

**MIDLANDS STATE UNIVERSITY**

**FACULTY OF ARTS**



**DEPARTMENT OF ENGLISH AND COMMUNICATION**

**Violence and the Postcolonial State: An analysis of Christopher Mlalazi's *Running with***

***Mother, They are Coming* and Noviolet Bulawayo's *We Need New Names***

**BY**

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## **DECLARATION**

I, Limpho. A Heywood, Registration number R123209X, hereby declare that this dissertation is my own original work that has not been previously submitted for any degree or examination at any other university. Proper citation and acknowledgements in line with copyright law and ethical requirements have been strictly adhered to, in writing this thesis. This dissertation is submitted to the Department of English and Communication, Midlands State University in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the Bachelor of Arts English and Communication Honours Degree.

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## **DEDICATION**

I would like to dedicate this dissertation to my beloved father, Mr. L. L Heywood who afforded me this opportunity to embark on my studies. He is the man who taught me that the most prized possession an individual could ever acquire on earth is education. Not silver or gold because anyone can take them away. Yet, no one can ever take away the education and knowledge you possess. His wisdom has guided and inspired me through all these years and continues to guide me to become a better person. I would also love to dedicate this research to my loving uncle Mr. K. K Heywood who has been there for me through my years at university.

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## ABSTRACT

This research discusses violence as it manifests in postcolonial Zimbabwe, with particular reference to Christopher Mlalazi's *Running with Mother* (2012), *They are Coming* (2012) and Noviolet Bulawayo's *We Need New Names* (2013). Drawing insights from Fanon and Zizek, it considers the several ways through which violence enters and disrupts the lives of individuals and communities. It notes the forms which violence takes, direct, structural and symbolic, for instance, and demonstrates that violence pervades postcolonial states. In Zimbabwe such violence appears in the forms of political violence, ethnic violence and poverty. The novels studied clearly grapple with questions of culpability, victimhood and survival in Zimbabwean violent contexts.

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# CHAPTER ONE

## 1.1 BACKGROUND OF STUDY

Violence can be defined as any action that causes destruction, pain or suffering. Stanko (2001) defines violence as ‘any form of behavior by an individual or individuals that intentionally threatens or causes physical, sexual or psychological harm to others or themselves’ (4). A wide range of coercive behaviors which can either be economic, emotional, physical and political targeted at having control over a victim characterize the concept of violence (Alehie 2011:63). Colonialism crippled the blacks politically, economically and socially as it undressed them of their freedom and made them function at the beckoning and the whims of the white man. Like any form of oppression, it became unbearable that the blacks resolved to fight the whites so as to emancipate themselves. Upon gaining their freedom, the white government was replaced by the black government that was to serve the interests of the majority in Zimbabwe. What the people had not envisioned was the violence that was heralded by independence.

Postcolonial violence is usually caused by grievances which can be subdivided into three categories namely hatred between groups, political exclusion or vengeance (Collier and Hofflier2000:83). Zimbabwe is no stranger to this scourge of postcolonial violence. From as early as the 1980s reports of violence emerged and since then there were countless episodes of violence in Zimbabwe. After the attainment of independence in 1980, ZANU PF positioned itself as the most legitimate party because of the role it had played in the liberation of Zimbabwe. Martin and Johnson (1981) state ZANU PF did play its part in the liberation struggle but there were other political parties that were involved. Due to the political exclusion resulting from ZANU PF’s entrenchment of power after 1980, ZIPRA ex-fighters

(who came to be known as dissidents) began terrorizing people in Midlands and Matebeleland as a form of retaliation. The state responded by sending in Fifth Brigade, a military outfit which is accused of perpetrating several crimes, which include murder, on Ndebele civilians (Catholic Commission of Justice and Peace and Legal Resources Foundation 1997). This operation undertaken by the Fifth Brigade came to be known as Gukurahundi, the early rains which wash away chaff. What started as a political fight between parties ended up being a violent ethnic war involving the military and unsuspecting civilians. As can be seen, the fight for supremacy and political power after independence was a violent process.

Furthermore by 1990 the government realized that Zimbabwe was not in the position of acquiring wealth and saw the need for loans. It adopted the Economic Structural Adjustment Programme (ESAP) mandate which emphasized on the devaluation of the currency, economic liberalization and removal of government subsidies. The failure of this programme left Zimbabwe crippled as it reduced the employment which grew at only 0.8%, instead of the annual 2.4%, while the public enterprise incurred \$3.8 billion in its losses (Moyo 2003:326). Many people were left without employment and could not afford to purchase necessities because inflation had also gone up by 16%. The postcolonial state's inability to support its citizens had become obvious. Poverty became a norm in the country.

Adjacent to the ESAP was the issue of the land distribution. The acquisition of land from white farmers by the government after a failed referendum in 2000 led to civil unrest in Zimbabwe. The land was taken by force from the white man and the white man was dispensed of to accommodate aggrieved war veterans who had been neglected by the government for two decades. Related to this was the recurrence, especially after 2000, of

electoral violence and fraud in Zimbabwe. The first ever election after independence was flawed by the attempted assassination of President Robert Mugabe (ZANU PF leader). Violence continued as the ZANU PF supporters conflicted with the PF ZANU supporters which led to the suppression of ZANU PF campaigns (Reynolds 1999:165). In the 2008 elections violence was at its peak between political parties. The desire to remain in power has been the reason why Zimbabwean elections are never peaceful and transparent. Violence has been used to acquire power and is still being used to sustain that power. In the process of this electoral violence, civilians are usually caught in between and loss of civic life is inevitable.

## **1.2 STATEMENT OF PROBLEM**

The literary depiction of postcolonial violence in Zimbabwe has not been adequately discussed literary critics. This research seeks to address this aspect and contribute towards the overall understanding of violence in postcolonial Zimbabwe. It shall employ the works of Franz Fanon who believes that violence is necessary and that violence can only be responded to by violence and Slavoj Zizek who is the opinion that for one to fully understand violence, they should move away from quick judgment and put their emotions aside.

## **1.3 OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY**

**The research seeks to:**

- Draw attention to the question of postcolonial violence in Zimbabwe
- Examine the literary depiction of ethnic violence in Zimbabwe
- Analyse the representation of poverty in the context of postcolonial violence in Zimbabwean

- Examine the depiction of political violence after independence in Zimbabwean texts

#### **1.4 SIGNIFICANCE OF STUDY**

This research contributes to the discourse of postcolonial violence by taking a literary perspective. While a lot has been written on this form of violence in general, little has been done in terms of how literary texts shed light on the experiences of individuals and communities in violent states. Such a commitment will obviously expand the discourse on violence and bring to light how Zimbabwean literature is increasingly grappling with issues to do with ethnic, political and everyday violence in Zimbabwe.

#### **1.5 LITERATURE REVIEW ON ZIMBABWEAN LITERATURE**

Like all literatures, Zimbabwean literature is a response to the history it reflects (Zhuwarara2001:10). It clearly depicts the oppressive nature of the colonial system and the after effects of colonialism as Zimbabwe becomes an independent nation. Critics of Zimbabwean literature have acknowledged that Zimunya's (1982) *Those Years of Drought and Hunger: The Birth of African Literature in English in Zimbabwe* is the most critical piece of work in the Zimbabwean literature as it provides an introductory overview of Zimbabwean literature. It demonstrates that 1980 is the turning point of Zimbabwean history which breaks and puts to the end the ninety years of colonial rule and the heralding of a new era where the black man assumes power and determines his own destiny. For the Zimbabwean writer this era of freedom offers endless possibilities for the exposure of the ills of the white settler rule.

Veit-Wild (1993) posits that Zimbabwean literature is more of a stream of writing that arose from the people's exile and loneliness they experienced during the colonial era. Through Zimbabwean literature the people of Zimbabwe are able to voice out all their grievances and can tell their colonial story to the world. Veit-Wild's (1993) did not limit herself to analyzing Zimbabwean novels written in English unlike Zimunya, she took a step further in discussing other Zimbabwean texts written in native languages and by doing so she gives a sociological approach to the study of Zimbabwean literature. Zimbabwean literary texts are a contributory factor to the public sphere therefore they are means for the search of justice in line with the historical eras, as they are often perceived as subversions of prevailing versions of history. Primorac (2006) states that the history of colonial rule was characterized by oppression of the black man and unwelcomed white settlement and in the process of this African human rights were violated and the notion of the 'othering of others' was enforced. The Africans were thus denied their history and sense of dignity. Zimbabwean literature therefore acts as a vigorous response to the injustice, something Ranger (2005) points out when he says 'Rhodesia in the 1950s and 60s and in Matabeleland in the 1980s and 90s, the people had been denied a history. Too much history as well as too little it had been necessary to remedy a deficiency' (12). Zimbabwean authors thus provided a solution to the deficiency. Ranger (2005) continues to posit that at the foundation of the tradition in Zimbabwean literature in English, there appears the representation of colonial resistance by the blacks. This resistance is said to be two-fold as it consists of war literature and nationalist writing.

