

A Legacy of Oppressing
Whiteness and Collective Responsibility for Black Oppression in Zimbabwe

by

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ABSTRACT

Cecil Rhodes said, "I would annex the planets if I could." This attitude epitomized the views of the white people who colonized Zimbabwe starting in 1890, and thus society was built on the doctrines of discovery, expansion, and subjugation and marginalization of the Native people. For white Zimbabweans in then-Rhodesia the institutionalization of racism privileged their bodies above all others and thus they were collectively responsible for the oppression of black people through white complacency in allowing that system to exist and active involvement in its formation. For my family, who has a four-hundred year history in Southern Africa, coming to this realization - this critical consciousness of their positionality as oppressor - has been a difficult road. Through their struggle made evident is the potential for change for both individuals and nations fighting to overcome the effects of colonization

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Chapter 1

WHY AUTOETHNOGRAPHY?

The methodologies for past explorations of whiteness in Zimbabwe are varied, with a significant focus placed on historical analysis of documents combined with traditional critical ethnographies conducted by anthropologists and sociologists. These are evidenced in David McDermott Hughes study, *Whiteness in Zimbabwe: Race, Landscape, and the Problem of Belonging*, during which he spent five years studying white farmers in Zimbabwe and becoming part of their community prior to writing this book. In this work his connection to the people he is studying is evident, especially in his concluding chapter, “Belonging Awkwardly.”¹ Other academic analyses of whiteness in Zimbabwe have largely been around the constructions of whiteness in context of land ownership.² In this thesis, I intentionally ground my positionality and myself in the research in order to deepen the analysis of the construction of whiteness in Zimbabwe and for Zimbabweans from an insider’s perspective.

I chose to engage in this methodology from learning from my professors and mentors who explained to me the resulting honesty of this approach. These women, Monica J. Casper and Michelle Tellez, focus their research on analyzing systems of oppression as they experience them as members of particular group.³ Upon learning of

¹ David McDermott Hughes, *Whiteness in Zimbabwe: Race, Landscape, and the Problem of Belonging*, (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2010), 129-145.

² Graham C. Kinloch, “The Zimbabwean Crisis and the Unresolved Conundrum of Race in the Postcolonial Period,” *Journal of Developing Societies* 26 (March 2010): 5-38; Michael Chege, “Africans of European Descent,” *Transition*, 73 (1997):74-86; Donald S. Moore, *Suffering for Territory: Race, Place and Power in Zimbabwe* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2005).

³ See Monica J. Casper’s work on The Feminist Wire, <http://www.thefeministwire.com> and in her co-authored book with Lisa Jean Moore, *Missing Bodies: The Politics of*

their experiences and participating in coursework aimed at understanding and analyzing our own identities and the systems of oppression that we operate under I decided to delve into the research of my identity for my culminating project of the program.

To do this, however, and with the encouragement of my former thesis adviser, Bill Simmons, I undertook the task of incorporating critical autoethnography into my work, aiming to fit the key features of autoethnography delineated by sociologist Leon Anderson. These five features are:

1. Member researcher status - the researcher is a member of the group they are studying
2. Analytic reflexivity - looking towards oneself with a critical eye focused on larger systemic analysis and how it interacts with an individual experience
3. Narrative visibility of the researcher's self – the research making their position known to their readers
4. Dialogue with informants beyond the self – using other's experiences from within the group within the research
5. Commitment to theoretical analysis⁴

Each contributes to the development of a critical autoethnography in a different and meaningful way. Being a member researcher allows for the researcher to engage with the population in a way that an outsider never could because of a lack of lived knowledge. While ethnographers going into a population to study their lives may have years of experience with the population, autoethnographers have lifetimes of knowledge passed down generation from generation. This creates not only a greater initial trust from the population, but also 'insider knowledge' that helps the researcher know what questions to ask, how to interact with members of the group, and the nature of power structures within

Visibility (New York: NYU Press, 2009). See Michelle Tellez' work, "Doing Research at the Borderlands: Notes from a Chicana Feminist Ethnographer," *Chicana/Latina Studies: the Journal of Mujeres Activas en Letras y Cambio Social*, 2005.

⁴ Leon Anderson, "Analytic Autoethnography," *Journal of Contemporary Ethnography*, 35 (2006): 376.

that community.

The first component of critical autoethnography necessitates adhering to the second feature described by Anderson, analytic reflexivity. While insider status helps the researcher in numerous ways, it can also blind the researcher from seeing patterns of behavior that do not conform to prior understanding. The difficulty of expanding personal schema extends to academics, making self-reflexivity throughout conducting an autoethnography absolutely critical. I kept journals through the past two years of formal research where I worked out problems within my observations and myself. In order to comply with the third feature, from the beginning of this project I have made my positionality known not only to my readers but to all those involved in the research.

The last two features are especially crucial to developing an academic argument from autoethnographic research and what separates autoethnography from memoir. Incorporating the experiences and opinions of those outside of one's own in-group is essential to constructing a relevant, critical, and rigorous thesis. In my work the opinions and observations of other white Zimbabweans, taken from memoirs, are used to corroborate findings. Analysis of historical texts, such as Rhodesian law and newspaper articles, as well as academic sources are all used to substantiate the claims based on mine and my family's experiences. Through the triangulation of these sources larger theoretical analysis performed through the thesis is made relevant.

Apart from these benefits as identified by Anderson, I feel that while the reader follows my ongoing and unending path to greater self-awareness they will understand two things. Firstly, why I chose to do this project and its importance to me. Secondly, why this project has significance to those outside myself and how it fits into the larger

framework of decolonizing literature. While mine and my mother's self-radicalization process and coming to critical white consciousness is performed in the context of Zimbabwean/Southern African identity, I feel it is relevant for privileged people within many communities.

Ultimately it was only through self-exploration that I arrived at the central argument to my thesis. Conducting the autoethnography within the parameters described above led to my conclusion that a critical white consciousness composed of a realization of one's positionality as oppressor is necessary for the possibility of reconciliation within Zimbabwe. Autoethnography enables the reader to better grasp my arguments in the fourth chapter of the thesis, "I Was Taught to Fear Black Bodies," by reflecting on me living the processes I discuss in the second chapter, "When Sympathy is Poison and Not Balm." While there are drawbacks to conducting autoethnography, such as becoming self-indulgent, I hope that through my self-exploration the reader sees the benefit of the certain kinds of data I was able to access through its conduction, the 'insider meanings,' and thus will recognize the resulting honesty.⁵

⁵ Leon Anderson, 389.

