

# **WOMEN'S STRUGGLE FOR PEACE IN ZIMBABWE**

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# Zimbabwe



# Zimbabwe

- ✘ Land of one of the 7 wonder's of the world
  - ✘ The land of the flame lily
  - ✘ The land of the balancing rocks – *Rhodes*
  - ✘ The land of the Zimbabwe Ruins built perfectly with no motar or cement
  - ✘ The land of some of the worlds friendliest people
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# Introduction

- ✘ History of women and their struggle for peace in Zimbabwe is a long one. It is also not just one story. Women in Zimbabwe are diverse and have diverse experiences. In this presentation I will focus on black Zimbabwean women. Historically women were always involved in peace.
- + Mbuya Nehanda - was a spirit medium who fought against colonial settlement. She was hanged for her efforts.

# Introduction cont

- ✘ Women in Zimbabwe's liberation war
  - + The women's movement in Zimbabwe has often used female guerrilla's experiences, fighting side by side with their men, as the basis for arguments to gain gender equality in legislation. To some extent this has been realized with the Age of Majority Act and changes to inheritance laws. However the women's movement today has not yet dealt with the specific needs of female ex-combatants. Women who fought in the struggle remain bitter about their treatment by society and government but remain hesitant to criticize the government which they fought so hard for. While female ex-combatants remain unable to organize themselves as a vocal group with special needs, the disparities in compensation based on gender widens.
- ✘ *The forgotten soldiers: Women in Zimbabwe's liberation war*  
*Tanya Lyons Southern Africa Report Archive, vol 12 no 2*
- ✘ 1977

# Flame

- ✘ From 1972 to 1980 there was civil war in Zimbabwe. We know about the heroes. Yes, they are buried in Heroes Acre, a high kopje that overlooks the town. And they are all men.
- ✘ <http://www.zimmedia.com/flame/>
- ✘ "These are strange times. Strange times indeed. Times when you go home to a bunch of war-born kids and wonder how you can make them understand your strange outcome in life. Explain why you belong to the most jobless and unmarried group of women in society. And how this should become a fact of life to be checked not abused. To be incorporated, not discarded."  
*(Neka Kazingizi, ex-combatant mother of three. Written in 1998)*

# LAMA

- ✘ The Legal Age of Majority Act (LAMA) and the Matrimonial Causes Act recognize women's right to own property independently of their husbands or fathers.
  - ✘ Prior to 1982 women had a guardian from birth to death.
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# Women's movement

- ✘ Since the early 1980's there has been a proliferation of women's activism and women's organizations.
- ✘ Each organization was founded to address issues that Zimbabwean women were struggling with focusing on social, economic and political development's, from gender equity, human rights, domestic violence, research, and children's rights

# NANGO

- ✘ An umbrella body of different NGO's, ironically the chair person was arrested yesterday (on 26 Oct, 2009), Mrs Dadirai Chikwengo and Chief Executive Officer Cephaz Zinhumwe. The arbitrary arrest and detention of Chikwengo and Zinhumwe is yet another incident that shows the relentless state-sponsored and condoned victimisation of Civil Society actors and Human Rights Defenders It is alleged that the two contravened sections of the repressive Public Order and Security Act
- ✘ <http://www.nango.org.zw/campaigns/view.asp?id=886>

# Women's movement

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- ✘ "Today women in Zimbabwe find themselves at the confluence of the political, economic and HIV/AIDS crisis. It is imperative that any future dialogue between the government and the MDC includes women as key players [...] To illustrate just how affected women are by the crisis, all one has to do is consider that a packet of 8 sanitary pads now costs, on average, Zim \$5000 (about US \$6). Most domestic workers only earn Zim \$5000. The price of a packet of 3 male condoms -more commonly used by women to prevent pregnancy and HIV infection- costs Zim \$2000 (about US \$2). Women are having to compromise their own health , just so that they can feed their families. Women's organization that have outreach activities in communities are finding it difficult to reach the women, thereby denying women space to participate in their own development programmes. It is imperative that a comprehensive constitutional review takes place, and in that process women want to represent themselves. We want to see a constitution that guarantees our right as Zimbabweans."
- ✘ *Everjoice Win, Spokeswoman for Crisis in Zimbabwe, a consortium of NGOs, August 2003*

# Political violence

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- × “One of the major impacts of this political violence has been to push women out of the political arena, never mind the fact that women were already wary of politics. In many African countries people, and especially women, are scared of politics because they see it as dirty, as corrupt, as vicious, and that’s the image that has now been reinforced. Politics is not serving the needs of women. It is no longer seen as about policy making and representing people, but about an individual getting a certain position so they can get whatever it is they want to get. A lot of women don’t want to be associated with that, and when violence is added, it just compounds the situation for them.”
- × *Everjoice Win, spokeswoman for Crisis in Zimbabwe, a consortium of NGO's and Consultant Director of the Zimbabwe Women in Politics Support Unit*

