

# Zimbabwe Review

The Journal of the Britain Zimbabwe Society

Issue 23/1 March 2023

ISSN 1362-3168

EST. 1981



## Stella Rambisai Chiweshe – the Mbira Queen

*Pat Brickhill remembers a pioneer of Zimbabwean music*



*The late Stella Chiweshe. Photograph © Pat Brickhill*

**The legendary Zimbabwean musician Mbuya Stella Chiweshe died on 20 January this year.**

Born on 8 July 1946 in Mujumi Village in Mhondoro south of Harare, Stella was a lifelong champion of the mbira, which plays an important sacred role in Shona spiritual ceremonies and in everyday life.

As a child Stella had a deep yearning to play mbira but, at that time, there were social taboos against women playing the instrument. Dominant tradition demanded only men could play this and other traditional instruments. In addition, missionaries taught mbira was evil because of its association with possession by the spirits of the ancestors, and pre-Independence white governments

### In this issue

	<i>page</i>
1 <i>Stella Chiweshe: Obituary</i>	1
2 <i>Tribute to Alex Magaisa</i>	2
3 <i>Working in the care sector</i>	3
4 <i>Health services</i>	5
4 <i>Mbira magic</i>	7
5 <i>Where are you from?</i>	8
6 <i>Stevenage/Kadoma link</i>	10
7 <i>A digitally active population</i>	12
8 <i>The work of The Centre, Mbare</i>	13
9 <i>Two more tributes</i>	14/15
10 <i>Research Day 2023</i>	15
11 <i>News/writing for the Review</i>	16

attempted to prevent people from taking part in their traditional sacred ceremonies.

But Stella would not be dissuaded from learning to play mbira – although for many years teachers refused to teach her. She persevered and, finally, at the age of twenty her grandfather agreed she should go to a great uncle who was a *Gwenyambira* (mbira master), and be schooled in the instrument.

Stella travelled to her great uncle's homestead but it was two weeks before she found the courage to tell him why she had visited. But, when she did, he agreed to teach her and so, from 1966 to 1969, Stella studied mbira-playing under his guidance.

### 'A telephone to the spirits'

Later described as *Mbuya Chinyakare* ('Grandmother of Traditional Music'), she made sure that the spiritually significant music would remain relevant and be passed on to future generations. By playing the traditional songs in an authentic style she helped preserve the mbira tradition, so that through her music, the songs and stories and lessons of the past would continue to be handed down.

She described playing mbira as a 'telephone to the spirits of people, water, trees and birds' – a way to contact the ancestors.

Chiweshe said she 'took her role very seriously. A lot of things came to her in dreams or from the spirit world'.

*Continued on next page*

*Stella Chiweshe: continued from page 1*

Often performing in a long kaftan made with Zimbabwean fabric and wearing a traditional headdress with shells, Stella would greet her audience by encouraging them to quietly allow the music to enter and speak to them.

Occasionally, she would take snuff and become almost trance-like, before she began to play. She would sway as she played, her voice blending with the sounds of mbira. Sometimes she would be silent and the sound of the mbira echoed through the darkness.

The music she played was inspired by her ancestors and the spirit world, but there was also a political side to her choice of traditional songs and in her original compositions: like all great musicians, there was always an element of social commentary.

### **An inspiration**

She played a pioneering role in inspiring many other women to play mbira. When an ethno-musicologist, Hector Rufaro Mugani, and cultural activist, Extra-Blessings Kuchera organised a series of mbira-related programmes at Book Café in 2012, one of their first discussions focused on female mbira players and featured interviews with Stella Chiweshe, Chiwoniso Maraire and Hope Masike – three generations of women mbira players. Mugani saluted ‘the emergence of female mbira players and their contribution to the development of mbira instrument and music.’

Chiweshe described the fire inside her that helped her persevere. ‘I didn’t think of it as opening doors for other women. I just wanted to play the mbira,’ she said. ‘Playing, freshens me, it gives me life, it gives me joy, it completes my life.’

Stella Rambisai Chiweshe was one of the first female artists to gain prestige and be honoured with recognition in mbira. Before independence, she released more than 20 singles of Mbira music, of which her first, *Kasahwa*, went gold in 1975. She later released seven internationally successful albums; and in March 2020 received the Lifetime Achievement award at The National Arts Merit Awards.

Her husband Peter Reich, who died in 2020, was buried in Germany on the same day as Stella would be

buried three years later. Before her death Mbuya Stella requested she be buried in accordance with African customs, in Nekati Village in Bindura, under the leadership of Chief Masembura. After the ceremony where traditional music was played and songs sung, the burial was private. Her body was removed from the coffin, which was then destroyed. Stella was wrapped in a reed mat (*rukukwe*) and cloth before being buried.

Her eldest daughter Charity addressed the mourners and praised her mother as a real fighter. She revealed that her mother was born Stella Nekati and that ‘Chiweshe was a totem she adopted as a stage name’.

### **A musical bridge**

Mbuya Stella Chiweshe was a musical bridge carrying mbira music from its ancient past to the present, along with musician Thomas Mukanya Mapfumo who transcribed the mbira sound to the electric guitar. By keeping alive centuries-old mbira music, Stella Chiweshe preserved the tradition for future generations.

Mbira is alive and well. Many Zimbabwean musicians have blended mbira sounds with modern music: the late Chiwoniso Maraire, Jah Prazher, Hope Masike, Alexio Kawara, Tendai Madziti, Tafadzwa Matiure, Tendai Mavengeni and Mbira punk Chikwata 263 along with traditional acts like Ephatt Mujuru, Mbira DzeNharira, Mawungira Enharira, Musha Waparara, Vee Mhofu (Virimai Nedega).

In 2012, just before the iconic Book Café re-opened in Samora Machel Avenue on 16 March that year, a group mbira legends led by Mbuya Chiweshe performed a traditional spiritual ceremony to ask for the blessings of the ancestors. When the Book Café phoenix rises again from the ashes one day, we shall call on the ancestors to be present and Mbuya Chiweshe will once more be with us.

*Stella Rambisai Chiweshe 1946–2023, died at her Kuwanzana home in Harare. She is survived by her two daughters Maidei Charity Mapuranga and Virginia Mukwasha.*

*Pat Brickhill is a freelance writer and Secretary of the Britain Zimbabwe Society*

---

## **Of Dr Alex T. Magaisa’s Unwavering Love**

*No Violet Bulawayo’s tribute to the late Alex Magaisa, who died last June*

**We’ve forced the loss down our throats, swallowed a most bitter grief.**

And, over the past few months since the passing of Dr Alex T. Magaisa, we’ve considered, carefully and collectively, the venerable institution and outstanding human that he was.

From heartfelt obituaries, tributes and testimonies by Mukoma Alex’s friends, colleagues, students, and the ordinary people he inspired, it is even more clear why the announcement of the death of the Zimbabwean lawyer

and public intellectual on 5 June of last year felt like the untimely setting of the sun.