Muponda (2004) approaches the issue of what constitutes Zimbabwean literature from a different perspective. He suggests that Zimbabwean literature has been dominated and shaped by the land narrative. Muponda (2004) continues to enlighten us on the issue of the land narrative:

The literature of Zimbabwe is inexorably bound to the violence of the history and land that engendered it. The land itself is not only a geographical entity, but the very text of the Zimbabwean history. It drips with blood, entombs bones of both colonial settler and MbuyaNehanda's children. It is suffused with memory. This memory is often imaged as, and transcribed in, the body. The body assumes the lineaments of a living personality (24).

In Muponda's view, land is seen to be the thread that knits together the story of the Zimbabwean people. Land is the centre of the violence and oppression that was hurled upon the Zimbabwean blacks because the blacks put much importance on land. By taking it away from the black man, whites stripped the blacks of their identity, sense of belonging and power thus reducing them to what Agambeni(1998:8) refers to as a 'bare life'. They are no longer the masters of their fate and destiny – the Zimbabwean blacks were rendered powerless. This is further supported by Graham (2009:4) who states that the history of Zimbabwe is 'indelibly marked by monumental processes of dispossession and alienation'. With the coming of the white settlers, the Zimbabweans were disposed from their fertile lands and were put in unfertile lands, Shangani and Gwaai, where they could not farm and produce enough crops to feed their families (Sachikonye2004:12). Clearly Zimbabwean literary criticism dwells more on how Zimbabwean literature deals with issues to do with colonialism and the land. Resultantly, attention on how postcolonial violence is depicted is warranted.

### **1.5.1 VIOLENCE IN POST- 1980 ZIMBABWE**

The first decade of postcolonial Zimbabwe was characterized by different sorts of violence. After independence, the government failed to contain the differences that emerged between

different ethnic groups that made up the Zimbabwean nation. Musindo (2004) states that the Ndebele tribe was seen as the most powerful during the colonial era and they would raid the cattle, women and crops from the Shona tribe and this created a rift between the two tribes thus the unresolved ethnic differences. Ndlovu-Gatsheni (2008) reaffirms this by stating that after independence, between 1982 and 1987, Zimbabwe was immersed in ethnic conflict which had its roots dating back to the pre-independence era.

Nyambi (2011) defines the Gukurahundi as a struggle within a struggle. The interrogation of the facts of the Gukurahundi massacres found and not found in the official historical journals is contained in Zimbabwean literature. As I discuss about the Gukurahundi I shall use the works of Christopher Mlalazi *Running with Mother* (2012). The difference between the violence that was inflicted on the Zimbabweans before 1980 is that its consequences are commemorated unlike the violence after 1980 which remains more of an enigma to the Zimbabwean people. This violence is the kind of violence that the people in power would not want in the ears and books of the nation.

These authors mentioned above echo the silenced memories of the Gukurahundi as highlighted by Kaarsholm (2005:17). From Kaarsholm's point of view, the violence inflicted by the state on the people is an evil that should be unraveled and the people of Zimbabwe have every right to know about all the ills. By writing about the Gukurahundi violence, the Zimbabwean authors expose the misuse of the power given to political leaders as they act as quasi-gods with the power to annihilate whole races.

Arnold and Weinar (1998:32) discuss the economic meltdown following the spate of violence ushered by war veterans of Zimbabwe's Second Chimurenga when they demanded

compensation for going to war. This group of people became the prime actors that aided the decline of Zimbabwe's political and economic state because they had the ability and power to challenge the state. After the state failed to compensate these war veterans due to the suspension of the War Victims Compensation Fund in March 1997, they found themselves marginalized. When their grievances were simultaneously dismissed, the war veterans decided to protest against this through confrontation. On August 11 1997, the war veterans began harassing the party officials during the Presidents Heroes Day Speech and to prevent more violent protest, the President agreed to reinstate the Compensation Fund.

Ndlovu-Gatsheni(2003) enlightens us on the problems ensuing regarding Zimbabwean elections which have been defined by the violence since independence. Postcolonial Zimbabwe, which is meant to be a democratic nation, defies the foundations of democracy by accommodating and encouraging political violence in order for the ruling party to win elections. For example, the presidential election in 2002 elections were deemed unfair by the European Union, United States and the British Commonwealth because of the activities of the youth militia and the refusal of the state to allow international observers and the Zimbabwe's Republican Police's intimidation of the people (Meredith 2007:226) . The state's response to elections is violent, leading to the deaths and imprisonment of opposition supporters

In addition to the violent elections was the advent of Operation Murambatsvina in 2005. This operation left thousands of people homeless as its main aim was to destroy all illegally erected buildings and vending sites (Tibaijuka 2005:12). Not only did this leave thousands homeless, it also left them without any source of income, forcing the people to migrate to the neighboring countries like South Africa and Botswana. Operation Murambatsvina was

carried out in an unjustified manner that ignored all human suffering and violated numerous human rights (Chan 2003:44).

## **1.6 THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK**

Several approaches can be used to understand the forms of violence in postcolonial Zimbabwe but this research shall be conducted through a framework that will combine two approaches to violence- direct approach by Franz Fanon as well as the sideways reflection approach by Slavoj Zizek. Understanding violence in postcolonial Zimbabwe calls for the direct approach which focuses more on the physical violence and the immediate solutions for the physical violence. However this approach leaves a gap in the understanding of the abstract violence, objectivity and the need to reflect in the postcolony thus giving one a leeway to use the sideways reflection approach so as to expose this sort of violence. By combining the two approaches, I will be able to illuminate on the violence in postcolonial Zimbabwe that shall be showcased in the texts studied in this research.

### **1.6.1 DIRECT APPROACH**

The Direct approach focuses more on the physical type of violence and how violence is seen as a necessity because it has the ability to recreate and change a world (Fanon 1963:99). To Fanon, violence works and produces results whether negative or positive. He supports this assertion by stating that the world is a violent place and once the violence has been unleashed to the world, the expected results are a violent reaction so in essence violence can only be solved by violence (102). Violence from the colonizer is seen as the catalyst for the colonized to be violent. Firstly the colonized, after independence, manifested their bottled up aggressiveness on their own people and, secondly, the black man is not seen as a person with

the ability to live peacefully as his sole purpose is depicted as one who has an insatiable hunger to persecute and inflict violence on his fellow black man (Fanon 1963:105) Lastly the reason for the black man's violence is that the colonial order left the black man in a place of tension and uncomfortability.

Fanon (1963) continues to state that there are different notions of violence chiefly militancy, aggression, coercion, force and physical or psychological injury. Mbembe (2001) also concurs with Fanon as he states that this is the kind of physical violence that authorizes the founding violence making its authority widespread and permanent. Fanon goes on to elucidate on how after independence the ruling party will start behaving like an ethnic based party (83). He states that it is a certain tribe that will make itself out to be a party and claim to be speaking for the totality of the people. It will deem itself the national party and instead of welcoming the discontentment of the people, it will forge a screen to silence these voices through violence and make sure that the peoples disappointments are not heard therefore hindering the free flowing of ideas from the people to their government.

For Fanon, violence is used to sustain political power and dealing with political threat as in the case of postcolonial Zimbabwe during the Matebeleland disturbances (Gukurahundi) of 1980s and the electoral violence of the 2000s. Literally the term Gukurahundi means 'the first rains' which are believed to cleanse away the chaff. Gukurahundi was a clandestine operation undertaken by the Fifth Brigade (all of which were the Shona people) who massacred the Ndebele people with the belief that all the Ndebele people were 'dissidents' who Marechera (1980) in his book *Black Sunlight* referred to as the 'intelligent opposition.' Arendt (1969) supports Fanon by implying that there is a link between violence and political power as seen in Zimbabwe during the Gukurahundi when the Fifth Brigade sadistically murdered the

Ndebele civilians so as to assume political power because the Gukurahundi started out as a mere war between two political parties the ZANU and ZIPRA but ended up as a fully-fledged massacre of the Ndebele people (Ndlovu-Gatsheni 2009:5).

### **1.6.2 SIDEWAYS REFLECTION APPROACH**

For one to have a clear concept of violence, this approach encourages one to deter from the lure of the obvious violence that is inflicted by identifiable agents and take a step back so as to see the conditions that cause such violence. By imploring this sideway glances approach, it enables one to view violence for what it is and even dissuades an individual to feel empathetic for the people affected by this violence. Distancing oneself enables an individual to see that kind of violence that allows for the existence of the will to fight against violence (Zizek, 2009:1).

Unlike Fanon, Zizek (2009) subdivides violence into three categories; firstly there is the symbolic violence which is manifested in speech forms and language. Secondly there is the systematic form of violence which is embedded in the nation's political and economic systems and it can be noted that these objective forms of violence encourage the existence of the subjective violence which manifests itself in civil unrest, terror and war. In this Zizekean approach more interest is put on the objective forms of violence because this is the violence that is abstract rather than direct- it is the invisible form of violence (Zizek 2009:2). By using Zizek's approach to violence, analysts are able to study violence without their judgments being clouded by emotions thus enabling them to have the full understanding of violence and its effects on the people that suffer from that violence.