# Peace

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- ✘ *“Civilization advances when what was perceived as misfortune is perceived as injustice.” (Martha Minnow, 1993)*
- ✘ *While people are saying, "Peace and safety," destruction will come on them suddenly, as labor pains on a pregnant woman, and they will not escape.*  
1 Thessalonians 5:3 (New International Version)

# Hear Us – Zimbabwean women affected by political violence

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- ✘ Various YouTube Clips

- ✘ Memory's story

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=L68KxQcjbIs>

- ✘ Kuda, Representative, Research and Advocacy Unit

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=NIMfY8nNsJo&feature=related>

# How can we make sense of it all

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- ✘ Research and analysis,
- ✘ Black women writing about their lived experiences
- ✘ Documenting these lived experiences
- ✘ Not just the negative about the successes and victories
- ✘ Strong black women, *myth or reality, weak and vulnerable, different stories*

# BLACK FEMINIST THOUGHT

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- ✘ Historically black women have faced (and continue to face) multiple oppressions, for instance they have been racialized, together with black men, but they have also faced patriarchal oppression from black men. Likewise with white women, they have been discriminated against for being women, but have also been racialized by white women. Black women have as a result been at the bottom of all social strata of society.
- ✘ Using BFT I envision will be a paradigm that is grounded in the historical as well as contemporary experiences of Black women as mother, activists, academics and community leaders
- ✘ About empowerment

# Principles of BFT

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- ✘ 1) Revolutionary Vision
  - ✘ 2) Resistance
  - ✘ 3) Mutual Stretching
  - ✘ 4) Collectivism
  - ✘ 5) Spirituality
  - ✘ 6) Community Mothering
  - ✘ 7) Self- Determination
  - ✘ 8) Self-Reliance
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- ✘ Book ‘Theorizing Empowerment’ edited by Notisha Massaquoi and Njoki Nathani Wane

# BIBLICAL FEMINISM

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## ✘ SPIRITUALITY

- ✘ One of my questions, can BFT really help me analyze my own experiences as a black female, daughter, lawyer, activist, wife and mother?
- ✘ “Religion plays a very important role in African and Caribbean women’s lives. It gives them hope and comfort, while also influencing many other aspects of their daily lives and activities.” (Tharao, Massaquoi, & Telcom, 2006).
- ✘ The principle on spirituality made me reflect on my own faith. What is spirituality and what is Christian faith, particularly Seventh-Day Adventism?
- ✘ How does my faith speak to my experiences as a black, African, Southern African woman, who grew up speaking English as my first language?

# Biblical Feminism

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- ✘ There are many definitions of feminism and one I find compelling is referred to as a 'biblical feminist.' (Bacchiocchi, 1991, p123). He defines a Biblical Feminist as follows:
- ✘ Whereas Liberal Feminists *reject* the Biblical Teaching on headship and submission and the Evangelical Feminists *reinterpret* it, the Biblical Feminists *reaffirm* it. They maintain that the Bible clearly teaches that God has established functional role distinctions between husbands and wives – distinctions which do not imply superiority or inferiority but complementarity. (Bacchiocchi, 1991).

# Zimbabwean women in the Diaspora

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- ✘ We are scattered as the result of the political and economic decline
- ✘ My interaction with women and men in my Zimbabwean community in Canada is part of leadership and part of theorizing and it is important to document and analyze those relationships and developments
- ✘ Our lives are closely intertwined with those in Zimbabwe

# Diaspora

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- ✘ God placing me, here, now, in this country, class, job whatever situation, being an intellectual is a way to help me and others make sense of our situation
- ✘ Zimbabwean women in the diaspora also facing struggles for peace, dealing with issues of culture, stress, violence, survival, a new 'chimurenga' in the West, not the land of milk and honey - Canada's economic apartheid\*
- ✘ *\*Canada's Economic Apartheid (Grace –Edward Galabuzi*

# Education

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- ✘ I perceive education (at whatever level) as the conduit for creating a positive environment for all people to develop to their full potential, especially those who are disadvantaged.
- ✘ As a woman, daughter, sister, a wife, and mother, I truly believe in the phrase “educate a woman and you educate a nation.”