Perhaps it was, perhaps it is something to call the loss of one of the most luminous beacons in the country’s present fight for democracy when that struggle is far from over.

### **A life cut short**

Still – knowing what we now know about Mukoma Alex’s precarious health in the last few years – we must, and so, appreciate that his heart had run its race. What at once

breaks my own and overwhelms it with awe and gratitude is how Mukoma Alex, faced with the unspeakable reality of a life cut short, did far more than many of us have in the face of lesser challenges.

We'll never know what it was like for Mukoma Alex to keep working for his country, for us, with his diagnosis staring him in the face, but what we cannot question is that he chose to fight on, giving the very best of himself up until the end – consistently educating, guiding, uplifting, questioning, cautioning, speaking necessary truths and speaking truth to power, mentoring, inspiring.

The courage it must have taken, the grace it must have taken, the generosity, the fight it must have taken, the humanity, the unshakeable belief that a better Zimbabwe was possible and he would play his part in helping us realise it even if he himself would not breathe its air. The selflessness it must have taken.

### **Incisive commentary**

I never got to meet Mukoma Alex but, like many, I followed his work. Between 2017 and 2020, I was especially in close communion with his famous BSR blog, where he ran incisive commentary on Zimbabwe's politics, law, economy, and social issues. He became, during that time, a great resource for my then work in progress and latest novel, *Glory* – it was a real privilege.

Many of Mukoma Alex's readers will tell you that outside of his obvious intellectual gifts he was also a great

wordsmith and storyteller, and it is true. As is the fact that what powered his words was an unwavering love – for his country, for us, so that it often felt like he wrote from his heart to ours, of what was close to our hearts, of what should always be in our hearts.

It's been uplifting to see this love reflected back to Mukoma Alex as the masses mourned, and continue to remember him. Unfortunately, as the Ndebele saying goes, 'umuntu ubongwa esefile' – a person is thanked after death, for whatever reason, we are not always in the business of expressing our gratitude while people live and walk among us.

### **The ones left behind**

Still, no matter, we are here, and I hope Mukoma Alex knew just how much he was loved back and appreciated. As for us, the ones left behind, I hope that we do not let this love story end here; the country that he loved best survives our dear Mukoma Alex, and we must continue with that love, even as our current political circumstances make it a difficult love.

Not just for his example, but for our future, the free, just Zimbabwe he fought so hard for, even as he knew he would not live in it.

*NoViolet Bulawayo is an award winning novelist whose most recent book is Glory, which was shortlisted for the 2022 Booker Prize.*

---

## **Caring in the UK**

### *Loveness Igwani describes her experiences of the UK's care sector*

**Zimbabwean careworker Loveness Ingwani is a qualified lawyer, who nevertheless felt it necessary to seek work in the UK, such is the desperate situation in Zimbabwe. Here, she describes her experience of working in the UK care system – and the problems and hardship she has faced.**

#### **How does recruitment work?**

One doesn't get to choose the agency that brings one to the UK. Recruiters/employment agents simply link a person with employers in need of carers. The fee, usually around \$700, is paid by the applicant. An interview is then set up.

Because of the high number of people looking for opportunities, prospective employees usually take the first job for which they've successfully interviewed.

This was my situation. There is simply no room to choose – if you are not quick, documentation might expire before you land another sponsor. The progress of getting new documentation such as TB (tuberculosis) vaccination certificates and an IELTS (International English Language Testing System) certificate, police clearance, etc is costly, adding approximately five hundred (US) dollars to the cost of coming to the UK. These costs are borne by the employee.

#### **Working hours**

With my care company, no one explained that although I was working from 6:30 to 23:00 each day (with a couple of breaks of no more than two hours in total), this would not be assessed as 16.5 billable hours. It turned out I am only paid for actual contact time with clients. The many hours spent driving long distances between clients' homes are not paid for. (The company supplies a car and pays for petrol.) However, if a client requires more than their allotted time, I am not paid extra.

I am paid £10.10/hour and, often, I am not paid on time by the owner of my private care company, a Zimbabwean who lives in Barnsley.

I serve six different clients, and make a total of 23 visits per day. Working the long hours I have to do is physically taxing, but it is not every day, and I am still keen to take on some other work. My visa clearly states I have the right to work 20 hours part time in another setting.

#### **Seeking further part-time work**

However, my company does not allow me to work elsewhere: they say there'll be a conflict of interest. Nor will

*Continued on next page*

*Carework: continued from previous page*

they supply the papers that would give me permission to seek employment elsewhere, even though it is illegal to prevent me from doing so.

It appears the employers can make their own laws, with no reference to the laws of the UK. We have no power to challenge them.

### **Salaries**

The pay date is supposed to be on the 28th of each month. However, last month, my company promised to pay us on 22 December. It didn't happen: we got about three apologies and spent a miserable, penniless Christmas, without family and with the rent overdue.

We only got paid on 30 December. Before that, November salaries had not been paid out until 3 December and no explanation was given.

### **Exploitation?**

As things stand, it is very difficult for anyone to ascertain whether a care company employing you will exploit you or not. Company websites seldom carry adequate information about its conduct towards its employees. Word of mouth is really all one can rely on to give an idea of how employees are treated. At the same time, there is no guarantee that such information will be available in one's circle.

### **What type of care?**

The kind of care work one chooses is a huge consideration. I am doing domiciliary care which means I go into people's homes and offer whatever care is needed, then move on to the next client. This kind of care work has by far the worst working conditions.

My company, like many others, does not give enough time for driving between clients; (which, as mentioned, is unpaid) there are often no breaks, and the working hours are very long.

To anyone thinking of undertaking this kind of work, I would recommend that they choose one of these:

1. Supported living (one has a starting time and knocking off time with one client). All hours are paid for.
2. Live in care.
3. Care homes.

As I say, domiciliary care (which is what I do) is the least desirable and most taxing.

### **Immigration**

I had no hassles with immigration when I arrived in the UK: I was fortunate to be asked only about where I was going and what I intended to do there. I have no complaints. Nor did I face any problems in securing accommodation. The company secured and paid for it for the first month.

However, because of delays in payment of salaries, I failed to pay the second month's rental on time. It was a difficult period for me because that attracts a penalty

(3 per cent of the rent). I was emotionally drained because I kept worrying about what explanation I would give my landlord and the possibility of eviction.

### **Homesick**

This is my first time in the UK. Besides the culture shock, there is the psychological trauma of being away from my family.

I remember days when all I could do was cry. I would think of my husband and young children in Zimbabwe and weep. For me, it wasn't just the separation that was painful. It was the knowledge that even if I wanted to bring them over, there was no way I could do so given that:

- I am earning minimum wage per hour, so money for passports, TB tests, police clearance and visa applications is simply unavailable.
- My working hours do not allow for a proper work-life balance. When you are working for days on end from 6:30 am to 11pm, this leaves one with no life outside work. Often, on days off, all I can do is make up for the sleep debt accumulated while on duty.
- Unpredictability of salary dates.

