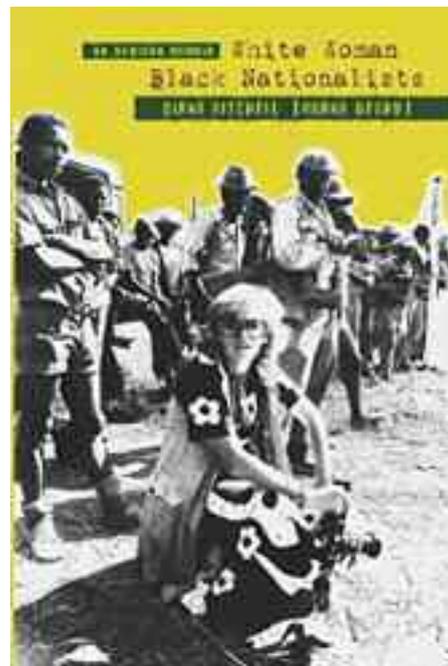
BZS members are probably familiar with the story behind this exhibition, which many of us were lucky enough to visit. A collection of over six



hundred paintings by young Zimbabwean artists of the 1940s was discovered in St Michael and All Angels' Church in Shoreditch in 1979 and seventy-five went on display in from July to September 2020 at a gallery nearby. A fundraising campaign to make a book out of these paintings (<https://www.kickstarter.com/projects/t sab/tsab>) has reached its target – so the book will now be published: though no details are available yet.

AN AFRICAN MEMOIR: *White Woman, Black Nationalists*

The memoirs of Diana Mitchell, political activist and journalist who witnessed the end of the Central African Federation and the rise of the



Rhodesian Front and UDI, and covered the military handover from Rhodesian to ZANLA guerrilla forces. Eventual disillusionment led her to oppose the subsequent Zimbabwean leadership. *White Woman, Black Nationalists*, Independently published January 29, 2021 ISBN: 979-8599882619

Hope for African communities

Mrs Mufaro Mapanda has been in touch with BZS about the Basildon-based charity, 'Hope for African Communities'

So far, she tells us, they are mostly concentrating on Zimbabwe. Its team is UK and Zimbabwe-based and describes itself as a charity that 'seeks to empower poor African communities by availing them with opportunities to better themselves' ... 'Our mission is to identify those who require our help ... by working with local community leaders ...'

They are partnered with the Rotary Organisation and had planned to construct a school for 350 children near Chegutu – but say that the current crisis brought about by the COVID-19 pandemic means their priority is getting food and basics to a community in desperate need.

Find out more from:

<https://hacinternational.org>

all 'News' items Jenny Vaughan

Research Day programme: continued from previous page

15.30-17.00 Panel 3: Migration of Health and Health Care
Speakers: Sunanda Ray, Department of Medical Education, University of Botswana, and Farai Madzimbamuto, Department of Anaesthesia and Critical Medicine, University of Botswana
Brighton Chireka, Faculty of Medical Leadership and Management, GP
Chair: Julius Mugwagwa, University College London

17.00-17.30 *Summing up*
Speaker: Professor Diana Jeater, University of Liverpool
17.30 Close of programme

If you have any queries, contact Margaret Ling margaret.ling@geo2.poptel.org.uk

All are welcome to join our lively and supportive audience



Contact the Britain Zimbabwe Society

President: Knox Chitiyo

2019–2020 Officers and Executive

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Ranka Primorac Victor de Waal
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The Stevenage-Kadoma Link Association

*Vacancies exist on the BZS Executive.
If you are interested in joining the Executive, please
contact Pat Brickhill at zimgekko@aol.com.*

Britain Zimbabwe Society Membership Form

To join and receive your regular copy of the *Zimbabwe Review*, postings on the members e-mail discussion forum, and Research Day discount, please print and send the completed form below with your subscription cheque to:

Margaret Ling, BZS Membership Secretary, 25 Endymion Road, London N4 1EE

Please enrol me/us in the BZS at the following annual rate (tick relevant box).

(You may also join the BZS online, payment by credit/debit card or PayPal, via our website:
www.britainzimbabwe.org.uk/join-bzs-today)

Rate

Ordinary	£21	<input type="checkbox"/>	Unwaged/student	£10	<input type="checkbox"/>
Joint (two at one address)	£25	<input type="checkbox"/>	Institution	£50	<input type="checkbox"/>

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

NAME

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Reminder: The Britain Zimbabwe Society 40th Anniversary *Life after 40 – 1981- 2021*

Saturday 12 June 2021, 13.55 – 19.05 BST (14.55-20.05 CAT)

See: <https://www.britainzimbabwe.org.uk>

Explore and celebrate the BZS's links with Zimbabwe: debate the way forward, music and performance

Further information: Knox Chitiyo chitiyoknox@yahoo.com
(programme) Margaret Ling margaret.ling@geo2.poptel.org.uk (registration)



BRITAIN ZIMBABWE SOCIETY RESEARCH DAY 2021
Zimbabwean Migration – People and Ideas in Motion

Saturday 19 June 2021

9.30–17.30 (CAT 10.30–18.30, EST 4.30–12.30)

In partnership with the Oxford African Studies Centre

Online with Zoom

All welcome – register with Eventbrite at

<https://www.eventbrite.co.uk/e/zimbabwean-migration-people-and-ideas-in-motion-tickets-137153833809>

PROGRAMME

Times in BST. Please note that some details may change

- 9.30-9.45 *Welcome and Introduction*
Kathy Mansfield Higgins, Chair, Britain Zimbabwe Society
Miles Tendi, African Studies Centre, Oxford University
- 9.45-11.15 *Panel 1: Narratives of Home, Return and Belonging*
Speakers: Beacon Mbiba, Oxford Brookes University, *Zimbabwean Diaspora Narratives of Return*
Tinashe Nyamunda, University of Pretoria, and Patience Mukwambo, University of the Free State, Bloemfontein, *Remittances, Perceptions and Disillusionment among the left-behind and Zimbabwean-UK Diaspora*
Loreen Chikwira, Manchester Metropolitan University, *Contested Narratives of Belonging: Zimbabwean Women in the UK*
Chair: Dominic Pasura, University of Glasgow
- 11.15-11.30 *Break – Zoom link remains live*
- 11.30-12.45 *Keynote speaker: Ethel Kuuya, Managing Director, Advisory K, Home and Away: Zimbabweans in Motion*
Chair: Knox Chitiyo
- 12.45-13.00 *Announcement of BZS Lifetime Achievement Award*
Chair: Kathy Mansfield, Chair of BZS
Speakers: Dr Pauline Dodgson-Katiyo, BZS executive, researcher on African literature
Marieke Clarke, researcher and writer on Matabeleland, western Zimbabwe
Butholezwe Kgosi Nyathi, Regional Director, National Gallery of Zimbabwe
Respondent: Pathisa Nyathi, historian, writer, poet, publisher, cultural custodian
- 13.00-13.45 *Break – Zoom link remains live*
- 13.45-15.15 *Panel 2: Migration of People, Ideas and Memory*
Speakers: Ushehwedu Kufakurinani, Department of Anthropology and Development Studies, University of Johannesburg, *Transnational Intimacy: A Life History of Love, Marriage and Family*
Zoe Groves, University of Leicester, *Tracing Machona: Malawian Migration to Zimbabwe*
Lloyd Nyikadzino, Director, Zimbabwe Theatre Academy, Harare, *Theatre and the Migration of Ideas*
Chair: Dorcas Gwata
- 15.15-15.30 *Break – Zoom link remains live*

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