Murambatsvina, for instance is an operation that was undertaken by the Zimbabwean government to clear the country of illegal structures. Many people were left homeless as people built these structures so that they could house their families because the government was not able to meet the accommodation needs of most people. Unlike the clandestine violence of the Gukurahundi, operation Murambatsvina was an officiated operation by the government. For a full appreciation of the causes of this operation, objectivity becomes a necessity.

In Zimbabwe the Land Reform was a form of violence experienced by the people. After the 1980s and the 1990s, many indigenous elites had the desire to become farmers at a large commercial scale so policies to correct the unequal allocation of land amongst the people were created. With this move, the state hoped that by giving land to the landless the country would be able to be self-sufficient thus upgrading the economy and bring back nationalism to the country. The big question was how to repossess this land from the white settlers and how it was going to be distributed. This process of affirmative repossession of land in Zimbabwe became a violent one as the settlers were not willing to give up their land.

When the sideways reflection approach is applied to the Land Reform for example, one is compelled to critique the government's motives in the redistribution of land as the people who advocated for this reform were the war veterans whereas the rest of the people in the state remained homeless and poverty stricken. How was the government going to deal with the predicament and who were going to suffer from the results? This approach enables a discussion of the aftermath of this reform rather than the reasons for the reform and the empathy that was given the war veterans since they are the ones that brought independence to the country.

## **1.7 RESEARCH DESIGN**

This research shall rely on the qualitative research method which shall be the main instrument in the gathering of data. The qualitative research method shall give the researcher enough room for the intensive analysis of data so as to have a profound conclusion. This research method shall be based on the textual analysis of the primary texts which are under study. These texts are *Running with Mother*(2012), *They are Coming* (2012) and *We Need New Names* (2013).

## **1.8 CHAPTER LAYOUT**

This research is divided into 5 chapters. The first chapter provides the reader with a panoramic idea of what constitutes the whole research and what the research is all about. The texts studied in the dissertation are read through chapters 2,3 and 4 and every chapter shall be titled so as to give an overview of the ideas to be discussed in that specific chapter. In essence the chapter delineation will highlight the structuring of the chapters. Chapter one includes the background of study, statement of problem, aims and objectives of the research, the significance of the study, the theoretical framework and the literature review of the research.

In chapter two the work of Christopher Mlalazi, *Running with Mother*, shall be critically analysed to highlight the pitfalls of nationalism and the ethnic violence that follows after such a pitfall. The analysis of this novel shall glean on the Fanonian approach to violence to show how violence is used as a ruling weapon in postcolonial Zimbabwe. Other critical works shall be employed together with the primary texts to give a full overview of the ethnic violence. Chapter three discusses poverty as violence in postcolonial Zimbabwe in relation to

Bulawayo's *We Need New Names* and chapter four shall discuss political violence in line with Mlalazi's *They are Coming*. Chapter five is the final chapter that brings together all the arguments raised in the previous chapters.

## **CHAPTER TWO: VIOLENCE AND ETHNICITY**

### **2.1 INTRODUCTION**

The previous chapter laid a foundation for this research by introducing the concepts of violence expounded by Zizek and Fanon. It also illuminated on what violence is and revealed that violence dates back to the time of slavery. It also highlighted how violence gives birth to violence and how violence can only be responded to by violence. For the Zimbabweans this violence is accredited to colonialism as the natives were oppressed in their own country. The acquiring of freedom was a violent process and so after independence violence continued as a means of governance and authority and as a means of political power.

This chapter focuses on the depiction of ethnic violence in Mlalazi's *Running with Mother* (2012). This novel showcases how the Shona militia perpetrated terror upon the Ndebele people. This is the story of a young fourteen year old girl Rudo who witnesses the horrific incidences of the Matebeleland disturbances (Gukurahundi) of the 1980's which were orchestrated by the Fifth Brigade (state security). The introduction and the conclusion of the novel reveal graphic acts of violence carried out under the supervision of Comrade Finish the whilst the rest of the novel shows Rudo, her mother and aunt running away from their village in order to escape these horrors.

The ethnic motivated violence shall be discussed in this chapter and the Fanonian concept of direct violence shall be employed. This chapter seeks to reveal the pitfalls of national consciousness and how violence is used to gain political power and to sustain that power. It

shall show how after independence, the unity that had brought the independence became an enigma and violence became the main source of governance.

## **2.2 ETHNICITY AND NATIONALISM**

There is a thin line between ethnicity and nationalism. Ethnicity and nationalism are weapons used by many political leaders to gather the masses and for personal political benefits. During colonialism, the people overlooked their ethnic differences and became one nation people so as to gain freedom. After independence, there is the fight for political power as one ethnic group emerges to be more capable than the other and ‘commandist’ violence is used to ensure that this group of people remains in power (Raftopolous 2004:6).

In postcolonial Zimbabwe, ethnicity re-emerges immediately after the liberation struggle. The people started singing praises of the heroes of the struggle especially of those who were from the ZANU PF side, aligning them to the historical embodiments from the Shona ethnic group like SekuruKaguvi and MbuyaNehanda (Nelson 1983:10). This gave the Shona people an elevated position in the state as the ethnic group of higher standing. Not only did it motivate the Shona people but it also gave them the upper hand to oppress other minority groups.

Conflicts of an ethnic kind continued between the two political parties PF ZANU and ZANU PF. Their diverging visions led to the rift between the two parties. ZANU PF assumed its political power as the ruling party whilst PF ZANU considered itself as the major opposition party. The conflict between these two parties thus took an ethnic turn as their slogans, songs and campaigns mocked and ridiculed the other party and it can be noted that the ZANU PF

party had its majority as the Shona speakers whilst PF ZANU was dominated by the Ndebele speakers (Lindgren 2005:20).

Ethnic incompatibilities are accredited to the failure of nationalism in creating a people as a nation and ensuring a culture of human rights and democracy (Ndlovu-Gatsheni and Williams 2010:14). Nationalism in the postcolonial Zimbabwe is seen as an anti-colonial product that seems to dissolve soon after independence resulting in ethnic differences coming to the surface and paving the way for one ethnic group to gain hegemony over other ethnic groups.

Fanon (1963) states that what follows after nationalism in a postcolony is racism, this is the kind of racism which no longer comprises a white man against black man, but consists of a black man acting fellow blacks. In essence nationalism is followed by ethnic differences. Huntington (1993) supports this assertion when he notes that violence in a postcolonial state is perpetuated by the incompatibilities in both religious and cultural ethics and these differences usually emerge after independence in colonial states. Ethnicity in a postcolonial state marks the fall of nationalism.

### **2.3 Ethnic violence in *Running with Mother* (2012)**

The novel begins with Rudo complaining that her school is far and so she and her friends are walking back home from school when they suddenly witness the bus Rudo's uncle (Uncle Ndoro) drives crashing into a tree. Things start spiraling out of control when the soldiers appear at the crash site, questioning Rudo and her friends about their ethnicity before the

soldier wearing reading glasses (Captain Finish) dangles a human hand in front of the children. The hand that is dangled belongs to Headman Mabhena, who is the community leader of the people of the Mbongolo village. It is in these parts where issues of ethnic differences are highlighted and how violence is used as a divisive strategy and a tool for instilling fear in the people.

Mlalazi's novel is saturated by horrific incidents that are witnessed by the protagonist Rudo as she, her Mother, her Auntie and cousin, Gift, try to survive the targeted violence. In the beginning of the story, we are made aware that the killings that are being perpetrated are directed indiscriminately at Ndebele people by the Shona dominated military. Comrade Finish makes it clear when he says to Rudo 'Hurry, disappear and don't look back. This is a matter for the Ndebele people' (9). Consistent with Fanon (1963:189) who states that ethnic violence is usually experienced and inflicted on the group that is in the minority, it can be noted that the Ndebele become ready and easy targets of violence because in Zimbabwe they are in the minority whilst the Shona people are in the majority.

This violence is also used to maintain the Shona political power and annihilate anyone who goes against that power. It is this form of direct violence that rules the nation and maintains 'stability' in the state. What began as an operation to eliminate the 'dissidents' deliberately conflated the Ndebele speaking people, ZAPU and ex ZIPRA supporters with dissidents therefore leading to the full blown attack on the Ndebele people (Lingren 2005:158). Mlalazi echoes this in his novel when mother says 'No. The soldiers said they are just killing all the Ndebele people' (17).

In the novel, Mlalazi depicts how being Ndebele was more of sin than crime. The soldiers are heard announcing that the people should go back to the primary school and that they shall be forgiven (71). Being Ndebele warranted a death sentence as the perpetrators 'Fifth Brigade' based this violence in terms of politics and ethnicity. The soldiers in the novel seemed to possess the power to decide who is to live and who is to die. Such power is aptly termed 'political power' Locke (1960:308). Its legitimization can only be achieved through physical violence. In the maintenance of the ruling party's power, ethnicity was used as the catalyst and as a means of suppressing any political uprisings and opposition and thereby monopolizing its power (Ndlovu-Gatsheni 2003; Ranger, Alexander and McGregor 2000:204-231).