Chapter 2

WHEN SYMPATHY IS POISON AND NOT BALM

The Problem (I said in my heart)

*How is that we wound when we would heal?
That when we give our best it proves a curse?
That falsehood often seems than truth more real:
That victory is deadlier than reverse?*

*Can it be true that light is far more dark
Than deepest shadow on our pathway cast?
That joy is but deception, and a mark
Of mind-unbalancing too intense to last?*

*Can it be possible that all our caring
For other's welfare is but doing harm;
That hope is naught but madness and despairing;
That sympathy is poison and not balm?*

*How is it that when our very love when given
All unreservedly but proves a sting
To enter our own hearts, thereby so riven
That words can ne'er express their suffering?*

*10 March 1914
Kittie Friend Van Blerk⁶*

This is my legacy. This particular heritage is born of individual natures, of course, but within the deeper context of colonialism and imperial expansion into parts of the world that were painted as exotic, as different, as beautiful, but strange. Our family history is spotted with good intentions and terrible results, caring tainted with judgment, questions about placement, about motivations, about what love really means. There were shining glimpses of treating those portrayed as the ‘others,’ the African natives, better

⁶ Kittie Friend Van Blerk, “The Problem (I said in my heart),” 10 March 1914, Breakwell family collection of poetry.

than the rest of those who looked like you. This was marred from realizing, years later, that such treatment was still under the guise of paternalistic caring. Four generations ago, my Great-Great Grandmother, Kittie Friend Van Blerk, wrote this poem eight months before the onset of World War I.

Kittie was originally from Sussex, England, born on 13 August 1878, and was herself part of the colonial expansion settlement into Africa. Her reasons for moving were different, however, than many white settlers, as her poor health took her to the milder weather of the area. Her experience in Southern Rhodesia, gave her an especially clear knowledge of, as she wrote in her poem, how good intentions can do the most harm. Kittie taught in a Dutch Reformed Church school in Bulawayo, and it was there that she began to see the negative effects of her native England's politics in the land she now occupied. How is it that she recognized the painful reality of colonialism then, right after its official onset in then Southern Rhodesia⁷? What, in her daily life, did she live that made her understand the suffering caused by England's colonization of so many Peoples; their homes, their lands, their cultures, their souls? Why did I not read her poetry until I was twenty years old? Why was I unaware of her awareness until three years past? She questioned her position in 1914, when doing so was not only unpopular, but largely unacknowledged as something important for anyone to do. Why did she think these things? Why did she feel them important enough to write down? It is this inquisitiveness into her own position in her community, country, empire, and world that is my own legacy. The legacy I carry into my own life and research.

There are many individualistic and uniquely fit answers to these questions for my

⁷ Southern Rhodesia one of the former names of modern Zimbabwe.

Great-Great Grandmother; her love of poetry, of song-writing, of reflection on her relationship with God and consequently with others, but I think there is more to her poetry than that. There, in this poem, written in 1914, is distinct evidence of the spark present within humanity to understand, to recognize, when something is wrong, when something is evil, when something is so hurtful to another human being that regardless of what your world is telling you, you cannot deny what you feel – even if it is only in your heart and in your private journal that you recognize these things. As human beings we are moral agents who are entirely capable of rising above our circumstances to exercise that agency and choose to be better than what we are told we need or have to be.

Every day we make choices; what to eat for breakfast, how to get where we need to go, what to do with our spare time (if we have any), how to treat the man we pass on the street. Those choices are made within the surrounding context of our global society, our culture in our communities, our faiths, and our economic system. This renders our choices limited, then, and we are not necessarily completely free to do whatever we please. This makes it incredibly difficult to choose to be better than the circumstances we were born into. The difficulty of making choices that do not play into the global hierarchy of power is exacerbated when we begin to realize that everything around us tells us who we are because of our skin color, our socioeconomic status, our country of birth, our age, our gender, our sexual orientation, our religion, our reproductive capabilities. A Mexican woman migrates across the US border does so because NAFTA⁸ rendered her farm unprofitable; a man from the Democratic Republic of the Congo flees to nearby Uganda because of conflict mineral mining and loses his family during the

⁸ North American Free Trade Agreement

journey; a child in India is sold into sexual slavery; a queer teenager in the US drops out of high school because of bullying. Each of us represents something to those around us, to society, and largely is forced to operate within the parameters those in power have set for us years before we were even born. Despite these systemic conditions, however, there is still some ability to use our human capacity to choose to be who we know we ought to be (as subjective as that is). These choices are what both cause humanity to fail one another in the progress to peace and provide unity and to achieve it.

While, when we are born, we make no decisions as to whom our parents are or where we are born into, humans, especially those born into privilege, have many opportunities to counteract the circumstances into which we are born. In *Possessive Investment in Whiteness*, George Lipsitz explains that,

“White people always have the option of becoming antiracist, although not enough have done so. We do not choose our color, but we do choose our commitments. We do not choose our parents, but we do choose our politics. Yet we do not make these decisions in a vacuum; they occur within a social structure that gives value to whiteness and offers rewards for racism.”⁹

The world gives white people incredible unearned privileges¹⁰, and acting against self-privileges is not economically or socially beneficial most of the time. In the short-term a white person who chooses to be antiracist may be punished for it by society, both in blatant, verbal, ways and in more nuanced ways that may lead to decreased economic opportunities. However the personal and communal benefits of engaging in self-

⁹ George Lipsitz, *The Possessive Investment in Whiteness: How White People Profit from Identity Politics*, (Philadelphia, PA: Temple University Press, 2006), viii.