Taking all this into account, I know that having my family with me would be impossible.

### **Check your contract**

Anyone arriving in the United Kingdom for the first time should be sure to be given a contract before leaving Zimbabwe. Read it carefully and ask questions. I got mine after arriving in the UK.

To apply for the visa all I needed was an offer letter and a certificate of sponsorship. The offer letter advised that the full terms of employment would be stipulated in the contract. But I had no idea when I signed up that I would be paid on a pro rata basis according to how much work there actually was for me, rather than how much I was contracted to do.

It turned out that that the company's failure to allocate to me the contractually agreed 39 hours per week would be borne by me.

This meant I was initially given many days off, as the company did not have enough hours for me.

Thus I was paid for 120 hours in the first month instead of the 156 hours minimum stipulated by my contract (and by UK law) and which I was expecting.

### **Report them?**

You might wonder why I have not reported my current employer to the Home Office. These are my reasons:

1. I have to think about the bigger picture, I am here to earn a living and to secure a future for my family. There is no time for much else. I would rather spend time looking for alternative employment.
2. Money and emotional stamina are required to bring an employer like mine to justice. I have neither.

3. No one will take care of my rentals, grocery expenses and other bills if my transition to another employer involves a legal battle.

In fact, I have not yet been able to save and send money to Zimbabwe. However, I am in the process of trying to switch employers and the hope is that I will be able to do so before long.

### **Worthwhile?**

I have a friend who was employed as a nurse in Northern Ireland. I'm not sure about her conditions of employment. What I do know is that she quit and returned to Zimbabwe after less than a year of service.

To her, the sacrifice of being in a foreign land, away from her family was too great. No amount of money would ever be enough to make it worthwhile.

*Loveness Ingwani came to the UK in November 2022, and is working in Mansfield.*

*Loveness has a Masters in Private Law, and was a solicitor in Harare working largely in family law. She is married, with three children. Her husband and children (two, four and six years old) are in Harare. For her permitted twenty hours of other work, she is looking for work in a solicitor's office.*

### **Further resources**

Loveness's experience is not untypical: yet many people judge that they have no choice if they are to give their families the support they need. The following links give further background.

<https://www.gov.uk/health-care-worker-visa/how-much-it-costs>  
A UK government site.

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/code-of-practice-for-the-international-recruitment-of-health-and-social-care-personnel/code-of-practice-for-the-international-recruitment-of-health-and-social-care-personnel-in-england>  
Another UK government site.

<https://rcni.com/nursing-standard/newsroom/news/nurses-coming-to-work-uk-after-forced-migration-zimbabwe-191076>  
'Thousands of nurses faced with broken agreements and withheld pay have flocked to the UK, leaving local hospitals short-staffed'  
*The Nursing Standard*

<https://www.africanews.com/2022/03/09/zimbabwe-clinics-grapple-as-hundreds-of-nurses-relocate-to-the-uk/>

<https://www.telegraph.co.uk/global-health/climate-and-people/how-nurses-recruited-zimbabwe-caught-uk-bonded-labour-schemes/>  
'Zimbabwean care workers are being tricked into coming to the UK'  
*The Telegraph*

<https://www.youthhistoriansproject.org/early-women/recruitment-and-migration-of-african-health-workers>

## **A Tale of Two Health Services**

### *Edgar Muzvidzwa compares industrial unrest in the UK and Zimbabwe*

**The wave of strikes in the UK this winter reminds me of Zimbabwe in the late 90s and early 2000s, when workers in almost every sector of the country were taking to the streets in well-coordinated actions.**

I have been considering the similarities and differences between the circumstances in Zimbabwe and in the UK.

### **Trade unions and health workers**

In Zimbabwe, the strikes (seeking pay rises) were spear-headed by the Zimbabwe Congress of Trade Unions (ZCTU), with Morgan Tsvangirai, before he became leader of the Movement for Democratic Change (MDC) as its Secretary General. Ever since that time, I have wondered how much industrial disputes might be purely industry-centred – and how much they reflect the political ambitions of the leaders.

Here in the United Kingdom, when the nurses went on the first of a series of nationwide strikes in December 2022, this action was almost unprecedented. The issues, they say, are pay and poor working conditions, including staff shortages which, they claim, affect patient safety.

At the time of writing, the issue is still unresolved and the nurses have been joined by other health personnel, who have their own days for industrial action.

### **The law and strikes – UK**

A strike in the UK is only legal as long as there is at least a 50 per cent turnout of eligible members. The majority

of those voting must be in favour of the strike.

Added to this, in England and Scotland there is another consideration designed to make industrial action for workers delivering 'important public services' more difficult – 40 per cent of all those eligible to vote must support any action. (For details of how this works, see how the Royal College of Nursing – the biggest nursing union – describes the rules: <https://www.rcn.org.uk/magazines/Action/2022/Jul/Industrial-action>)

The fact that the nurses passed this second threshold indicates how determined they are.

The government offered them £1,400, but in the nurses' view this is not enough. Like many other workers, they are seeing their costs rising faster than their pay – a situation made worse by high energy costs as a result of the war in Ukraine.

### **Pay and inflation in Zimbabwe**

Problems in Zimbabwe and other developing countries are, of course, much more severe than in the UK.

To start with, there is pay. State registered nurses in Zimbabwe generally earn the equivalent of only around US \$500 (£415 per month). Annually, this translates to around £5,000 a year – nowhere near enough to live on.

In the past, Zimbabwean inflation has been so extreme it was described as 'hyperinflation'.

At its peak in 2008, prices of basic commodities would double in a day. People experienced extreme poverty and

*Health service: continued from previous page*  
unemployment hovered over 80 per cent. The economy became more informal with most companies relocating out of the country.

### **Trying to overcome problems**

People had to find ways of overcoming the problems this caused: one result was that the health sector became informal as some medical professionals set up small practices in their localities while others turned residential houses into clinics.

Those who remained in employment continued to persevere with meagre allowances which came from external donors: their normal salaries could not buy them food for one week.

They also had – and still have – to make do with limited resources and shortages of most of the tools and equipment they need in their job.

The desire to express dissatisfaction persists, even though they know that the country's treasury cannot finance the Ministry of Health and Childcare's massive needs.

Health workers also face a big hurdle in the stringent labour laws and regulations designed to prevent them from taking prolonged industrial action: when junior doctors and nurses stay away from work for more than seven days they are threatened with dismissal by their employer – the government.

### **More recent strikes**

Even so, in 2019, health workers, including doctors, went on strike for several months until Dr Strive Masiyiwa stepped in through Ecosure, a subsidiary of his company Econet, and helped to end the impasse between government and the health workers by looking for protective personal equipment (PPE) and providing them with life and health insurance, as well as transport to and from work for 12 months during the COVID 19 period.

But the problems continue: in June 2022, health sector workers undertook a week-long strike over low salaries and deteriorating working conditions.

In January 2023, there were indications that the nurses and other members of the health sector would strike again and a new bill, the Health Services Bill, was passed to forbid them from striking for more than three days. Anyone breaking this law faces a fine or imprisonment for up to six months.