In *Running with Mother*, ethnic relations are seen to spiral out of control. For instance when MrMkandla chases Rudo and Mother out of the cave because he believes that they being Shona automatically translates to perpetrators of violence against the Ndebele, we get a glimpse of how deep ethnic divisions have become. In Mkandla's eyes, there is no difference between Shona civilians and the Shona military butchering the Ndebele. Out of sheer fear, MrMkandla forgets that once upon a time he and the Shona people were living peacefully in Mbongolo village. It can be argued that these killings are the major cause of the failure to integrate the nation into one because the Ndebele people believe they were dehumanized by their fellow black people whilst the Shona people see Gukurahundi as a payback mission on the Ndebele for the 19<sup>th</sup> century raids.

Mlalazi goes on to highlight how ethnicity manifests amongst the people themselves and how they are conscious of their own ethnic identities. In the novel, Mother is reluctant to follow

the Ndebele teachers who are also in flight from the killings because she is Shona. Auntie voices this fear when she asks Mother if the reason for her reluctance to join the teachers is based on the fear that the teachers will not accept her and Rudo. Auntie's statement leaves a lot to be desired. If indeed Zimbabwe is 'one' nation, why should Mother nurture the fear of not being among fellow Zimbabweans? The cracks and crevices of nationalism are exposed in Mlalazi's text. Nationalism played and continues to be the key element in the reconstruction and fathoming of the Zimbabwean state which is 'always imagined, constructed, suffered and celebrated' (Ndlovu-Gatsheni 2009:22).

This in turn suggests that 'nationhood' remains problematic since people of different ethnic groups live in fear of being rejected by their fellow black people. The idea of the people in Mbongolo village living in peace is seen as a facade as it only takes a series of related incidents to expose the hidden cracks in the community. It is through Mr Mkandla that we realize that it takes violence to bring the cracks to the surface. Mr Mkandla's true nature is exposed when his fellow Ndebele people are being murdered and no one seems to be helping them. These incidents echo Nyamubaya's poetry anthology *On the Road Again* (1986) which predicts the collapse of the postcolonial independent state. Nyamubaya goes on to allude to the 'mysterious marriage' between 'freedom and independence'. Nyamubaya is of the opinion that independence was celebrated when there was no freedom. When the people attained their independence, the struggle did not end but it continued and the only difference was the instigator.

Mr Mkandla bluntly refuses to eat mice after several days of surviving on figs and water because his reason is that mice are only eaten by the Shona people. This clearly depicts the

stereotypes that come with being Shona and how conscious he is of his ethnicity. Mr Mkandla symbolizes the bitter Ndebele people who refuse to be associated with the Shona people because of the atrocities the militia directed towards the Ndebele people.

Mr Mkandla makes the reader aware that this violence is being caused by the Shona people with the consent of the people in power. Comrade Finish also states that ‘they are on national duty and that nothing should disturb them not even their fellow tribesman and their children’ (139). This entails the hijacking of what the people fought for by the political leaders while neglecting the needs of the majority in the pursuit of political aggrandizement.

The fact that there was nothing that was being reported on the radio about the killings in the village shows that the government is complicit to these massacres. The only report that Rudo and her mother hear is of the Prime Minister being away from the country. How is the Prime Minister's journey more important than innocent people being massacred? One clearly questions why such a horrific incident is not reported on national radio. The fleeing party is of the view that people cannot be harassed and killed en-masse without the government knowing about it. The deafening silence on the atrocities in Mbongolo epitomize the marginalization of people in the rural areas who are sidelined and considered unimportant in an urbanized state, whereas if these killings had happened in the cities, much attention could have been paid to them. Political leaders consenting to the mass murder of its people highlights the betrayal of the nationalists' promises made to the people and the direct violation of human rights and the core beliefs of democracy. It seems that there is no law to protect the minority because the authority that is meant to protect them is inflicting violence on them.

When Mother questions and shows disbelief regarding the actions of the government soldiers who go around burning people and children in their homes, Mlalazi tries to shed light on how the trust between the government and its people is betrayed. This leads to the continued mistrust of the political leaders by the civilians as the people cannot understand why the political leaders would violate their human rights to such levels and defy the very foundations of democracy. The violence of the Gukurahundi in turn left the nation gripped with fear and suspicion because they knew that these atrocities had been endorsed by the government (Ndlovu-Gatsheni 2003:16-24).

The jackal outside the house and laughing (32) seem to be mocking the fleeing party's ignorance. It is not by accident that Mlalazi introduces the jackal laughing soon after Mother ponders about the government soldiers' behavior. At another level, the jackals would nevertheless parallel the actions of the military who linger in the dark waiting to pounce upon their human prey. Both are cause for hiding and fleeing.

Rudo's father is taken away by the soldiers whilst Gift's parents are burnt in their house, highlighting how this violence has caused family disintegration and caused many children to grow up without their parents whilst wives lose their husbands. Not only does Mlalazi expose how families are disintegrated, he also shows how these killings affected the witnesses psychologically and emotionally. Auntie and Uncle Ngoro are left damaged mentally whilst Rudo bemoans the loss of her father. One wonders about the child's psychological state after witnessing such atrocities.

The Gukurahundi is responsible for the marginalization of the Matebeleland and Midlands province as these two provinces were the centre of the ‘disturbances’. The Ndebele people arguably believe that they have been sidelined in the political and economic realm and the Shona people have been accused of ‘taking’ their counterparts’ jobs and educational opportunities (Muzondidya and Ndlovu-Gatsheni 2007:34).

Mbembe (2001) posits that in a postcolony, the state or the people in power create their own world of meanings and by doing so they are able to govern the people and instill their own ideologies on the people. Looking at postcolonial Zimbabwe, the state power has made the use of violence a normal procedure in the governing of the people and in making sure that the laws enacted are obediently followed and opposition is suppressed. In his novel *Running with Mother* Mlalazi raises the question of how the ruling party legitimizes its power at the expense of nation-building therefore leading to the country’s irresolvable differences. The killings experienced by the Ndebele people in the novel, were a way of making sure that the people acknowledged and feared the political leaders in power. In the Fanonian ideology, violence is the instrument that is used to achieve political power

The question of who is supposed to be protected by the law is also raised in *Running with Mother*. Auntie talks about how Zimbabwe has tough laws (35) only to realize at the end that it is the law that is abusing them. So now one wonders who is meant to be protected by the law- the Shona people? Since Zimbabwe is a multi-ethnic nation, what shall be the destiny of the rest of those who are not of Shona descent? Clearly whoever makes the law chooses whom the law is meant to protect and whom it shall oppress and those who cannot be protected by the law would obviously be ‘bare lives’ who can be killed and yet not sacrificed (Agambeni 1998:8).

Mlalazi's novel also depicts the abuse of the women during the Gukurahundi. Rudo's friends are stripped naked in the beginning of the novel, loaded in the truck with their fate unknown to them and Rudo who remains behind. The brutality of the soldiers is highlighted as MrMkandla explains how the soldiers made the men rape their neighbor's wife in front of the children and, like in any other war, the women were raped by the soldiers for instance Miss Grant, a white female teacher. The rape and shooting of Miss grant shows that these massacres, though ethnic based, had other (gender and racial) victims. In that case, they were also an excessive show and monopolization of power.

The postcolonial state's ineffectiveness to manage the issue of ethnicity was realized through the Gukurahundi as highlighted in *Running with Mother*. This operation was a demonstration of 'quasi- nationalism' and the struggle of moral authority and power in Zimbabwe. In *Running with Mother*, Mlalazi is at pains to demonstrate that violence was primarily targeted the Ndebele people. Underlying this violence is a the pursuit of a one-party state, which is a form of modern day dictatorship (Fanon 1963:132) and a unitary vision for the state. In *Black Sunlight*, Marechera demonstrates that freedom can never be talked about as long as a nation cannot tolerate opposition politics.

The ongoing attempts by authors to write about the 1983-1987 atrocities of the Gukurahundi show the insatiable hunger for answers as the people from the provinces that were affected reiterate their story in a muffled voice. Writers like Mlalazi are trying to expose the violence that was almost silenced and consigned to oblivion. Gukurahundi is seen as a historical and chronological reality which cannot be blotted out without giving answers. Mlalazi's vivid

narration of the activities Rudo witnessed highlight how difficult it would be to completely erase that part of Zimbabwean history.

*Running with Mother* can be read as a form of protest literature as Mlalazi exposes the ills of the postindependent government seeing that governance has not changed since 1980. Here Mlalazi seems to be reasoning with the government to own up for the wrongs it did during Gukurahundi because it nourished the seeds for Ndebele particularism and the continued unease between the Shona and the Ndebele people. The Ndebele people were made aware of their differences with the Shona people which in turn crippled the one-nation building ideology. Mlalazi's text is an indictment on the political leaders to recognize their wrongs and admit them. The Ndebele identity has been sidelined and has been constructed as the Shona's convenient other (Mthwakazi Action Group 2006; Ndlovu-Gatsheni 2003; Ndlovu-Gatsheni 2009).