¹⁰ Peggy McIntosh, “White Privilege and Male Privilege: A Personal Account of Coming to See Correspondences Through Work in Women’s Studies” (working paper, Center for Research on Women, Wellesley College, 1988), <http://www.iub.edu/~tchsotl/part2/McIntosh%20White%20Privilege.pdf>.

decolonization is monumental. Our lives and our livelihoods are interconnected, and the privileges for the few are located on the same map of the suffering of many. While economically keeping these privileges helps us, emotionally and spiritually holding onto them wounds us.¹¹ While my Great-Great Grandmother was certainly not antiracist, her thoughts are indicative of an inner turmoil at wanting to help, being told that what she is doing is good, yet recognizing that it is likely doing more harm. The colonization of the African continent after Europe's greatest military powers carved it up was based on this doctrine of goodwill and righteous doing; white colonists in the area were told they were ambassadors of modernism, 'culture', and civilization.¹² My family's genealogy is located within this particular history. Our familial history is rife with discord between daily lived experiences, thoughts shaped by colonial existences, and a worldview shaped by a distinct love of God that commanded them to love all – a 'typical experience' of other whites in Southern Africa. It is not a current experience only, but spans back to the seventeenth century, which, in my family's case, only further complicates the formulating of personal and familial identities in conjunction with the places we have lived and do live. Our centuries-long presence in Southern African continent results in a non-immigrant identity despite lacking actual nativity in the continent.

The first member of my family to be born in Africa was born in Cape Town, South Africa in 1629. There is not much known of her, other than her name, Catharina Nel Van Blerk, the daughter of a man who had likely come to the Cape on one of the

¹¹ See Susan Sontag, *Regarding the Pain of Others*, (New York: Picador, 2004).

¹² See Cyril Alfred Rogers and Charles Frantz, *Racial Themes in Southern Rhodesia: The Attitudes and Behavior of the White Population*, (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1962).

hundreds of Dutch expeditions to the Horn of South Africa in the early 1600s. Dozens more added to our muddled lineage of colonists who left their homes for various reasons as time went on; our history starts with the Dutch, but continues with Englishmen and Irishmen, all who married into this original bloodline of colonists. My Granny, Joan Breakwell¹³, who I grew up with, was half Dutch and half Irish. Her father, George O'Flynn Madden's, family had arrived in Natal, Orange Free State, South Africa in the mid-nineteenth century as part of an Irish exodus to South Africa escaping the potato famine. In contrast, her mother's family was part of the Van Blerk line that occupied the continent since 1627. George O' Flynn Madden lived in Natal until, the soil proving too rocky to farm, moved north to Kenya where his family lived for most of his boyhood until they settled in Northern Rhodesia, now Zambia. There he met my Great Granny Jean and began his family.



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Granny, Joan, and Grandfather, Bob, on their wedding day.

My Granny, Joan Breakwell, was born in Northern Rhodesia and spent most of her life in Broken Hill, the center of lead and zinc mining. Her father worked on the

¹³ Maiden name O'Flynn Madden

¹⁴ Joan Margaret Breakwell (O'Flynn Madden) and John Robert Breakwell on their wedding day, Breakwell Family personal collection.

railways as an inspector and made a moderate income, so my Granny did not lead the most privileged of lives. Northern Rhodesia was, like Southern Rhodesia, another land violently dominated and colonized by Cecil Rhodes and his exploratory British South Africa Company, so as a white woman she still had a far more privileged existence than most people within those carelessly-drawn country lines. She had three brothers (Michael, Donald, and Buck) and two sisters (Jeanette and Patricia) and, as the oldest girl in the family, Joan was expected to act as a second caretaker for her younger siblings. Her family moved to Southern Rhodesia in 1945 when her father was transferred to the railways there following the end of World War II, and she stayed in Gwelo (now Gweru) for the next thirty years.

My Great Granny Jean had an undying love of the land that sprung from a deeply rooted belief that God gave it to men and women upon His creation of the Earth. This love was shown through her massive gardens – cultivating roses and other flowers, maintaining an orchard, and growing vegetables, all of which she canned by herself (her most famous being her curried cabbage). Teaching her children to till the land, to reap what you sowed, was a fundamental part of both my Granny and Mother’s upbringing in the rural town of Gwelo. There was never too little to not get by, but some months the money was tighter than others. On occasions, ice cream treats for good marks (grades) at school was the norm, but it was potatoes and cabbage for dinner most nights. While the children were expected to help with the gardens, the harvesting of fruits and vegetables, and cleaning their rooms and doing chores there was always the ‘boy’ who did most of the cooking and cleaning of the house and who lived in the ‘kaya’ out back. At sixteen, my Granny Joan went to an Air Force Ball at the Royal Air Force base just

down the road from her family's home. This ball would prove to be a monumental moment in her life, as it was there that she met my Grandbob, John Robert Breakwell, seen in the image above with my Granny Joan on their wedding day in London, England.



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Breakwell Family: Mik, Joan, Don, Jeanette, and Bob

At this time Southern Rhodesia was still in the Commonwealth, a British colony, and the military men swarmed the town every time there was a transfer. She found these men to be quite “repulsive and uncultured”¹⁶, but never turned down an invitation to dance. Upon her arrival her strand of pearls broke and fell down the front of her wispy lilac chiffon gown, one of the Royal Air Force men took notice and asked, “Can I help you get those?” Being the “proper lady” she was she was disgusted with his advances. “Proper ladies” in Southern Rhodesia were devoid of sexuality and sexual desires, but instead lovely and pure, dressing for men’s delight, but never to joke about that delight

¹⁵ Family photograph of Breakwell’s, Breakwell Family personal collection.

¹⁶ This quotation is taken from informal conversations with my Granny since I was young. In cases like this, especially, I have quoted phrases that, in my mind, stick out as commonplace descriptions of her life and the people in it.

with such levity as this Air Force man had. Hundreds of letters written back and forth from Rhodesia to the Sinai Peninsula, Jordan, and Palestine over the span of four years after that meeting she and my now Grandbob, John Robert,¹⁷ were engaged through the mail. It was quite the exciting news that a colonist was to marry an Englishman, and my Granny, who had never left home without her family departed on a two-week long excursion around the Cape of Africa to England where she married her sweetheart. He despised the long, cold, gray days of his native England and happily moved to Southern Rhodesia following their first son, Mik's, birth. Soon after, my Granny became pregnant with my Mom, Jeanette Ruth, who was born in my Granny's childhood city of Gwelo and was followed by a younger brother, Donald, a few years after.



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Great-Great Grandfather with the black-maned lion he killed.