This looks like a desperate move from the government, aiming to bar industrial action.

But does it solve the underlying problem?

I would say not.

### **Making comparisons**

Comparing the situation with the UK, I am sure that if the health workers in Zimbabwe were to see the conditions and earnings that their counterparts are exposed to in the UK they would want to grab them for themselves.

Those in developing countries like Zimbabwe have learned to deal with few resources.

There is no easy way to get what they need, so they must manage as best they can.

### **Moving out**

But it can come to a point that, as they say in Zimbabwe '*abaiwa ngaabude*' ('the one who gets pricked goes out of the hole').

It means that if you cannot survive it any more, you are the one who leaves. And people do.

The countries that most of these professionals go to include the United Kingdom, Canada, Australia, USA and South Africa.

South Africa was the major destination for skilled people from Zimbabwe – but now even those who have been based there for years are leaving now because of the xenophobic attitudes of the native South Africans.

### **Different pressures**

In the UK, the pressures of low pay and overwork, as in Zimbabwe, are prompting staff to leave – but in this case they are leaving the health service though not the country, and are usually moving to better paid, less stressful jobs, rather than going abroad.

And there is a difference, too, when it comes to resources from which pay rises might be given. In the UK, it is not always agreed, least of all by the main opposition parties in parliament and the health service staff themselves, that an acceptable increase in pay is impossible.

The government says it has decided to make what it calls 'difficult decisions': one of which is to curb inflation by limiting spending. While they may see this as an economic reality it remains to be seen to what extent they can ignore the increasing voices and acts of discontentment from the workers.

Strikes may also be a catalyst for political change – the British people may decide to change their government at the next election.

In the end, both countries are seeing struggles between public sector workers and the government, and in both cases can have far-reaching effects.

*Edgar Muzvidzwa is author of Deeper COVID-19 Social, Political and Economic Revelations, National Archives of Zimbabwe 2022. He is a business analyst and a recruiter of health and social care workers. edgarmuzvidzwa@gmail.com*

#### **Do you live in the UK and have friends or family in Zimbabwe who would enjoy being part of the BZS network?**

If you do, please consider sponsoring them to become members. A growing proportion of our new members are Zimbabwe-based and have been sponsored by friends in the UK to get around the practical difficulties of paying membership subscriptions from Zimbabwe.

Membership subscriptions for Zimbabwe-based members cost only £10. They will receive their copies of *Zimbabwe Review* and other BZS communications by email and be kept informed of our online events programme. Contact the Membership Secretary Margaret Ling: [margaret.ling@geo2.poptel.org.uk](mailto:margaret.ling@geo2.poptel.org.uk) to find out more.

## Review

### **Mbira magic, pitch-perfect piano, delightful dance** *Richard Pantlin attends John Pfumojena's show at the Sheldonian Theatre in Oxford in November*

**This show took place on Thursday 24 November 2022 at Sir Christopher Wren's Sheldonian Theatre, Oxford University.**

It was a historic day – the day that the so-called ‘finger-piano’ or ‘lamellophone’ was liberated from being exhibited as an other-worldly exhibit in a glass case at the Pitt Rivers Museum. Instead of being part of a colonialist history (see <https://oxfordandcolonialism.web.ox.ac.uk/pitt-rivers-museum>) the instrument was formally ‘matriculated’ into western academia in the heart of what once was the brains of the British Empire.

It proudly claimed its rightful name: *mbira*.

The event could only be a one-off. It was produced courtesy of TORCH (The Oxford Research Centre in the Humanities).

#### **Integrating tradition and the modern world**

As Visiting Fellow, John Pfumojena was the TORCH carrier. His mission has been to devise performances that integrate traditional Zimbabwean and Shona Mbira

culture for the modern audience.

In this unique show, he succeeded in spades – and was dressed appropriately, sporting a long academic gown over a red waistcoat, white shirt, bow tie and shiny black shoes. The costumes were designed by his sister MydeiMaf Linda Mafuba.

The other main protagonist at the event was Judith Valerie Engel, an Austrian concert pianist, currently pursuing an Oxford D. Phil in Historical Musicology. In a stunning, strapless scarlet ball gown, she provided the perfect counterpoint to Pfumojena – musically, culturally, as well as sartorially.

#### **The Norwegian Dance Compny**

The show opened with Simba Fulukia of the Norwegian national dance company safely surrounded by a ring of traditional Shona red-white-and-black cloth while the audience gradually entered past his presence in the centre of the ancient hall. He sat on the ground cross-legged, wearing a traditional ostrich feather headdress – head and eyes

*Continued on next page*



*John Pfumojena with the mbira and Austrian pianist Judith Valerie Engel (here, singing, at the Sheldonian Theatre, Oxford University). Photograph © Ian Wallman. John Pfumojena is a Visiting Fellow with the Humanities Cultural Programme, and the event was part of his fellowship. Photograph © Ian Wallman*



Simba Fulukia of the Norwegian national dance company.  
Photograph © Ian Wallman. .

*Mbira magic: continued from previous page*

down, flexing his lithe body, waiting for the show to start.

John began with a Shona praise poem for the Elephant totem (*samanyanga/nzou*) to whose clan he belongs. It was followed by *Mudzimu dzoka*, a traditional song used to invite his ancestors into the space every time he performs. As in an academic procession, John entered followed by the other performers in line all wearing gowns. He ceremonially carried the mbira and subsequently gave the matriculation speech, first in Latin. That started some university members of the audience tittering and when he repeated the speech in English, the rest of us broke into laughter.

### **Music to unite**

The whole show was a beautiful mixture of the tongue-in-cheek, musical maestro-sity, outright comedy and delightful dance. Gorgeous classical piano pieces were mixed with traditional mbira with a playfulness between the two.

John must have some preacher or *svikiro* ancestry in his bones, for he made the point explicitly in words that music should exist to unite and not to divide people.

Genius!

*Richard Pantlin is Project Co-ordinator of The Oxford Zimbabwe Arts Project (OZAP).*

*John Pfumojena is a Visiting Fellow with the Humanities Cultural Programme, and the event was part of his fellowship. The Humanities Cultural Programme is a founding stone of the future Stephen A. Schwarzman Centre for the Humanities, University of Oxford: <https://torch.ox.ac.uk>*

## **Where are you from?**

### *Manasa Narayanan on the politics of 'home'*

*The following article is not from a Zimbabwean, but it is published here after discussion among BZS members about the occasion when a member of the royal household insisted on asking a Black Londoner, at some length, where she was 'really from' (<https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-63822940>).*

*Some people asked, why was the question so offensive? After all, she had an African name and was wearing African fashion. Was it just the rude persistence of the questioner, or the fact of the question itself? Is there a subtext to this question? Is it ever asked of white people?*

*How do Zimbabweans, specifically, answer it?*

**'Where are you from?' I have been asked this more times than I can remember. And having lived in several places, the idea of home is sometimes elusive.**

I barely lived in my Tamil hometown. It's of some sadness to my family that having lived so far away from there, my Tamil is rather a modern metropolitan-esque rendering. It's a version of what I picked up from my parents and also borrowed from the movies I grew up watching, peppered with English and Hindi.