## CHAPTER THREE: POVERTY IN THE CONTEXT OF EVERYDAY VIOLENCE

### 3.1 INTRODUCTION

Violence can only be understood in the context in which it happens. It cannot always be expressed in a direct way but there are other subtle forms of violence that people tend to give a blind eye to and incorporate as part of their lives. This chapter shall focus on poverty as a form of violence experienced in a postcolonial state. Poverty as a complex phenomenon can be defined in numerous ways with lack of the necessities like food, shelter, health and education being at the centre of the definitions. Poverty is never a result of the lack of one thing but a lack of many interlocking needs.

Poverty has its various manifestations including hunger, ill-health, limited access to education, homelessness, no practice of one's rights and unsafe environments. When people are deprived of these things, they always feel trapped and feel like when each day begins, the struggle also begins. This chapter looks at some of these issues as they are depicted in Noviolet Bulawayo's *We Need New Names*, with the intention of demonstrating how poverty easily takes the form of violence in character's lives. This chapter shall be subdivided into three sections namely the nature of poverty, sources of poverty and victims and their responses to poverty.

*We Need New Names* was written in 2013 by Noviolet Bulawayo and is set in Bulawayo where the protagonist and her family and friends live in a squatter camp in a place called Paradise. This novel is told from a child's point of view and dwells on how the children perceive the ongoing activities in their lives. By making the child the voice of the novel,

Bulawayo tries to give the reader the most purest and truthful side of the story. It is through the children's narration of the events that happen around them that we get a glimpse of the poverty that haunts the everyday life of the people of Paradise. In her novel, Bulawayo goes on to reveal the psychological aspects of poverty like powerlessness, dependency syndrome, and lack a voice therefore making the poor people an easy target to exploitation. Due to their powerlessness the poor people are vulnerable to the inhumane treatment, insults and humiliation that are thrown at them by those with the capability to help them.

### **3.2 NATURE OF POVERTY**

The novel begins with Darling (protagonist) complaining how she and her friends did not eat in the morning and how hungry she feels. It is in the beginning that Bulawayo introduces her theme of poverty manifesting itself through hunger. The protagonist seems to be looking forward to stealing guavas with her friends in Budapest which is the area where the rich people live. The children resort to stealing guavas so that they can satisfy their hungry stomachs since their families cannot provide the adequate meals. To them stealing seems like a petty crime and a game but looking at it closer, it is due to the poverty they experience that they resort to theft. Bulawayo reveals how desperation has forced the children to resort to theft. Townsend (1970) notes that poverty breeds desperation and desperation thus breeds crime and crime can become rampant in the state when the state fails to provide employment.

When the children go to Budapest to steal guavas, they risk being caught and imprisoned for stealing. Hunger forces them to neglect the consequences of stealing. The children expose themselves to a dangerous lifestyle. Bulawayo shows how it is the survival of the fittest

amongst the poor people. It's either you stay hungry or you find other means of acquiring food even if it means stealing.

Not only are the children exposed to the hunger but also deprived of the necessary clothing. Darling's friend Godknows constantly wears trousers that are torn on the buttocks and Darling is forced to go to church barefooted because her old shoes were now tight and uncomfortable and the new shoes that her mother had got from the Chinese shops had become torn. The adults also suffer from the same fate of being under clothed as showcased by Mother of Bones who goes to church wearing mismatching shoes and Darlings mother who complains about the clothes that are not always there.

Bulawayo ventures on to expose how the people of Paradise are forced to live like animals. Due to their poverty, most people in Paradise live in one roomed shacks meaning that everything happens in that space. Darling and her mother also live in one room and her mother invites her 'man' over and, thinking that Darling is asleep, engages in coitus. Darling overhears every sound that her mother and 'man' produce, making it even more difficult to sleep. A child witnessing their own mother having sexual intercourse disturbs the psychological stability of the child thereby violating her innocence. Bulawayo thus exposes how poverty and lack force people to live under precarious conditions to the point where privacy and discretion become unattainable.

Darling and her family did not always live in the shacks. They once lived in a proper well built properly furnished house that was destroyed by the bulldozers forcing them to find

shelter in the squatter camps of Paradise. Now they live in a shack that has a small bed sitting on some bricks and poles which was made by Mother. The inside of their mattress was made of plastic, old pieces of cloth, chicken and duck feathers. Bulawayo shows how Darling and her family are removed from their comfortable life and left to suffer in Paradise. When Mother's man comes over, Mother's laughter reminds Darling of the time they used to live in the real house. She states that ever since they moved to Paradise Mother does not laugh that way anymore. It is through Darling's analysis of Mother's laughter that Bulawayo illuminates on how poverty not only kills the spirit but changes the individual.

Darling and her friends stop going to school because the teachers have left the country for greener pastures in countries like Botswana, South Africa and Namibia. The children are thus deprived of an education. Here Bulawayo shows how poverty affects the people. The state offers salaries that do not equate to the cost of living in the country thereby pushing the teachers and other civil servants to seek employment in neighboring countries (Kondylis 2005:10). The economic decline of a nation directly fuels up the impoverishment of its people.

By depriving the children of an education, the illiteracy rate is fuelled up. In underdeveloped countries, illiteracy is at its highest level which becomes problematic in trying to improve the people's livelihood. By virtue of being illiterate, the poor have limited access and knowledge on the prevailing technologies and preventive health measures. Illiteracy can be the reason why diseases like Malaria or HIV are widespread amongst the poor people (Runciman 1966: 54).

*We Need New Names* also broadcasts how the poor go through the pangs of humiliation from the very people they can access help from. When the NGO people come to distribute food and clothing to the people of Paradise, they seem reluctant to touch the children and when Darling says ‘Thank you’, the NGO lady does not respond as if Darling just barked. When the NGO people take pictures of the children, the children feel embarrassed because of their dirt. The children receive clothing and are ecstatic because their families cannot afford to clothe them adequately.

The fact that the people of Paradise complain when the NGO people do not come shows how dependent they have become on foreign aid. They even wish the NGO’s could come more frequent to help alleviate the hunger in their households. The adults are given beans, mealie-meal and sugar which only generate signs of disappointment because the portions given to them are not enough to feed their families. Being impoverished forces one to continuously depend on the one that offers assistance (Humphreys & Weinstein, 2008:435).

When the NGO are busy giving away the food and gifts, Mother of Love distances herself from the whole charade. The fact that the people of Paradise have to accept foreign help from the westerners makes one wonder what the government is doing about it. How poor can a nation be that they are forced to accept help from the westerners? To Mother of Love, this help is like a Trojan horse; these people seem to come in peace but have ulterior motives. Mother of love is not quick to accept this help because to her it’s all a game of deception and though she acknowledges her impoverished state does not want to appear broken. She like the first day she came to Paradise refuses to be broken and beaten down by her predicament.

Bulawayo continues to show how poverty dehumanizes the people. Instead of using proper sanitation facilities, Darling and her friends are forced to defecate in the bushes like animals due to the lack of sanitation infrastructure. This signifies the level of poverty Bulawayo's characters experience. There is absolute poverty (United Nations Report 1995:6). Absolute poverty entails the lack of all the necessary things needed for every day survival.

They are severely deprived of the basic human needs thus reduced to animals. They cannot access a proper lavatory since they live in squatter camps which are structures erected illegally and not recognized by the government. Of all the things that an individual can be deprived of, proper sanitation should not be at the apex of it all which is not the case of the people of Paradise. Being made to live like an animal destroys an individual's dignity and forces them to lose faith in the state that is making them live like this.

The raping of Chipso in *We Need New Names* entails how feelings of powerlessness due to poverty engender violence in men. It is only when she and Darling are at church that she reveals who had impregnated her. It is in this part that the reader finds out that Chipso had been raped by her grandfather and yet no punishment has been rendered on the perpetrator. It is notable that those who are poor usually face high risk of sexual violence and due to their lack of a voice and the prevailing patriarchal society lets the crime slip by and forces victims to continue with their everyday lives. It is through Chipso's ordeal that Bulawayo reveals how poverty and sexual violence are entangled.

*We Need New Names* showcases how poverty subjects one to the inaccessibility of health facilities thereby forcing them to try other methods of healing which later subject them to exploitation and oppression. Darling's father returns from South Africa inflicted with AIDS and instead of being taken to the hospital, is kept at home to be looked after by Darling and her Mother. Mother of Bones then implores Prophet Bitchington Revelations Mborro to pray for her brother (Darling's father) so that he can be well again, but the Prophet is of no help because he believes that Father is possessed and a sacrifice of two virgin goats should be offered together with a payment of five hundred U.S dollars for his well being. Bulawayo thus reveals how the church oppresses its own people because prayer is meant to be free but when a fee is now levied on prayer, what use is it then to pray? Mother seems to be the only one who realizes that they were being exploited by Prophet Bitchington Revelations Mborro because after the Prophet states his price, Mother storms out of the shack angry.