Growing up I remember hearing magical stories of my Mom frolicking around ten-foot high elephant grass with her brothers, molding forts out of the dried grass and plodding around barefoot across the savannas, plucking granadilla (passion fruit) and

¹⁷ Grandbob is our name for my Grandfather, John Robert Breakwell

¹⁸ Great-Great Grandfather with black maned lion, Breakwell Family personal collection.

making hair garlands out of frangipanis (plumerias). She spoke of giant red furry spiders that would jump out of the toilet onto your bum when you were using the loo, of my Great Granny shooting a black mamba snake in the garden one day with her trusty rifle, of my Great-Great Grandfather killing a black-maned lion who was mauling townspeople when he was only nine years old (pictured above). The stories were full of larger-than-life scenery; mangos the size of watermelons, watermelons the size of small children – it was *her* land to me. It drew me there in my mind; it was romanticized, beautified, exoticized, and made to feel so much better than the land I occupied in Anaheim, California (another colonized space).

I felt like I knew every detail of her childhood life. Her mornings consisted of waking and eating mealie meal (corn porridge) for breakfast with her rooibos tea that she had with a spot of milk and sugar. Each day she went off to school in her light blue yoon-ee-form¹⁹. When sick, she was given muti²⁰, not medicine. She loved drinking the foam off her mother's shandy²¹ and loved cheese and tomato saamies²². She wore pink hot shorts as a young girl, had five hours of television in the night, and was chased down the main hall in their home at the end of the air strip when she did something wrong and needed to get a 'thick ear'. I idealized *her* 'native' land, a land she only left because she was on vacation and happened to meet my dad and, in a whirlwind of a love story, was engaged within five days of their initial meet-cute. It was never problematic to me as a young child that I viewed my mom's country of birth as *hers*, as native to *our* family – to

¹⁹ A regular uniform, which I only realized at a later age only sounded different because of her accent

²⁰ The Afrikaans word for the medicine used by *ngangas*, or native healers

²¹ Beer mixed with lemon-lime soda

²² Sandwiches

me. She never wanted to leave, and my grandparents only came to be closer to their children, two of whom lived in the US. In my mind it was as much theirs as anyone else who lived there. They had been there for four hundred years, after all, and that's more than a lifetime.

This was before my curiosity into my family's roots and heritage in Southern Africa ignited. As a very small child, I deemed it pretty cool that my mom was from Zimbabwe. None of my friends could say anything similarly out of the ordinary like I could. The nearest was my friend, Sarah²³, whose parents came from Pilgrim stock and always got to say that during our traditional mind-colonizing 'Indian/Pilgrim' feast each Thanksgiving at school. I relished telling others in Kindergarten where her accent was from because of its shock value; "But your mom is white! How is she from Africa?!" This would usually lead to my response, "Not everyone in Africa is black. My mom's family has been there for a long time." This simple explanation, while on the surface certainly true, became shallow and hollow to me even if it was good enough for those I used it on. Starting in first grade I began to notice how different I was from everyone around me, and I became self-conscious of telling others my mom was Zimbabwean and that I was also half-Zimbabwean. While my siblings loved telling others they were "Halffrican," I remember feeling uneasy from the age six onward about what it meant when I told people her nationality. I began to realize that it mattered that most people thought only black people lived in Africa and because most people who were in Africa were black.

On my first standardized test I distinctly recall the discomfort I felt when

²³ Name changed for the purposes of protecting anonymity.

more deeply-rooted feeling that I needed to understand where I came from and what it meant that I, and my family came from there. While I knew that not all of Africa was white, I knew it meant something that most of it was not, and that almost no one I spoke with viewed Africa as space where non-blacks could or did exist. That most people there did not look like my mom, but that almost all people who ruled there in the past did.²⁷

These images of Africa as a black-only space was perpetuated and reinforced by the U.S. media, by the commercials for needy and orphaned children with distended bellies on TV, all of which homogenized and simplified an incredibly diverse and complex continent.²⁸ It became difficult for me to grapple with the history these images hid, the reality of my family's presence on the continent. While the individual reasons for coming may have varied for those in my family, they ultimately came as part of the colonial process – to dominate, to take what was not theirs and exploit it.

They were and are not native to that land, regardless of how they portray themselves. Instead, my family was an active participant within the framework of colonization. The colonial project was, as F. Cooper has written, “an object of struggle” set within a specific set of historical, cultural, economic, and social conditions under which the roles of ‘colonizer’ and ‘colonized’ were not naturally-occurring constructs;

²⁷ Only Liberia and Ethiopia were not formally colonized, though in both cases while black men were in power there was American and Italian interests and alliances, respectively, that constructed the majority of systems within the two countries.

²⁸ Within popular media in the West, Africa is largely ignored and hidden but is misrepresented, homogenized, and marginalized when shown and discussed. The media engages in modern Orientalizing of black bodies in order to further other the subjects of the stories and images. This has resulted in a US populous that views the lives of those in Africa as entirely different from their own and has made the population into voyeurs. See Asgede Hagos, *Hardened Images: The Western Media and the Marginalization of Africa*, (Trenton, NJ: Africa World Press, 2000).

instead, they were “reproduced by specific actions.”²⁹ My mother, grandmother, and great-grandparents throughout the centuries we occupied the land were part of this struggle and engaged with the colonial system in particular ways so as to reinforce their statuses of colonizers. Even still, the history of Zimbabwe is told in a way to support the national boundaries that were constructed as part of the colonial project; the Great Zimbabwe, the Ndebele States. While these are important moments of this geography’s history, there is greater support for the diversity within the linguistic and political characteristics of native peoples that relates to systems of power very different than that delineated by a state or nation. As my family, and other white Zimbabweans, continue to engage in these actions and this dialogue they are reinforcing their positionality as colonizer.³⁰

My family had not been there forever, we talked about how way back when we were mixed with all sorts of European countries, so they were the intruders. It made me wonder why my Grandbob referred to those in the Zimbabwean government as “kaffirs” – a word we usually reserved for our dog when he messed in the house. Was it really okay to refer to people with the same derogatory term as we did our dog? This became one of the first indicators of my family’s prejudices and racism in my life. Kaffir was okay to use when describing black people, which meant white was best and black was worst. My questions revolving around my family’s portrayal of those they lived near, but never with, my mixed identity with an immigrant family on one side and a US family

²⁹ Frederick Cooper, *Colonialism in Question: Theory, Knowledge, History* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 2005), 17.

³⁰ Brian Raftopoulos and Alois Mlamabo, ed., *Of Becoming Zimbabwe: A History from the Pre-Colonial Period to 2008*, (Harare, Weaver Press: 2009), 1-39.

on the other, and the ‘nativity’ of my family to the continent they claimed their own resonated in my mind and life. I remember, as I got older, refusing to talk about my family’s heritage at school functions because I did not want to explain it to others since I could not fully understand it myself. My identity as half-immigrant dominated my life, and I loved my family, but it was something that was only shared with the closest friends.