But most times, my word mix-up and jumbled pronunciation just makes for an easy laugh and gives my family more reasons to remark fondly on my silliness.

Time spent in Singapore was a brief stint from which I only have baby memory. In other words, I remember nothing except for memories I have created in retrospect watching videos my parents took on a rather bulky handycam.

The place where I spent most of my life, Allahabad, (in northern India) no longer holds the home I grew up in. The structure remains, but now is a modified, rented space. It no longer resembles the home I knew.

My parents currently live in a different city I only visit when I go to see them. I have no roots there. The home they've built makes for a strange experience. The house has the persons and objects that serve as reminders of familiarity stemming from childhood, yet the setup is as strange as a stranger's house.

My hostel room in Mumbai, where I stayed as an undergraduate, is an in-between space. Without the people who lived there with me then, it's lost its hold on me. And



my little room in the university halls at Leeds, where I spent much time earning my Master's during lockdown, has changed residents twice. No longer mine to call home.

### **So, where *are* you from?**

I now live in London, in a place I'm building up to be home, but far away from the home country that shaped me. Home remains accessible, and yet elusive.

And so, when people ask me, 'where are you from?' – what do I tell them?

'Where are you from?' is really two questions.

One comes from innocent curiosity, asked by someone who wants to know you and your history. One who sees the beauty in colour, but does not compare shade.

And then there is one of 'otherisation'; that attempts to place you anywhere but here. At worst, it is a racial profiling to remind you of your place. At best, it is to tell you how much space you are allowed to occupy.

Some months ago, I was at a friend's birthday party. We had all gathered in a park on a sunny day to enjoy some picnicking. Someone asked me where I was from.

Since moving to the UK, for the sake of brevity, and to avoid the painful task of explaining where in India, I simply say 'India'. While India is huge and various, and I have many homes there, if I venture into the complexities, the answer would run pages. So unless I feel we can afford a long conversation, I start simple.

So yes, I was asked where I was from. In this context, it was the coming together of various social groups where a lot of us were strangers (the only person I knew there was my friend whose birthday it was), so this question was thrown around to everyone from a place of simple knowing.

### **'You're Indian, too, right?'**

But then this person specifically picked out the only other brown person in the group and said, 'you're Indian, too, right?' – motioning us to talk to each other. I did not know this other brown person, but having heard her converse so far, I could see she had a proper British accent. Not the I-came-here-yesterday-and-picked-up-an-accent kind, but the I-have-lived-here-all-my-life-and-so-I-speak-this-way kind.

It was pretty obvious to me she would consider herself British – having probably grown up here. I was right. She clarified that her parents were of Indian origin, but she was born and raised in the UK.

She explained this with a half smile that I am quite familiar with. It's the yes I look different but why do I have to keep confirming my Britishness look. And I could only sympathise.

### **What's wrong with that?**

Reading about this episode, some would ask - what is so wrong about a person being recognised as Indian if they look Indian? The answer lies very much in the motivation and intent behind this act of identification.

What was the point of singling her out for me to talk to? The person could have thought, 'same culture so same interests'. But that would also be a dilution of our metropolitan selves, which don't fit into one culture.

Whenever in the UK I am asked about my origins, I say with much ease and without hesitation that I am Indian.

But for my friend's British-born Indian-origin friend, identity is a more complicated subject. She is expected to be a certain way because she looks a certain way. But she acts like a person from around here, because she is from around here.

She is stuck between a camp that wants her to exude Indian-ness (but just enough, not too much) and another camp that is seeing her as betraying her origins due to her Britishness. Yet if she were to put out her Indian-ness on colourful display, she would be blamed by some for not trying to assimilate.

She could easily be criticised for being not Indian enough, not British enough, too Indian, too British, all at the same time.

After the awkward introduction, both of us did converse a fair bit that evening. And the interesting common ground we found was not our Indian roots, but rather our love for Leeds! Turns out we both went to Leeds University. That is what broke the ice, not our brownness.

### **Complexity of identity**

Later on in a pub, she opened up about growing up in a really white town.

She talked about how she would be given looks, and had things yelled at her.

I told her I have had the looks, but luckily not the crude comments. Even between the two of us, seemingly similar looking brown skinned people, 'where do you come from?' holds different connotations.

And therein lies the complexity of identity that many fail to grasp in their blanket opinions on how to feel about race.

The last time I was asked where I was from, the question came from a few homeless people I was interviewing. I was asking them how it was for them this winter.

They looked at me a bit bewildered to begin with – why is this odd girl going around in the darkness of the evening, prodding us with questions?

I wasn't sure at first if they meant where I was from, as in where I lived currently and set out from that day, or where I was from, as my ethnic/national origin. I replied, 'You mean where I come from originally?'

'Yes,' he said.

'India,' I responded.

### **'You can't ask that!'**

While this exchange was happening, a fellow homeless person gave out a snort and laughed.

He said, 'You cannot ask these questions any more!'

He was snarkily referring to this controversy involving

*Where are you from contned from previous page*

a British black charity worker Ngozi Fulani who was recently pestered by a member of the royal household with questions about her origins .

Despite being born in Britain and clarifying that, the late queen's lady-in-waiting (also Prince William's god-mother) kept pressing her to disclose where 'her people' came from.

### **Racial profiling**

I think the incident is really useful in bringing out the subtleties of racial profiling.

While 'where do you come from?' can indeed be an innocent question posed to anyone, people of colour have scores to say about their unique experiences with that question. A lot of the time it's used to make you feel like 'the other'. And yet when challenged, people can hide behind a claim of innocence behind that question.

Therein lies the reality of today's racial politics. In an environment where overt racial slurs and comments are socially unacceptable in many places, people resort to masked commentary.

Maybe some do it without conscious understanding. But pointing it out when it happens is important for the process of unlearning.

### **Confused**

In an environment where overt racial slurs and comments are socially unacceptable in many places, people resort to masked commentary.

My own recent encounter with this question left me

confused when, on that same day, I was asked that question by three different homeless people. Two of them, who were Polish, reacted positively. They were happy I had come from somewhere else and possibly made it. Despite their own situation, they made this known and made me feel comfortable.

And then there were a few British people who took this as an opportunity to react defensively against the incident involving Ngozi Fulani.

But, either way, I came out thinking there is something truly poetic about being asked about home by people who unfortunately are struggling with the concept of home themselves. Their home is transient. And it forced me to think of home without a sense of attachment to a physical space.

It made me think of home in the form of all the warmth and love I have had, whichever place I have lived in, whatever place I come from.

The next time someone asks me where I come from, I will be tempted to just say 'everywhere'.