### **3.3 SOURCES OF POVERTY**

It is through Darling's constant nightmare that we are made aware of the bulldozers that destroyed their home. To Darling, this dream is a constant reminder of why they are poor and cannot afford a decent meal. Darling continues to narrate how the policemen and the men driving the bulldozers came without notice and destroyed their homes and all the furniture leaving them homeless with no place to go to. Instead of giving a notice to the people so as to be given time to vacate their homes before destroying them, the state just ignored their responsibility to the people. With corruption comes the centralization of power. Leaders tend to be unaccountable to the people whom they serve and corruption within leaders hinders development as resources are used for personal benefits.

It is in Darlings dream that Bulawayo sheds light on Operation Murambatsvina, a ‘clean-up’ operation which happened in Zimbabwe in 2005 with the approval of the government. This operation left many people homeless because after independence, Zimbabwean towns and cities were infested with illegal structures due to the shortage of housing. Bulawayo shows how the government was unable to provide housing and social amenities to the people, thereby forcing them to erect illegal structures in urban areas. Instead of addressing this issue of scarce housing, the government decided to embark on an operation for the demolition of these structures. Consequently, the people were forced to move to squatter camps where there was inadequate shelter and poor sanitation leading to the rise of airborne diseases.

When Mai Tari tries to protect her house by standing in front of the bulldozer, she is hit with a gun on her head and blood gushes out and no one says or does anything about it. Due to the people’s powerlessness, the people are exploited as they are humiliated by the policemen who are supposed to help them. In the destruction of their homes a series of human rights are violated like the malicious damage of property, assault and forced relocation. Bulawayo not only highlights how powerless the people are when their houses are destroyed but also how their fate is not theirs to dictate.

Bulawayo highlights how poverty and direct violence are closely related. In my view, the state apparatuses exert direct violence on the people to ensure their compliance and to indirectly impoverish the people. The destruction of Darlings family house and the others houses seemed to be a way of conveying a message to the people considering that it was almost election time. The ruling party could be believed to have been showcasing the extent of its power thus pushing for a wave of fear amongst the people. Closely looking at this

operation, one may question what the ruling party was aiming at because it is a ludicrous operation to destroy the people's houses and at the same time not offer them an area for resettlement.

It is also in Darlings dream the reader gets to know about the death of Nomviyo's son 'Freedom' who had been left in the house when the bulldozers destroyed her house, killing the poor child. There is nowhere in the novel where Bulawayo highlights on who was accountable for the death of Freedom and how they were punished. This in turn shows the corruptive nature of the government forces who are supposed to help the people but instead turn a blind eye to the murder of an innocent child. It is like Bulawayo is saying that if you are poor, you are an easy target to the violence of the government officials. The novel clearly captures how hierarchy, inequality and power normalize violence (Kleinman and Kleinman 1991:275).

The murder of Bornfree who was an opposition activist is an example of how the ruling party maintained its status quo. It is after his funeral that Bulawayo, through the game Darling and her friends' play, showcases how Bornfree is murdered in front of the whole town, clobbered without remorse. It is not a secret as to who murdered Bornfree but the people of Paradise do nothing about it fearing for their own lives. To them Bornfree is an unsung hero who died for 'Change'. By publicizing the violence inflicted on Bornfree, fear is instilled amongst the people of Paradise and all their dreams and hopes for change are shattered because their expressions for the basic needs and freedom are responded to violently.

Unlike Darling who blames her family's poverty on the destruction of their home (Operation Murambatsvina), Mother of Bones (Darling's aunt) blames her poverty on the continuous decline of the buying power of the Zimbabwean dollar. She cannot improve her living conditions because she cannot access foreign currency like other people. She complains about the devaluation of the lumps of Zimbabwean dollars which she possesses but cannot even purchase a grain of salt. She says 'What I don't understand is how this very money that I have in lumps cannot even buy a grain of salt I mean that there is what I don't understand.' (25). When Mother of Bones is talking, there is so much resentment and hurt in her voice. It is as if she feels the pangs of betrayal. Ndlovu-Gatsheni (2009) explains how postcolonial Zimbabwe failed to stabilize its economy after independence leading to the devaluation of the Zimbabwean dollar and the introduction of foreign currency as the currency used in everyday life. By introducing the foreign currency, the poor became poorer and the rich acquired more wealth due to the factor of accessibility.

This can be accredited to the November 14 1997 incident 'Black Friday' when the Zimbabwean dollar declined by 71.5% against the United States dollar. This incident led to the crash of the stock market forcing investors of the Zimbabwean dollar to pull off (Mambodlani 2014:10). Not only did the use of foreign currency cut deep through the nation's dignity but it reminded the nation of everything that came with accepting help from the Westerners- a brutal reminder of the colonial times.

### 3.4 VICTIMS AND RESPONSES TO POVERTY

*We Need New Names* reveals how one's political affiliation can subject an individual to become a victim of this violence. It can be noted that the reason that Darling's family house was destroyed along with the others is because of their political affiliation. It is quite evident that the people of Paradise are supporting the opposition party because Messenger and Bornfree ask Darling and her friends to put up posters written 'Change, Real Change' on everyone's door. They believe that if the opposition party wins the elections, their predicaments would change and their poverty alleviated. The fact that they believe that by voting for the opposition party their lives could be improved emphasizes the notion of how poverty is man-made. There are people responsible and maintain the suffering of the impoverished thereby violating the basic human rights. Little do the people of Paradise realize that change does not come easy and publicizing your sentiments about the ruling party only puts one in a more uncomfortable situation after the elections especially if the ruling party wins. It is quite clear that one's political inclination in postcolonial Zimbabwe is the deciding factor of one's fate and social stature (Scheper-Hughes 1993:62).

In *We Need New Names* poverty seems to be affecting every individual regardless of their age or gender. Clearly what really the people of Paradise an easy target for this violence is the concept of their political affiliation. They seem to have not chosen the right side because it is the ruling party that they are voting against that has the power to change their situation and even offer aid.

Bulawayo further illuminates on how poverty has required the women to become the primary sources of the family income. Darling's mother engages in cross boarder trading so as to be able to fend for her family. The traditional setup of the men being the breadwinner of the family is eroded because the women too need to feed their children. The men are forced to work dangerous jobs or to go seek work in other countries, for example Darlings father who leaves for South Africa in search of employment. Thando is stuck working in the mines for meager wages but ends up leaving for South Africa like Darlings father. Here Bulawayo shows how poverty pushes one to migrate to other countries leaving behind their families. It is through this migration that the people lose their own identity.

Bulawayo also showcases how Characters like Mother of Love deal with the pangs of her poverty by brewing potent liquor for the people of Paradise to help them forget about their past and their homes that have been destroyed. The people of Paradise spend their time in Mother of Love's shack drinking beer before the elections because they believe after the elections, their lives will be better. To them the elections herald the coming of change and the betterment of their situation. What they do not realize is that election time is like tossing a dice, the outcome is never predictable. They had not fathomed that change is not easily attainable in a nation that ceases to exist as one. So when the election results are out, they are not what they envisioned. The peoples' hopes are shattered and it is then that they realize that their poverty will become a permanent and potent part of their lives.

## **CHAPTER FOUR: POLITICALLY MOTIVATED VIOLENCE**

### **4.1 INTRODUCTION**

Zimbabwean politics has been characterized by a series of coercion and violence as opposition against the ruling party is not tolerated. 'Peace' may exist in Zimbabwe but during election time, this peace ceases to exist. The people are harassed and coerced into voting for the ruling party, ZANU PF (the Zimbabwe National Union Patriotic Front), and those who do not stand for the ideologies of the party usually experience the violence. In turn, opposition parties, especially the main opposition MDC (Movement for Democratic Change). For this violence to exist, the youth is usually targeted as the tools for the perpetration of the violence.

This chapter, subdivided into four sections will discuss Christopher Mlalazi's *They are Coming* in the context of political violence in Zimbabwe. The first section shall look at the perpetrators of violence as depicted in *They are Coming*. The second section will focus on the text's rendition of the effects of violence on the perpetrators and the third section shall focus on how the text deals with the masterminds and architects behind political violence in Zimbabwe. The last section shall focus on the texts' construction of the victims of violence.

### **4.2 PERPETRATORS OF VIOLENCE**

The novel begins with Mr Nkani running for his life and shouting 'they are coming' and there is blood flowing down the left side of his face indicating that he has been assaulted and the people chasing him are the 'Green Bombers'. The Green Bombers are the ZANU PF youth militia who gained their nickname 'Green Bombers' because of the color of their uniforms and seeing that Mr Nkani is running for the MP position in the opposition party MDC, they

want to eliminate the opposition. The capture of Mr Nkani meant that he would be tortured and maybe murdered because he belongs to the opposition party. Mlalazi reveals this when he says that the Green Bombers had previously chased a couple who were wearing MDC t-shirts. He continues to state that ‘The couple had been caught, kicked and stomped on until, covered in blood they lay on the ground as if dead’ (3). Here Mlalazi shows that the Green Bombers targeted the people of the opposition party so as to stamp out any opposition as the election time was drawing close. The whole concept surrounding this violence was to instill fear amongst the people and take revenge on those who had voted for the opposition party in the prior elections.