I aimed to find answers to questions of my identity and background one way or another. As an incredibly resourceful child with adeptness at searching out books at the library I was quickly able to find resources on Zimbabwe the summer between my first and second grade years. It was then that I began to learn more about that country my Mom and my grandparents came from. I learned that it had been what was called a colony for half a century and now it was not, but mostly I learned things that reinforced the exotic natural landscapes my Mom spoke of often. The books I found were never on politics or colonization or oppression, they were on animals, trees, and flowers with a smattering of ‘black people were treated as less than white people’ tossed in for what the publishers obviously considered good enough measure to pass off as a lesson on the country for small children.³¹ To have my conceptions of Zimbabwe reinforced by what I found at the local Anaheim, California public library was satisfactory for me, since I was indeed a small child. Because I was incredibly confident with my library skills I assumed I found all that I could outside family stories and that my internal squirming was just a result of not liking to feel badly about my differences from my classmates.

³¹ For examples of these books see: Jason Lauré, *Zimbabwe*, (Chicago, IL: Children’s Press, 1988).; Lisa Halvorsen, *Letters Home from – Zimbabwe*, (Mason, OH: Blackbirch Press, 2000).; Rebecca Stefoff, *Finding the Lost Cities*, (Oxford, England: Oxford University Press, 1998).

One of the foundational properties of skin color and heritage, though, is that it will never go away³². People have no choice in the matter, and it stays with a person forever, physical, intellectual, and cultural markers that guide the way we view the world and how others view us. Everything I knew supported my way of thinking and my lifestyle, but that was because I surrounded myself with those who were like me. My identity was in large part formed by what they thought of me, who they classified me as. Because I was intelligent, always the best-performing in my class, my identity was wrapped up in my academic successes and was exemplified by the most populous yearbook comment “Karen, you’re so smart and nice! Stay cool this summer.” This did not change my classmates’ perceptions of my differences, only that I became a novelty to them when I was introduced to others in their family or circles of friends. “This is Karen, her mom is from Zimbabwe!” My status as a child of an immigrant suddenly became something to be admired, and I loved it. I got to love it, though, since I was white.

Immigrant children of color or children of color who are not from recent immigrant families are forced into that status whether or not they want to disclose it, and it is generally not something vastly admired by those around them. Immigrant status is most often equated with person of color status in the United States, and “today’s immigrants appear as threatening outsiders, knowing at, crashing, or sneaking through the gates into societies richer than their own.”³³ My family was never placed within this

³² See Derek Bell, *And We Are Not Saved: The Elusive Quest for Racial Justice*, (New York: Basic Books, 2008), p.48; Richard Delgado and Jean Stefancic, *Critical Race Theory: An Introduction*, (New York: NYU Press, 2012); Charles Wade Mills, *The Racial Contract*, (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1997).

³³ John A. Arthur, *African Diaspora Identities: Negotiating Culture in Transnational Migration*, (Lanham, MD: Lexington Books, 2010), 1.

immigrant classification, however, because we did not look like those that were immigrants in the media and we spoke English perfectly. While a person of color has to deal with negative assumptions about their personality and makeup on a daily basis associated with equally negative perceptions of immigrants I did not have to deal with such assumptions. Everyone upon hearing my mom was from Zimbabwe would have similar reactions because my appearance did not line up with what they thought people from Africa to be. A look of bewilderment became compulsory to a new knowledge of my lineage, I was the seemingly all-American girl that they wanted on the outside with my long brown hair, big eyes, and sun-kissed olive skin, but with, as one of my best friend's mother's noted, "an exotic twist."

The security I thought I felt with my identity was really a front for the tumult surrounding some aspects of it, especially the one part that was visible – my whiteness. Being white meant I was privileged in my Orange County neighborhood, but being an immigrant meant I had something in common with my Latino friends who were demonized and homogenized as Mexican and my Vietnamese friends who were referred to as being 'fresh off the boat,' even when their families had been here for generations. I loved them and felt more at home with them than my white friends, but I felt like I was capitalizing on their culture as much as anyone. It was a strange place to occupy, one where I identified with people who were deemed as less than me by the country we lived in and those who were incredibly privileged by those same systems. I straddled the border between marginalized and overvalued, but was most often overvalued and only because of how I looked. To marginalize me you had to know me, my history, where my friends were marginalized regardless of who they were around because they were not

white. Beginning in high school, and with the aid of one especially astute teacher, the late Mr. Jim Disbennett, I became more aware of the history of the world and how the US became an imperial hegemony as the largest economic and military power in the world. This new understanding of US colonization conflated with one of my cousin's from Zimbabwe, Liam, moving in with my family struck within me a renewed passion to understand where I came from in order to better understand where I was going and later, why I was allowed to go there.

This began by asking more questions about modern-day Zimbabwe, which, I learned from my family was devastated not only due to the dictator, Robert Mugabe, whose name I grew up hearing, but because of the way Zimbabwe gained independence. In my house the struggle for independence was labeled as the "Bush War," where the freedom fighters, called terrorists in our home, fought against the white regime for power. Robert Mugabe was identified as the leader of this struggle, which was one of the only accurate assessments my family made concerning the history of this war. My Grandbob taught me that it was the whites being cast out that caused the country's downfall. All the money left and no one left was educated or able to run a country. In essence, I was taught that being black and African meant that you were incapable of being a leader. The distinction was made in my house that being black and African was a separate and peculiar condition different from having dark skin. There was never a question as to the equality of people who were black and from the United States, never a query into their intellectual or leadership capacities. Being black and African, though, automatically meant that you were either child-like or a terribly selfish and cruel ruler. Either you were like one of the houseboys or garden boys that lived on the property with a white family or

you were a dictator. Those were the dichotomies within Zimbabwe and in the African continent as a whole, according to my family's accounts.