*This article first appeared in the quarterly webzine: Emerging Voices: <https://www.emergingvoices.co.uk/post/where-are-you-from> (14 December 2022)*

*Manasa Narayanan is a freelance journalist based in London.*

*See: <https://uk.linkedin.com/in/manasa-narayanan> and, for the article about homeless people mentioned here, see: <https://bylinetimes.com/2022/12/16/without-a-place-to-go-homeless-at-christmas/>*

---

## **Stevenage and Kadoma Link**

### *Three members of the town-twinning organisation between Stevenage and Kadoma report back from a visit to Zimbabwe*

**Stevenage and Kadoma have been linked as twin towns since 29 August 1989.**

Over those 33 years, we have developed a plethora of partnerships – school partnerships, library and fire service partnerships, youth partnerships, linked churches, and school fees schemes being the main ones.

It remains as a lively two-way relationship, in the form of the Stevenage Kadoma Link Association (SKLA).

### **Our October visit**

The most recent event was a visit between 13 and 25 October 2022 by the SKLA Executive Committee to its counterpart Executive Committee in Kadoma (KSLA – Kadoma Stevenage Link Association).

The group from Stevenage was made up of Louise Holmes – current Chair of SKLA, John Addison – current Secretary – and Jan Addison co-ordinator of the SKLA Partnership Schools Scheme.

The two Executive Committees wanted, firstly, to talk face-to-face about the fact that various personnel from



*Orphaned children at the Tariroyashe Children's Life Centre, Kadoma, funded mainly by 'Cornerstone' (the Stevenage side of the youth partnership). Louise Holmes presented them all with waterproof washbags, toothbrushes and toothpaste. Photograph © Louise Holmes.*

both committees were stepping down within the next year, and to address the issues this would leave. It was also a good time for the two Chairpersons (both women) to discuss other matters they both faced in their roles. We also met the leaders of groups that are affiliated to the Link committee in Kadoma, that we in Stevenage know very little about

**‘Learning Partnerships’**

We visited various primary and secondary schools in Kadoma on behalf of their partner schools in Stevenage, and delivered classwork to them.

These schools are in ‘Learning Partnerships’, which means the sets of two partnered schools work together, jointly choosing a subject that is part of their normal curriculum, which they each teach in their normal way, then share some of the schoolwork with each other.

As the paired schools are each working in a different continent, and within different cultures, there are quite naturally occurring teaching and learning points in the

*Continued on next page*



*Above: Children at Munyaradzi High School reading letters from students at Barnwell Secondary School, their partner school in Stevenage.*

*Below: visiting Rubatsiro Special School. Louise, John and Jan Addison took a plaque from SKLA to the school, commemorating Primrose Matiba, the school’s founder and a long-time supporter of the twin towns. Primrose had died last year, and her nephew came to receive the plaque on her behalf. Both photographs © John Addison*



*Jan Addison presenting donated swathes of cloth to the teacher of textiles at Munyaradzi High School, for use in dressmaking classes. Photograph © John Addison.*



*SKLA: continued from previous page*

Stevenage and in the Kadoma schools for staff and pupils alike, that couldn't be learnt when using just the materials supplied by the reciprocal education systems.

### **Highlights**

As always, the Stevenage contingent were well-received and cared for by the Kadoma Link Committee, by Kadoma City Council and by the different schools we visited.

Both Executive committees felt the meetings were excellent. We concluded the matters we needed to talk about in a way that has set plans in place for our twin towns to continue to flourish into the future.

Meeting the leaders of groups affiliated to the Kadoma

Link, we discovered that the Link is a natural hub for those who don't have a voice in society in Kadoma.

They are actively sharing with each other what they do to help their section of community life in Kadoma, and share information and expertise to the benefit of all concerned.

It was so exciting to see for ourselves how many of the Partnership Schools are working together very well, enhancing teaching and learning in both sets of schools – something they should all be proud of.

*Thanks to Louise Holmes (SKLA chair), John Addison (SKLA Secretary) and Jan Addison (co-ordinator of the SKLA Partnership Schools Scheme)*

---

## **Empowering a Digitally Active Population**

*Georgina Fleming describes the work of ZOF Africa: 'promoting tech education for young people in Zimbabwe'*

**For enterprising young Zimbabweans struggling to find work in a troubled economy, digital skills can allow them to work remotely in a globalised job market.**

But those youths need to learn those digital skills in order to pick up the promising 'off-shored' jobs in fields like data science, digital marketing, and web development.

That's why our volunteer-led charity, ZOF Africa (Zimbabwe Orphans Fund) – founded in 2009 to support the education of underprivileged youths in Zimbabwe – is focusing its effort on teaching technology subjects such as coding, robotics, and engineering.

### **Job opportunities**

Digital skills provide young people with unparalleled job opportunities: in the sub-Saharan Africa region, over 230 million jobs will require digital skills by 2030, resulting in almost 650 million training opportunities (IFC).

Our long-term vision at ZOF is to empower a digitally active population to foster sustainable socio-economic growth in the region. Currently, only one in four people in Africa is connected to the internet – well below the world average of 2.4 (*Source: World Economic Forum*). A faster rate of digitalisation will speed up Africa's ability to compete on a global scale. 'Knowledge is power' – and, with access to the internet, that knowledge opens the way to information, skills, inspiration ... and jobs.

As a region becomes more digitally connected, this promotes social inclusion: digitalisation connects people to online banking, health and other online services.

Digitalisation is also key to helping our world meet its climate goals: it allows us to do more with less, which is essential in a world of depleting resources.

### **Funding for opportunities**

Over the last 13 years, we have funded educational activities for over 500 young people from disadvantaged backgrounds in Zimbabwe. We have not always focused on

technology skills, but we have always focused on youths from underprivileged backgrounds.

Our first project in 2011 raised funds for Emerald Hill Children's Home in Harare to build a computer lab for over 150 young girls and boys. In 2013, we began to fund vocational courses for teenagers (18+) leaving children's homes.

The Gift of Education programme was born, between 2013–2020 funding 56 vocational courses in such subjects as Baking, Mechanics, and Garment Sewing.

To complement these, ZOF organised motivational career events for nearly 200 underprivileged youths. One motivated student, named Media, used her baking skills create a confectionary business, Medi Cakes. Today she works in the marketing department of National Foods.

### **UK charitable status**

Until 2020, ZOF was a US-based charity, but in 2021 it received charitable status in the UK. All ZOF donations go directly towards programmes on the ground.

Today, our flagship programmes include:

1. Tech exposure courses for children (9-14 years old).
2. • Engaging courses in the fields of robotics, coding, drone piloting, and 3D printing.

*One of the students ZOF has been able to help by donating a laptop to use for his university studies. Photograph © ZOF*



- Delivery partners: The Maker Club and Precision Aerial.
  - Cost: £200 per child per course; £15,000 to sponsor a school cohort.
  - Benefits: problem solving, teamwork, confidence, and an understanding of the role of technology in the future of work.
3. Skills development for teenagers (15-18 years old)
- Intensive 3-level course in Python coding.
  - Students are typically paired with a used laptop and a career coach to ensure they are applying their skills to further their career prospects.
  - Working with a delivery partner: The Maker Club
  - Cost: £200 per student for the full course + £50 to

send a used laptop + £130 for a three-month career coaching programme.