No opposition meant that the ruling party continued in power. The Green Bombers considered themselves the enforcers of the government policies and in return for their loyalty and services they were promised jobs in the military and police forces. According to a report in 2003 by the Solidarity Peace Trust, the Green Bombers targeted the MDC party members as they were taught that the MDC party is the enemy of the state backed by the white people whereas ZANU PF consisted of heroes of the black man in Zimbabwe because they shun white supremacy. One then questions why ZANU PF preaches its own version of history instead of the true version that independence was attained through the joint coalition of different parties instead of carving themselves out as the saviors.

When the Green Bombers chase Mr Nkani down the street, they reappear running hard because they too are being chased and the chase is being led by Mr Nkani himself revealing that the people chasing the Green Bombers must belong to MDC party. They continuously throw stones at the Green Bombers in retaliation for chasing Mr Nkani. This shows that perpetrators of violence can be from either parties. Despite motivations for violence, the

MDC was also seen to participate in violence although Mlalazi seems to consider their violence justified. It is mere retaliation. Moreover the fact that other people join the chase shows how resented the Green Bombers were in the community so the only way to answer back to them was through the use of violence.

In *They are Coming*, Senzeni talks about how her future has been confirmed since she is now a Green Bomber. She says 'My future is all but confirmed. And I did it on my own.' (71). To her invoking violence on her fellow people who were of the opposition party meant securing ones future. In her sense of powerlessness deriving from the state of poverty in her family she believes that what she is doing is right as long as it helps her secure a good future. Senzeni goes on to say 'We're going to win the elections and when I come back; I will be having a good job' (134). It is through Senzeni that Mlalazi shows to what extent a human being can go so as to attain a good future.

It clearly seems the government targeted the youth as their new recruits because the Green Bombers emerged after the government's announcement that every individual above the age of ten had to enroll for the National Youth Service (NYS). Allowing children between the age of ten and sixteen to be recruited meant a serious violation of human rights as the state seemed to be breeding child soldiers which is against all human rights. The Green Bombers are believed to be the members of the NYS and are the state controlled and supported machine for the military. The youth were the easy target because they were hungry for money and jobs and being part of the Green Bombers came with the monetary benefits and the youth could be easily manipulated (Freedom House 2010; UN 27 Oct.2009).

Mlalazi echoes how the police force has ceased to be for the people when MaNdlovu says ‘I know our police force can no longer be trusted’ (60). The fact that the Green Bombers were integrated into the police and military force after their service meant that these institutions were being run by the ZANU PF.

By putting the Green Bombers in the police force, ZANU PF maintained its power because these people were fiercely loyal to the party. In a democratic nation, the police force is meant to be impartial and not affiliated to any political party because their sole existence is to protect the people. Being affiliated to one party compromises their ability to protect the people in a non-partisan manner. In essence it signifies how the people can never be protected by the police force because it is biased and impartial.

The police force being infiltrated by the ZANU PF members means that justice ceases to exist and Mlalazi reiterates this through Ngwenya, the protagonist Ambition’s father, who tells his wife, MaNdlovu, that one does not do anything wrong so as to be chased down by the policemen. It is through Ngwenya that Mlalazi exposes the discord between the police force and the nation. The people feel betrayed by the very people who are meant to protect them from the political violence between different political parties. The people seem to be sacrificed for political reasons.

Through Mrs Gumbo, Mlalazi exposes how the police and militia is one sided. Mrs Gumbo says:

But I'm also an undercover agent for the police...I report straight to the Chief of Police about any nonsense that happens in my school, or anything that threatens the security of our great nation (100).

How is the police force going to stop political violence when their very structure is held up by a one sided political ideology? If the Green Bombers and their leaders are the police force it means that for the whole nation to be at peace they have to support the ruling party which deviates from the very foundations of the concept behind having elections. If there is no opposing party, there is no need to vote because everyone is assumable content with the regime in power.

Mlalazi ventures on to expose the police force as another group that perpetrates violence in *They are Coming*. When Ngwenya goes out to look for Ambition, he is assaulted by the police under the disguise of him resisting arrest. Ngwenya tries to explain to the police that he is just an innocent father looking for his son but they do not listen to him leading to his arrest. What the police do not realize is that Ngwenya was just at the wrong place and at the wrong time because the police had targeted Mr Nkani and the members of his political party. Instead of assisting Ngwenya to look for his son, the police assault him causing him to limp.

It is of relevance to note how the police pay more attention to petty crimes and turn a blind eye to the loss and abuse of the people's lives. When Bra Ngeja is caught by the police after stealing MaChivanda's TV, Ambition questions Nobuhle why the police do nothing when the Green Bombers beat up people merciless but arrest a common thief when a TV is stolen. He

continues to wonder what is more important – the lives of the people or a TV. This clearly shows that the police force itself is backing up and in agreement with the Green Bombers activities and that the police is controlled and is a part of the Green Bombers.

When Mr Nkani is murdered by the Green Bombers, the police deny the act on behalf of the Green Bombers and tell Mrs Nkani who witnessed the murder of her husband that her husband was not murdered by the Green Bombers but by the thieves who were trying to rob the house. Mlalazi reveals how the police force protects the instigators of violence instead of the people. One's life ceases to be of importance as long as they belong to the opposition party and they can be taken or killed at any time with no one to account.

Mrs Gumbo is one of the key speakers for the Green Bombers and it is not by accident that Mlalazi disguises her as a teacher at the school. By making her a teacher where many adults interact, she is able to tap into the fountain of gossip regarding various teachers' political affiliations. She can easily spy on whomever she suspects is against the ruling party. Upon knowing that Mr Nkani belongs to the opposition party, she fights him because she does not agree with Mr Nkani's reference to the President. Mlalazi makes use of this allusion so as to highlight how the ruling party sabotages the elections once they realize that they face the risk of losing.

### 4.3 EFFECTS OF VIOLENCE ON THE PERPETRATORS

Perpetrating violence has its own effects on the instigator. One cannot engage in violent activities and remain the same. In *They are Coming*, Senzeni runs away from home to join the Green Bombers. She alienates herself from her family and though she tries to be tough and tells Ambition that she has a new family, she herself sounds like she is not yet convinced that she has a new family and she will never return home. Ambition can sense that her sister is scared. For Senzeni to fill up the gap of disconnectedness between her and her family, she continues to entertain her brother's visits and assures Ambition and Ntando that they come visit anytime. This shows that Senzeni still wants to be a part of her family and Ambition is her only link to the knowledge of her mother and fathers' wellbeing.

Senzeni's father does not want anything to do with her anymore since she has become a Green Bomber. Senzeni's actions indirectly affect her family as MaNdlovu also faces the same fate of alienation as her daughter. Mrs Nkani, for instance, accuses MaNdlovu of bad parenting skills because she believes Senzeni is the one who throws a bomb in her house, causing it to burn down. Mlalazi tries to elucidate on how the society turns its back on the family and the individual that instigates violence. If a child revolts from his/her family, the parents are usually blamed for not being able to train and teach the child the right ways of the world yet they forget that every child has a mind of their own and desire to make their own decisions (Kleinman A and Kleinman J. 1991:55).

3pac is another individual who faces alienation. *They are Coming* journeys with us back to 1977 when 3pac, also known as Mbambo, was considered a sell out after he exposed the location of the dissidents to the Rhodesian forces. This act made him flee his own home for safety and in 2004 he resurfaces as a neighbor to Ngwenya who recognizes from the colonial days as soon as he sees him. Knowing that Ngwenya knew he was a sell, makes Mbambo self-conscious to the point where he decides to have no relations or friends thus alienating himself from the society 3 Pac's alienation is precipitated by his past and other personal vendettas that he has with Ngwenya, who married the woman he also wanted to marry.

Though the perpetrators of violence abuse and terrorize the people, they themselves also face many forms of abuse. In *They are Coming*, Senzeni complains to Ambition and Ntando about how the people in the youth militia camp do not give them enough food to sustain them. Senzeni says 'These people are really starving us here' (70).Lack of food in the Green bomber camps was a norm as many people were enrolling and the state could not turn down its ready human bank for military and police recruitment and at the same time could not provide enough food to eat. This inturn forced the Green Bombers to behave like pirates as they were looting and stealing from the people.

The bloody money that Senzeni gives to Ambition is a clear example of how Green Bombers try to fend for themselves. That money could have been acquired through stealing or beating up one of the opposition party members before ransacking them of their money. Blood money is always acquired through a series of violence that is why Ambition's mother takes it away and shreds it to pieces.

When Senzeni ran away from home, she did not carry any clothes and had been seen wearing the same t-shirt that she was wearing when she left home. MaNdlovu says ‘How can she wear the same green t-shirt for weeks on end! She is not a tshomoliya leaf’ (72). This suggests that the Green Bombers were not given adequate clothing as the only thing they wore was the uniform.