What was missing from their accounts and from my mind until I researched it myself was the reality of the struggle for independence in Zimbabwe and the history of that geographical area. The war against the white regime was predicated on the coming together of thousands of black people who refused to be dominated any longer and, in acts of incredible resilience and agency, decided to assert their right to self-determination. The fight against the Smith regime begun in 1961 was not the beginning of the struggle against the colonizers by the native population. Resistance and rebellion by the native black people is woven throughout the history of colonization in Zimbabwe. The word given to the war for independence by the agitators as Chimurenga, which is a Shona word with “political origins in the uprisings of the 1890s as the Africans north of the Limpopo River fought to prevent the white settlers from the south occupying their land.”³⁴ Rising up against the oppressor was as much a part of the history of Zimbabwe as was violent domination by the white settlers.

As this new story unfolded, it prompted me to question what my Mom, my Granny, my Grandbob, and Liam told me. Their stories were of black African people who were simply incapable. People who were incapable of learning, of growing, of thinking, really. These readings painted a different history. One filled with white men dominating a land and a people forcefully, violently; dominating one People after another – forcing the black native individuals and communities into subjugation and servitude for

³⁴ David Lozell Martin and Phyllis Johnson, *The Struggle for Zimbabwe: The Chimurenga War*, (Ann Arbor, MI: The University of Michigan Press, 1981), vii.

their capital enterprises to profit from their natural resources to benefit the Crown and her Empire. Never before had the word Empire conjured such visceral feelings in me before. Suddenly Empire, a word that I deemed reverential growing up, admiring the explorers who brought ‘civilization’ to the world became a word that instead represented treating others as less than human and forcing them into a way of existence that transformed them from free agents to captive servants and slaves. Zimbabwe, a country that I for so long felt was ruined by whites being forced out was suddenly a destroyed nation because whites forced themselves in.³⁵

Realizing the power and pain of colonialism compelled me to reflect on how I was contributed through my actions to the perpetuation of those terrible processes. The brokenness I felt at understanding my role in carrying out oppression was mediated by the strength that resulted from coming to that understanding. By acknowledging the unearned privileges I had and that I had unintentionally used them to hurt others helped me to understand how to amend my behaviors to my new worldviews and advocate for change. The truths were that colonialism was equal to oppression, that there was no discovery of these places, that the people living in other parts of the world who had darker skin colors were systematically treated as less than in order for others to have more than.³⁶ When I recognized these truths, which are purposefully kept hidden from the public school educational system I learned from, there was a slow transformation that occurred in the way that I saw the people, communities, and world around me. Realizing

³⁵ Munyaradzi Mushonga, “White power, white desire: Miscegenation in Southern Rhodesia, Zimbabwe,” *African Journal of History and Culture*, 5.1 (January 2013).

³⁶ See Frantz Fanon, *Black Skin, White Masks*, (New York: Perseus Books Group, 2008).; Steven Biko, *I Write What I Like*, edited by CR Aelred Stubbs, (Johannesburg, South Africa: Heinemann Educational Publishers, 1987).

that the greatest of the world's successes were almost always built on the suffering of millions transformed my reality because I recognized I was a fundamental, if small, component of the daily oppressions the majority of the world face. In coming to understand these truths came great internal fortitude to try to overcome them first in my own life so that I could begin to educate others to do the same in their own

I was raised, I think unintentionally, by my parents as well as the society which privileged me to look at the world in a very Manichaean way. Through my own studies I learned the complexities of 'right' and 'wrong', 'morality' and 'immorality', but one important universal truth – that doing things that are hurtful to another person, another human being is almost always wrong. This was the time of my life when I best realized the validity of Rabbi Mendel of Kotzk's words; "There is nothing so whole as a broken heart."³⁷ When I began to comprehend my role in the systems that forced millions, billions even, into superfluity I gained strength, but only because first my heart was broken. I was accountable for the harm I had done, yes, but now knowing I had done wrong I could move forward by actively campaigning against it by living in a way that intentionally subverts systems of power. It was incredibly and distinctly painful to think on the times when I perpetuated the immediate or extended suffering of those I knew and those I did not, in places I knew little or nothing about and lives that mirrored mine only in their humanness. Many privileged people have difficulties in self-criticizing and in reconciling past and present selves with their new understandings. This cognitive dissonance, of having a core belief challenged by another person's beliefs or realities,

³⁷ Common Jewish proverb often attributed to Rabbi Menachem Mendel, http://www.goodreads.com/quotes/65442-there-is-nothing-so-whole-as-a-broken-heart?auto_login_attempted=true.

was the first step in understanding my true lack of understanding about the world around me. While some respond to these critiques of their current beliefs with discounting the other in order to maintain stability in life I was able to begin to throw out my past ideas, with a significant amount of effort, and start growing new ones. It was this capacity within my soul, that is part of every person's I think, that allowed my heart to break, which consequently began the healing process. While the scars that colonialism, oppression, capitalism, and globalization ultimately leaves on all of us, including those who oppress, never entirely dissipate from our subconscious, I could feel myself changing based on how I operated in the world and how I interacted with people around me.

Thus began my process of self-radicalization³⁸, of moving further and further away from the colonized ideas that lay ever present in my mind and outlook on life, deliberately dismissing them, and transforming my mind to fill it with ideas that were more in balance and complementary to where mine, and my family's, identity really lay. From the time I was young my belief in my God and my understanding of myself in relation to Him, as His child and as a sister to all those on Earth, has been an incredibly foundational aspect of my being.³⁹ What my broken heart period taught me, however, was that this was not just one of the important fragments of my being, but the only critically important aspect of who I was. Race, nationality, religious affiliation, were all created by humans in order to separate us from one another, to distinguish each other as

³⁸ Term taken from Adjoa Florência Jones de Almeida, "radical social change," in *The Revolution Will Not Be Funded*, (Cambridge, MA: South End Press, 2007).

³⁹ I was raised in a sect of Christianity which focuses on the divine nature of each human on Earth and our identities as literal children of a physical God.

better or worse based on our assessment of who was like-minded and like-looking.⁴⁰ No one wants or should have to be tolerated. My God does not tolerate, He accepts, and He loves.