- Benefits: problem solving, teamwork, career development, career-appropriate skills.
4. Sending used laptops to bright students to aid their studies.

Cost: £50 to ship a used laptop

If you would like to volunteer, donate, or think your company could donate their used laptops, please contact us at [gflaming@zofafrica.org](mailto:gflaming@zofafrica.org)

*Georgina Fleming is ZOF Founder and Country Manager UK and USA.*

## The Centre – ‘Committed to Helping’

### *Alwyn Francis on the work of a drop-in centre in Mbare*

**Mbare, founded in 1907, is Zimbabwe’s oldest, busiest and most densely populated suburb. It has grown to be home to between 450,000 and 800,000 people, half the population of Harare.**

Nestled between a sprawling bus terminus and Mbare Musika, the country’s largest farm produce market, is a one-acre site with a large building known as The Centre.

About 800 people go through its doors every week – vendors, vagrants, vulnerable families and sex workers, and more than 300 children from severely disadvantaged backgrounds.

They receive assistance from 38 support groups which offer vital community services, notably HIV counselling and referrals, support for abused mothers and children, legal and documentation facilities and savings clubs.

The Centre building began life as the offices of the City of Harare’s superintendent for Mbare. In 2011 the

city fathers offered it rent-free to The Centre to carry on the work of the late AIDS activist Lynde Francis as a drop-in centre for people with HIV and AIDS.

#### **Two powerful women**

The activities at the Centre are coordinated by two powerful women, Tariro Chikwanha and Lilian Butau.

They are both AIDS survivors and they have both set up pioneering support groups for people with HIV and AIDS in their communities, Tariro in Chitungwiza and Lilian in Mbare and the surrounding settlements.

Lilian, who became blind in 1993, says, ‘Many people in Mbare know this place. Every day, on average, we help between 15 and 30 single mothers or pregnant teenagers. On Wednesdays we have meetings of more than 60 widows who are members of our Mukando savings club. This is a revolving fund which is used to finance start-up projects for vendors of vegetables or clothes.’

Tariro says, ‘We are committed to helping young people who are facing multiple barriers to success to change their lives and make an impact on issues that are important to them and their communities. Our youth empowerment programmes cover behavioural change, sex education, career guidance, counselling, life skills and vocational training among other issues.’

#### **A growing range of services**

The range of services has grown in response to increasing hunger, poverty and lack of access to education in Mbare.

Estimates of the school drop-out rate in Zimbabwe vary greatly. A 2021 report from the U.S. embassy in Harare, citing NGO statistics, estimated that 840,000 children dropped out of school during the COVID-19 pandemic. A national vendors’ association believes that more than 20,000 children turned to street vending in that time.

The national statistics agency reported in October 2022 that 18.2 per cent of adolescent females had dropped out of school due to marriage or pregnancy and 45 per cent of



*Centre coordinator Lillian Butau (centre) in a discussion with The Centre’s admin volunteers.*

*Photograph © Alwyn Francis*

*Mbare continued from previous page*

the school-going population were not in class as a result of financial hardship. The Lynde Francis Trust (LFT) sources school fees for 35 learners from well-wishers overseas and locally. (Fees at some of the government secondary schools doubled from 2021 to 2022 and doubled again in the first term of 2023.)

In 2019 LFT began to run the following activities at The Centre:

- weekly classes from Early Childhood Development (ECD) to vocational
- training for teenagers out of school;
- a feeding scheme for poorer children to ensure that they can be attentive in class;
- training their mothers how to cook economical and nutritious meals;
- giving them basic teaching skills they can apply at home;
- offering them techniques to reduce emotional stress and help them to acquire a more positive outlook on life.

### **Expanding facilities**

Facilities at The Centre have expanded. A group of diplomats' wives and an international NGO (Non-Governmental Organisation) have equipped and expanded the Centre's kitchen and put in a borehole and water tanks.

The Centre is soon to have a \$25,000 waste plastics recycling workshop on site. In line with its aim to create opportunities for sustainable income-generating projects, LFT has partnered with Alitab Enterprises, a waste management consultancy, to build and equip a workshop at The Centre. Volunteers will be trained to operate and maintain an industrial pelletiser that produces lengths of durable, all-weather plastic in various colours. These strands are woven onto metal frames to make chairs, baskets and lighting fittings that Alitab will market locally



*A mother helps two young ECD pupils to master the alphabet. Photograph © Alwyn Francis.*

and abroad. Alitab in turn aims to help Determined, Resilient, Empowered, AIDS-free, Mentored and Safe (DREAMS) and LFT with their school fees sponsorship programme.

Modest additions of resources and equipment would make an important difference to the lives of the Centre's beneficiaries.

The last word goes to Tariro Chikwanha: 'It would help to have ceilings put in to keep out the dust. Our kitchen needs shelves, lockable cupboards and a freezer. And with a bigger stove with an oven, we can prepare to feed more children and youngsters who benefit from our support and even make food to sell.'

*Alwyn Francis a veteran Harare journalist and editor who worked for many years on the iconic Horizon magazine in Harare*

## **Tributes**

### **Joburg Zwelibanzi Mzilethi**

**Born in March 1942, the late Joburg Zwelibanzi Mzilethi played a vital role in the liberation of Zimbabwe.**

After independence his contribution to the development of the young nation spanned nearly two decades. He joined the civil service in 1982 in the Ministry of Local Government and Town Planning as the District Administrator for Binga and rose to be Deputy Secretary (Field Operations) in the Ministry of National Affairs, Employment Creation and Co-operatives.

Mzilethi's patriotism began when he

attended Nyati Secondary School where he took part in student activism. When ZAPU was banned in 1963 he joined the underground youth movement.

He left for Zambia in 1966, sustaining a life threatening lung injury in the process, and did training in the Soviet Union in 1967.

On his return he was stationed in the Zambezi Valley. He operated from camp DK where he was responsible for helping hundreds of young men and women cross to join the Liberation Struggle

During ZAPU's internal problems, he was one of the 42 that were detained. Released on medical grounds and made his

way to the United Kingdom, where he joined the ZAPU contingent there, helping to obtain the release of the rest of the 42 before going to York University.

Mzilethi leaves behind a strong legacy. Of great concern to him was the development of Matebeleland North, South and Bulawayo.

He never stopped being a patriotic Zimbabwean desiring only equity and equality.

*Joburg Zwelibanzi Mzilethi: 1942 – 2022*

*This tribute was contributed by Zwelibanzi Mzilethi's daughters, Nikki and Memory Mzilethi.*

## **Kees Maxey**

**Long-standing BZS member Kees (Cornelius) Maxey died on 19 October 2022 at the age of 85.**

Kees, an active member of his local Labour Party, developed an early interest in the struggle for African majority rule in the then Rhodesia. He maintained an extensive private research library on the nationalist movements and the liberation war.