What kind of government recruits people for the NYS and fails to feed and clothe its recruits? This shows how merciless the leaders of the NYS were as personal hygiene was not of importance to them than the strength and training of its recruits. MaNdlovu continually sends Ambition with a t-shirt for Senzeni so she can at least have a clean change of clothes. At first she refuses the t-shirt but at the end she accepts it. The continuous sending of the t-shirt symbolizes MaNdlovu’s plea for Senzeni to come back home and when she finally takes it with a smile on her face it represents her acceptance to finally come back home.

Mlalazi also highlights how the Green Bombers were deprived of a normal education that every child is entitled to. Instead of teaching them the expected syllabus, they were taught military syllabi. Mrs Gumbo teaches them from an excerpt of Martin Luther King’s speech *I Have A Dream* and the Chimurenga theories. They also read *From Colonization to Independence* which is more off the military syllabus nature. Sibanda (2005) states that the most terrifying aspect of the NYS was the level of militarism that was being taught. Everything that they were being taught was political and condemned the opposition party by portraying them as sell outs.

The education provided to the Green Bombers was military inclined thus forgoing any other type of education. According to the BBC report in 2004, the education that the youths received is said to have been derived from a manual that the President wrote himself. This manual is clearly his own version of history which emphasized that the ruling party comprised heroes who brought about independence from white minority rule. They were not being taught to be book smart but to be strong and know the reasons for the struggle before them. In short the military education that was provided to them was overallly propagandistic.

Tshabalala, who is part of the police force but does not accept the way the people are being terrorized by the Green Bombers and the police force itself, is a refreshing alternative Mlalazi creates. In his drunken state, Tshabalala mutters 'I can't beat my neighbors, even if it for the Party..., This ...erishn't why we...er weren't to war' (110). Here Mlalazi shows how Tshabalala still upholds the values of the Chimurenga and detests the orders he is being given. He complains about how the elections are causing unnecessary suffering and believes that there is no good that shall be reaped from the elections. Instead of dealing with the problem, Tshabalala takes to the bottle. He becomes a drunkard so as to numb and deal with the emotions that accompany the violence he is being forced to instigate.

For those who did not believe in the cause of this political violence and could not turn their backs on the Party, intoxication became the only answer to their predicament. They could not question the orders for fear of being victimized and considered a sellout. Through Tshabalala, Mlalazi acknowledges that violence not only dehumanizes the victim but also the perpetrator.

#### **4.4 ARCHITECTS OF VIOLENCE**

Mrs Gumbo is one of the architects of the violence that is being perpetrated by the Green Bombers. She is one of the state functioners that make the violence possible. Mlalazi illuminates on how the leaders of the Green Bombers were usually people in power or leadership positions. Mrs Gumbo tells the Green Bombers that she reports directly to the Chief of Police about any nonsense that is happening in her school. She continues to brag about herself being a war veteran. This means that the Chief of Police too is directly involved and part of the minds behind the violence and that most leaders of the Green Bombers were believed to be war veterans – a people with a strong military background because the Green Bombers curriculum was inclined to be military in character (Solidarity Peace Trust 5 Sept. 2003, 11).

Comrade Tshisa is also part of the master minds behind the violence that is being instigated. He emphasizes on how the Green Bomber youths need to be strong, forgetting that for them to be strong they need to be fed adequately. Comrade Tshisa goes on to emphasize on how the youth need to be taught how to throw stones harder thus the need for them to strengthen their muscles through the use of weights.

These people who are part of the state apparatus take away the decision making ability from the people. They exist to take away the agency from their followers and fuel violence. They dictate and govern how things will be done and the people execute those orders without complaint. These leaders indoctrinate and pacify their followers. When Mrs Gumbo reminds

the Green Bombers that she is a full war veteran, they praise her on how she helped save the country but she does not tell them that the country was not saved by the Party alone but was liberated through the joint venture of the people and the different parties. The Green Bombers are made to believe that it is the Party alone that took up arms and liberated the nation.

In *They are Coming*, Tshabalala is ordered, by his Inspector, to beat up his neighbors all in the name of the Party. Though Tshabalala does not openly defy these orders, he speaks out his heart when he is drunk while lying in a ditch. He says that he will not beat up his neighbors for the party because that is not what they went to war for. As an ex-dissident and war vet, Tshabalala believes in the cause of the war and from his actions, he is one of the few that still upholds the spirit of nationalism and does not want to betray the people's trust. Unlike the others, he has a conscience.

#### **4.5 VICTIMS OF VIOLENCE**

In *They are Coming*, the violence is directed towards the opposition party but at the same time innocent people are caught in between. Ngwenya experiences this when he is arrested for allegedly resisting arrest. Ngwenya refuses to belong to any political party because when MaNdlovu suggests that they purchase cards for both political parties, he shows disinterest and tells his wife that he will not carry any of these cards. His predicament of not being affiliated to any political party leaves him vulnerable to violence. During election time in Zimbabwe, having no party meant that you could be terrorized by either the ruling party or the opposition so that they can instill fear in you forcing one to be affiliated to a certain party (BBC29 Feb. 2004).

Senzeni talks about how she has been promoted to do her 'job' in the rural areas. The only job Senzeni has is to terrorize the people and the MDC members and when she is stating that she has been promoted to go to the rural areas, Mlalazi exposes how the Green Bombers expanded their terror to the rural areas. Due to their marginalization, rural residents appeared to be the easiest targets that could be coerced into supporting and voting for the ruling party. If the police could not do anything about the violence in the townships, what attention could be paid to the violence in the rural areas considering how marginalized they are. The BBC reports reveal how the people from the rural areas were terrorized whilst the police force paid no attention to their complaints. They were forced to support and vote for the ruling Party for the safety of their lives.

When Mbambo fights with the milkman, he gets the milkman arrested by lying that the milkman insulted the president. The police do not carry out any investigations. Rather they arrest the milkman telling him that he can exonerate himself when they get to the station. When MaVundla tries to shout out that Mbambo is lying, she is quickly silenced when the police question whose words they were. The milkman becomes a victim of police brutality and though everyone was there to witness what the fight was about, no one can testify because the police force is being run by the ruling party and defying the police force means punishment. As innocent as one could be, accusations of devaluing the ruling party and the president earned one an arrest and the police could not protect you.

Victims of political violence are forced to live in fear as they cannot stand up for their own rights. Those in power dictate how the nation is to be run and even when they are found

wanting, there is no one to question them because their word is the law. They structure the laws, enforce them and recruit their underdogs who will make sure that the law is to be followed as accorded. Thus the people have no power over their own lives.

## CHAPTER FIVE: SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

This chapter aspires to deliver a summary and settle the arguments that were discussed in the previous four chapters. Overall, the study sought to draw attention to the different forms of violence experienced in postcolonial Zimbabwe as depicted in Mlalazi's novels *Running with Mother*, *They are Coming* and Bulawayo's *We Need New Names*. The significant literature on the concept of violence in postcolonial Zimbabwe was reviewed in the first chapter of this study. It exposed the forms of violence that were experienced by the people after independence like the Gukurahundi, Operation Murambatsvina, poverty and electoral violence. This chapter also gave an overview of the objectives, framework and methodology that guided the research. Fanonian and Zizekian ideas were explored due to their relevance in the understanding of violence. The fusion of these two theories allowed for a broader understanding of postcolonial violence.

Chapter two focused on the depiction of ethnic violence in Mlalazi's *Running with Mother* (2012). Ethnic violence in postcolonial Zimbabwe can be accredited to the state's failure to uphold nationalism and reconcile the differences that the Ndebele and the Shona people had. Chapter three focused on poverty in Bulawayo's *We Need New Names* (2012). This chapter revealed the nature of poverty manifesting itself through hunger, deprivation of adequate clothing, education, health facilities and proper sanitation thus leading and exposing one to powerlessness, lack of a voice, dependence and exploitation. Chapter three further discussed the issue of how this poverty comes to be and how it is maintained. It exposed the relationship between direct violence and poverty- these two seem to thrive on each other. The people of Paradise are forced to relocate to Paradise because their homes have been destroyed by the bulldozers being accompanied by the police who are meant to protect the people

against such exploitation. Their powerlessness forces them to undergo humiliation and face inhumane treatment from the state agents.

Chapter four dwelled on Mlalazi's *They are Coming* by paying close attention to the portrayal of political violence. This chapter looked at perpetrators of violence and how they relate to the violence, themselves and their targets of violence. The effects of violence on the perpetrators were also discussed and it was observed that violence affects both perpetrator and victim in so many ways. The chapter also magnified on the architects of violence, those who make violence possible even as they remain out of view. It was generally observed in the chapter that violence has many participants. There are architects, perpetrators and targets. Mlalazi, nevertheless, seems to be of the view that these categories are not exclusive. It is possible to regard all categories as fluid and entangled. Perpetrator can easily become target and vice-versa. At the end of the day all are potential victims.

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