For me, self-radicalization meant pruning away those things that were choking my existence and my growth and causing that intense discomfort in my own body and mind. It meant eliminating from my mind ideas fed to me by my family, community, and society-at-large that placed other human beings in positions that rendered them superfluous to my, or any other human's existences unless they were commoditized, and instead embracing the inter-vulnerability of my life with theirs. It was a process not of changing who I was, really, but understanding better who I was at my core and wiping away the contamination of the hierarchies that the world's powerful systematically created and continue to enact in order to subjugate the masses. In doing this it was important for me to remember that, as activist Adjoa Florência Jones de Almeida said,

“Of course, one woman's weed is another one's medicine, so it's important that we seek to fully understand and define the nature of our oppression. What chokes our existence is not *just* about money. It is about the kind of values, culture, and everyday interactions created by capitalism, heterosexism, imperialism, racism, sexism, and other systems of oppression.”⁴¹

What was killing me spiritually, emotionally, and culturally was not necessarily what was killing another and thus it was (and is) vital that my chosen healing processes did not help me while inflicting even more pain into the lives of those I already hurt.

It is near impossible to erase the hierarchies within the world from our existences,

⁴⁰ Edmond Wright, *Narrative, Perception, Language, and Faith*, (Basingstoke, England: Palgrave Macmillan, 2005), 103-120.

⁴¹ “radical social change,” in *The Revolution Will Not Be Funded*, (Cambridge, MA: South End Press, 2007), 186.

though. While sitting in the sun, basking in its glow after climbing Red Rock in Las Vegas, Nevada this realization came to me with greater force than it ever had before. As often happens I was contemplating who I was whilst perched cross-legged on this giant red stone, and that is when I realized the honesty in our identities being wrapped up in how we are perceived by others. Yes, I may self-radicalize and see myself for who I believe myself to be and see others in a more open light, but until those around me ceased to judge me based on their perceptions of what I was or should be little could change in my own life and, more importantly, of the lives of the unprivileged, the oppressed, the marginalized. As a woman I fit into these categories some of the time, but as a straight white woman whose appearance fits the stereotypically feminine mold of what society asks of me I generally am accepted wherever I go based on appearances alone.

The reality is that double consciousness pervades the mental existences of many of those who are oppressed when they internalize that oppression.⁴² This “peculiar sensation” that W.E.B. Du Bois discussed in his *The Souls of Black Folk* was described as a “sense of always looking at one-self through the eyes of others, of measuring one’s soul by the tape of a world that looks on in amused contempt and pity.”⁴³ While I am not equating the experience of people of color, and especially black people from the US, with my own I felt a strong connection to this description by Du Bois in my own life growing up prior to my mental decolonization process. I remember feeling like my actual personage was dependent and equivalent to what other’s judged me to be – I looked at myself through their eyes. My family’s geographical history became something I

⁴² W.E.B. Du Bois, *The Souls of Black Folk*, (Rockville, MD: Arc Manor, 2008), 12.

⁴³ *Ibid.*

prodded and exoticized for so long until I began to understand what it really meant that I was white and half Zimbabwean. It signified that I was intimately connected to a structure of oppression and that I was one of those who oppressed. The call by Steven Biko was for black consciousness, a shift in mental attitude, to occur for native Africans both on the continent and in the African diaspora. As he explained it:

“...Being black is a reflection of a mental attitude...the fact that we are all *not white* does not necessarily mean that we are all *black*. Non-whites do exist and will continue to exist for quite a long time. If one’s aspiration is whiteness but his pigmentation makes attainment of this impossible, then that person is a non-white.”⁴⁴

This transformation called for is for a conversion in viewing oneself not based on worldview of your status, but founded on elements of truth that are derived from the status of being human. No one is granted superior status in this transformation, and thus no one is relegated to inferiority. For me, this meant that while my skin would always be white I could actively advocate for breaking down the systems that privileged me because of it. In doing so I could reflect a different mental attitude in my actions than whites.

What I am asking of my family, my relatives, and white Zimbabweans is to come to a critical white consciousness. While for black people, consciousness means embracing their humanity, their power, their strength, and in doing so demanding and proving their equality with all other people⁴⁵, a white consciousness means embracing their humanity, yes, but in an entirely different way. Being white, especially a white person in Africa, signifies a position of superhumanity, one where intelligence, creativity, culture, socioeconomic status, and attractiveness were, and in many ways are, privileged

⁴⁴ Biko, 48.

⁴⁵ See Chapter 14, “Black Consciousness and the Quest for True Humanity,” in Biko.

to a person because of their pigmentation. Creating white supremacy was not unintentional. Rather, this white supremacist view of the world was carefully crafted by those in power to justify and rationalize their violent and oppressive treatment of those in lands with resources they wanted for their own national gain. It was accomplished through a process of marginalization, colonization of minds and bodies, dehumanization, and othering.⁴⁶ Through these processes people who otherwise might have acted in ways that made lives more livable were convinced that they were still doing so despite how they actually treated others and made them feel. These believers in white supremacy were converted to the dogma of colonialism by the governments they served. Their conversion took the form of ardent belief that they were helping the blacks in the countries they invaded and thus created a population of peoples who, in a show of the banality of evil⁴⁷, perpetuated a system that crushed the souls of black folks.⁴⁸

⁴⁶ See Raftopolous and Mlambo, 2009 and Arthur Keppel-Jones, *Rhodes and Rhodesia: The White Conquest of Zimbabwe, 1884-1992*, (Montreal, Canada: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1983).

⁴⁷ Borrowed from Hannah Arendt, see *Eichmann in Jerusalem*

⁴⁸ Borrowed from the great W.E.B. Du Bois.

Chapter 3

BASED ON THE DOCTRINE OF DISCOVERY

South Zambezia, Southern Rhodesia, Northern Rhodesia, Rhodesia⁴⁹ – all names for a place bound by lines placed on a drawing of a geographic space by people who were not from there and who claimed discovery of the places they dominated. Before colonizers claimed discovery on the land there were people living there at the latest in 600 CE. The Zhizo People, the first to live in the Limpopo region, traded extensively in the region as did their successors, the Kalundu People.⁵⁰ Great Zimbabwe, was “the biggest political and economic centre south of the Zambezi,” and was succeeded by a variety of indigenous states, all who traded with the Portuguese starting in the early seventeenth century.⁵¹ The cultures were not only valuable in their economic advances; many cultures practiced reverence for both females and males in their communities and did not establish patriarchal structures until interaction with the West. The ethnolinguistic diversity of the region was rich in cultures based on a variety of faiths, artisanal works, community-based living, and traditional educational systems that taught generations of people to survive in lands that were difficult to inhabit.⁵²

In this particular space, what is now Zimbabwe, the leader of the conquests of

⁴⁹ The names chosen for these markers of territory designations are important in the colonial history of Southern Africa because they designate a shift from marking the territory by natural land formations with names derived from native terms for them to the domination of the place by the whites occupying. Rhodes name being used in the new terms for the geographic markers was a significant step where language displayed the mentality of domination that was quintessential of the colonial enterprise.