Kees worked as an industrial research chemist until a mid-career shift took him to the African Educational Trust as its Director. AET helped provide educational opportunities to African students, particularly in conflict areas – including, at that time, Zimbabwe and the other Southern African front line states .

Within the BZS, Kees served as a trustee of the John Conradie Memorial Trust, set up in memory of one of the small number of white political prisoners convicted by the Smith regime for their

role in the liberation struggle. John, a South African by birth, stayed in Zimbabwe after independence, working as an advocate and practitioner of early childhood and pre-school education. Following his retirement, Kees served for 10 years as the Secretary of the Council for Education in the Commonwealth (CEC).

Kees was also a dedicated and active supporter of PENHA, the Pastoral and Environment Network in the Horn of Africa, an organisation ahead of its time in highlighting the threat of climate change and drought to the sustainability of long-established nomadic livelihoods.

*Margaret Ling*

*Kees's great-niece, BZS member Jennifer De Bruijn, adds the following personal tribute.*

**Kees was my great uncle and I recently joined BZS to remember him.**

I was inspired by his legacy to be part of a community that is both engaged on

the issues and celebrates the achievements of Zimbabweans at home and abroad.

I grew up in Zimbabwe, but was lucky to be able to visit Kees and Sheila in the UK occasionally as a child. It was always a joy to stay at their house and meet other family that they brought together. After moving away to study and work, I became a little disconnected from Zimbabwe, but have been motivated to re-engage by the many recent tributes to Kees about his activism and mentorship.

During his life he helped many people read more and widely on African affairs, and through BZS I have started to do just that. Thank you Kees.

*Jennifer De Bruijn*

*Kees (Cornelius) Maxey :1937-2022*

*Donations to PENHA in Kees's memory can be made at <https://kees.muchloved.com>*

---

# **The Britain Zimbabwe Society Annual Research Day, 2023**

**Topic: Religion and Gender in Zimbabwe and the Diaspora**

**Date: Saturday 17 June 2023**

**Format: Virtual**

**The 2023 Research Day will explore research on, and the role of, religion and gender in Zimbabwe and the diaspora.**

These topics will be examined as standalone discourses in their own right; but there will also be presentations and debates on the intersections between religion and gender. The impact of religion and gender on national and diasporan development will also be assessed.

The Research Day will use a multidisciplinary, wide-angle lens to look at religion from historical, contemporary and future viewpoints. Religious faith – and/or its absence – remains a keystone of the human condition, and this certainly applies to Zimbabwe.

## **Religion as an arena of experience and debate**

Issues of interest may include, but would not necessarily be limited to, the history and evolution of religion, culture and spiritualism in Zimbabwe; and perspectives on, and critiques of, contemporary religion, culture and spiritualism.

Religion and politics, religion and demography, religion, society and the economy are just a few of the areas of interest which might be discussed at the Research Day. Religion is also a major arena of the Zimbabwean diasporan experience, and this too will be an arena of debate.

There will also be presentations on the everyday reality, as well as the uses of, diverse religion[s], culture and spiritual faith.

## **Issues concerning gender**

Gender too is an inescapable part of the human experience. It is a complex arena of collaboration, contestation, cooperation and coercion.

A number of issues continue to resonate, including; gender stereotyping, gender discrimination; complex discussions around nature and nurture; inclusivity and exclusivity in gender discussions and activism; and matriarchy and patriarchy.

More specifically the Research Day will also examine the landscape in gender research, practice and activism in Zimbabwe and the diaspora. These may include topics around gender and politics, gender and society, gender and conflict, gender and identity, gender and the economy – and more.

Also of interest will be questions around the differences between Zimbabwean/African constructs of gender and lived experiences; and Western approaches to gender. In an age where questions about masculinity, femininity, LGBT, identity, and other issues, remain highly emotive and contested, the challenge is to make discussions of gender in Zimbabwe and the diaspora meaningful and useful.

## **Lived experience**

The Research Day will examine the intersections between religion and gender, both from research perspectives and as lived experience.

Research Day 2023 will continue the tradition of being a forum for new and established voices to interact with each other and the audience on some of the key issues of our time. We look forward to welcoming you.

*Knox Chitiyo, President BZS*

## News

### Zimbabwe and the Commonwealth

An online discussion, hosted by the Institute for Commonwealth Studies (ICWS) addressed the issue of the influence the Commonwealth might have on Zimbabwe – and the implications of rejoining. The discussion can still be heard on: <https://commonwealth.sas.ac.uk/podcasts/zimbabwe-and-commonwealth>

### BZS Zimbabwean Book Festival

On 3/4 March, the BZS held a two-day Zimbabwean Book Festival, *The Story is YOU*.

The first day (3 March) was in person, at Royal Holloway, University of London's, Bedford Square venue. The next day was online.

The event as a whole aimed 'to be a forum for the cross-fertilisation of new voices alongside established writers.'

*We plan to give a detailed report in our next issue.*

### Writing for the Review

Members of the BZS Executive have suggested that I draw up some guidelines for writers. I hope these will be helpful. (That's the plan!)

#### 1. Offers of material or ideas for material from members

We love getting suggestions and offers of material. The *Review* belongs to the members, and the more input we get from members the better. Ideally, that comes with an offer to write it, or a suggestion of someone who can do it. But do get in touch before sending anything – to save confusion!

#### 2. Obituaries

We suggest that there should be two kinds of obituaries – both, as you would expect, relevant to Zimbabwe.

a) obituaries for well-known people written by someone familiar with their life. We will happily accept suggestions.

b) for less well-known people: whose colleagues feel should be acknowledged but who is 'unsung'. We can then publish something like the Guardian's *Other Lives* obituaries, written by a friend or relation.

#### 3. Lastly ...

if you've agreed to write for the *Review*, please let me know as soon as you can if there's any problem (meeting the deadline, etc) so we can look for a way to fill in the space and, if possible, reschedule you!

Jenny Vaughan, Editor, *Zimbabwe Review*.  
jenny@jennypvaughan.co.uk



## Contact the Britain Zimbabwe Society

**President:** Knox Chitiyo

### 2022–2023 Officers and Executive

Chair: Millius Palayiwa

Vice-Chair Rori Masiane

Secretary (Minutes/Correspondence): Pat Brickhill

Secretary (Membership): Margaret Ling

Information and Publications Officer: Jenny Vaughan

Web Officer: Philip Weiss

Treasurer: Margaret Ling

### Other Executive members:

Pauline Dodgson-Katiyo

Kathy Mansfield Higgins

Diana Jeater                      Victor de Waal

Pelagia Nyamayaro

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](mailto: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 WhatsApp network membership, 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, via our website:

[www.britainzimbabwe.org.uk/join-bzs-today](http://www.britainzimbabwe.org.uk/join-bzs-today))

### Rates

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

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

NAME

TELEPHONE:

ADDRESS

POSTCODE

EMAIL