# Women's empowerment orgs

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- × WILSA
- × WIDAF
- × WAG
- × *MUSASA Project etc*
- × ZWCRN
- × WOZA
- × Girl Child Network
- × Women's Coalition
- × Women's University in Africa

# Women's Empowerment orgs cont

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*Bulawayo Women Lawyers Association -quilt*

*Zimbabwe Women Lawyers Association*

Zimbabwe Lawyers for Human Rights

Numerous HIV/AIDS organizations

Catholic Commission for Justice and Peace

ZimRights

Zimbabwe Peace Project

Legal Resources Foundation

+ Legal Project Centres

× Political Parties

ZANU-PF, ZAPU, United ZANU and ZAPU, ZUM, FORUM Party, MDC, ZAPU, MDC – T, MDC – M, Independents

**Sekai Holland clip**

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Dp0Oja7nb3A>

## Possible ways to promote the role of women

- ✘ Need to understand the full context
- ✘ Not just look at the dire situation: “othering”
- ✘ Need to look at the whole story, not just the failure of Mugabe’s leadership now, but look to the history of the colonial creation of the African State.
- ✘ We cannot just look at the negative stories of women’s struggles there are many successes too. Lessons can be learned from those.

# CULTURE AND CONFLICT TRANSFORMATION

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- ✘ UNESCO defines culture as a “Complex of distinctive spiritual, material, intellectual and emotional features that characterise a society or social group including arts, letters, modes of life, values systems, beliefs and traditions”
- ✘ Rao/Walton (2004) define culture as “Lenses through which professionals need to look to ‘see’ complexity factors influencing development and behaviour”.

## Cultural approach to Conflict Transformation is:-

- ✘ Effective in enlarging the scope of conflict analysis;
- ✘ Inspired by realities of the lives of the people affected;
- ✘ An exploration of solutions through local identity and cultural expression;
- ✘ Cognisant of the link between culture as beliefs, values etc. and culture as the expression and creation of meaning;

# Relevance of Culture to Conflict Transformation

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- ✘ Tension can arise when identity is under threat or when people seek to change oppressive power relations;
- ✘ Cultural features can be a positive influence to support peace building;
- ✘ Creative expression can promote communication;
- ✘ Resilience or internal cohesion and capacity to withstand shocks is related to culture;

# Culture and Conflict Transformation cont

- ✘ Culture contributes to unity, diversity, validation and communication;
- ✘ A set of values could be lost as a result of conflict and these could be recalled in conflict transformation and, if restored, could be a basis for peace building.

Refer to tribal culture where grandfathers, grand mothers, parents, uncles, aunts, brothers, sisters and cousins relate in certain ways and play different roles.

# Culture and Conflict Transformation cont

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- ✘ Culture must not deny difference and insist on fictional unity;
- ✘ Oppressive power, the powerlessness of some groups and the marginalisation of others may result in conflict;
- ✘ Culture may either be an obstacle to progress or promote unity or both, but it is never neutral

# Culture, Resilience and Peace

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- ✘ Some cultures are resilient to mass violence while others are not;
- ✘ Features of resilient cultures are
  - Unity where people divided by conflict can come together and articulate their differences in a secure environment;
  - Diversity where people from different cultures can come together to talk about their common humanity;

# The Cultural Approach

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- ✘ Can transmit peace messages;
- ✘ Analyse cultural factors and risks to conflict;
- ✘ Identify cultural resources that can support peace building or exacerbate tension.

A useful example of intercultural dialogue could be to bring chiefs and other traditional leaders together and let them explain to each other their cultural norms on such matters as marriages, allocation of land, settlement of disputes etc.

# Natural Attributes Common to all Human Beings

While recognizing cultural diversity, it is also important to emphasize the fact that there are natural attributes that all people have in common. These are birth-gifts that we all share and which assist in the promotion of the common good.

# Freedom and Power to Choose

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- ✘ Has the greatest impact on people;
- ✘ Resonates deeper in the soul than anything else;
- ✘ Is most practical, most relevant and most timeless regardless of circumstances;
- ✘ Is the greatest gift next to life itself;
- ✘ Stands in stark contrast to the mind-set of victimisation and the culture of blame;

# Freedom and choice cont

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The freedom and power to choose is the most important of our birth-gifts.

Awareness of our freedom and power to choose leads us to accept that we are responsible (response-able) for what happens to us provided that we are truly independent.

Even in conflict situations we can choose to promote peace or to succumb to the ravages of conflict through such things as fear to lose face!

# Natural Laws or principles

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- ✘ These are universal, timeless and inarguable i.e. they do not change;
- ✘ They transcend culture and geography;
- ✘ They are sometimes referred to as the “Gandhi Factor” and they include fairness, kindness, love, respect, honesty, integrity, service, industry, humility, contribution, modesty, trustworthiness etc

# CONCLUSION

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In dealing with inter-personal, inter-group or inter-cultural dialogue, conflict management, conflict resolution or conflict transformation, in the pursuit of peace for Zimbabwean women, and ALL women it is important to think of the underlying unity in our diversity and to appreciate that conflict resolution or escalation is largely a matter of:-

# Conclusion cont

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- ✘ Using or not using our freedom and power to choose;
- ✘ Applying or not applying the Gandhi Factor;
- ✘ Developing or not developing our God-given intelligences/capacities.

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