⁵⁰ “The Shashe-Limpopo basin and the origin of the Zimbabwe culture,” *New History*, 2010, <http://newhistory.co.za/part-1-chapter-1-the-slashe-limpopo-basin-and-the-origin-of-the-zimbabwe-culture/>.

⁵¹ Raftopolous and Mlambo, x-xi.

⁵² Raftopolous and Mlambo 1-39.

these lands was Cecil Rhodes – a celebrated figure in the history of the British Empire as the man who started it all. His life’s work was built on the taking of what was not his and destroying it through his supposed love of the land and desire to raise the people up to the standards of Western culture and society. He was a perfect embodiment of the ideas expressed in of Rudyard Kipling’s famous *White Man’s Burden*, which, to understand the history of this place, a portion bears repeating here.

Take up the White Man’s burden –
Send forth the best ye breed-
Go bind your sons to exile
To serve your captives’ need;
To wait in heavy harness,
On flutter folk and wild –
Your new-caught, sullen peoples,
Half-devil and half-child.

Take up the White Man’s burden –
In patience to abide,
To veil the threat of terror
And check the show of pride;
By open speech and simple,
An hundred times made plain
To seek another’s profit,
And work another’s gain.

Take up the White Man’s burden –
The savage wars of peace –
Fill full the mouth of Famine
And bid the sickness cease;
And when your goal is nearest
The end for others sought,
Watch sloth and heathen Folly
Bring all your hopes to naught...⁵³

Through the poem there are repeated uses of words to dehumanize the people whom were colonized, to turn them into objects and animals. Words used to describe the colonized

⁵³ Rudyard Kipling, “The White Man’s Burden, 1899,” Fordham University Modern History Sourcebook, <http://www.fordham.edu/halsall/mod/kipling.asp>.

include: “half-devil,” “half-child,” “silent,” and “sullen,” indicating an observance of them as not quite people, but not completely incapable of rescuing, either. The poem indicates the mindset that rescuing must occur, and that it is the West that only has the capacity to rescue, “Take up the White man’s burden, ye dare not stoop to less.” This idea of ‘rescuing’ was used as justification for colonization, conquest, and genocide in all of Africa. Those abroad were children, while those in Europe and in the US were the educated, the elite, the real adults whose “manhood” was validated in their excursions and expansions abroad. It was through these perceptions of colonialism, these creations of a reality separate than the one that actually existed, that pervaded the minds of those like Cecil Rhodes and justified the means and the ends of the colonial enterprise in Africa and globally. This was the discipline of the European empire system for centuries that Edward Said coined as Orientalism – the framing of those in the colonized areas as exotic and conquerable. He wrote, “...the transition from a merely textual apprehension, formulation, or definition of the Orient to the putting of all this into practice...did take place, and Orientalism had much to do with that...*preposterous* transition.”⁵⁴ The (mis)representations of the non-West in literature and other media did not stop in text, however, and instead was used as actual fodder for rationalizing the violence of colonization.

Cecil Rhodes entered what is now Zimbabwe in 1888, referring to this thousands-years old inhabited area as South Zambezia. It was chartered under the name Southern Rhodesia in 1889 after Rhodes signed a series of treaties with King Lobengula of the Ndebele People. From that point on it was a protectorate, a ward of the British state, then

⁵⁴ Edward Said, *Orientalism*, (New York: Vintage Books, 1979), 96.

ruled by Queen Victoria and under the immediate direction of the British South Africa Company (BSAC). Following the establishment of the protectorate, and using the authority of the Queen's signature, Rhodes sent in white settlers from the UK and South Africa into the territory protected by armed men in the British South Africa Police. While the creation of Southern Rhodesia was done under the auspices of consent from the leader of one of the most powerful tribes in the region, the travel of the white settlers through Matabeleland, where the Ndebele People lived, created a great amount of tension for the various native people living there. This resulted in the BSAP defeating the Ndebele People in the First Matabele War in 1894.⁵⁵ It was in this armed struggle between the People and the colonizers that King Lobengula was killed, which resulted in a spiritual leader, Milmo, rising up and waging another war against the colonizers in 1896, resulting in the Second Matabele War.⁵⁶ While, like in the Americas, the native Africans are often portrayed as being complacent in their conquest, even loving and being fascinated with the Europeans and other fair-skinned conquerors it was and is not so. There was both armed and spiritual resistance against colonization by the majority of those who lived in the region and whose families lived there for centuries., as evidenced by the Matabele War, which engaged those living throughout the area. Despite their concerted efforts to disband the project of colonialism from extending into their lives and their homes the guns and military prowess of the British Empire was too extensive and

⁵⁵ "British South Africa Company (BSAC, BSACO, or BSA Company)," *Encyclopaedia Britannica Online*, <http://www.britannica.com/EBchecked/topic/80349/British-South-Africa-Company-BSAC-BSACO-or-BSA-Company>.

⁵⁶ "1893 Sequence of Events: The Wilson (Shangani) Patrol", *Centenary of the Matabele War of 1893*, (Harare, Zimbabwe: Mashonaland Branch of the History Society of Zimbabwe, 1993), 25-26.

expansive for them to end in victory. The domination of the native black people's land by the white invaders continued and resulted in the establishment of cities throughout the savanna, including Salisbury, modern-day Harare, and the capital of the Empire in Southern Africa.

For the next century the influence of the Crown of England in Southern Rhodesia and in the region grew, especially as the productivity of England's Queen's holding exploded. Southern Rhodesia was considered the bread basket of Africa; it had some of the most fertile land and exported fruits, vegetables, grains, and minerals throughout the Continent and, of course, the Empire.⁵⁷ The Protectorate was set up as a standard British holding, where European settlers and other whites who may have been born in the colony were in positions of power, blacks were relegated to live on tribal lands, called the Native Reserves Land, or in designated areas outside the cities where they were easily accessible to serve the whites, and blacks and whites were educated in separate schools, despite the UK claim that they believed all were able to learn equally well.⁵⁸ Land ownership was solely permitted to whites, domination of the land while having a simultaneous love for its natural beauty continued, with the construction of the Kariba Dam in the North best showcasing the twisted appreciation of the land by the colonizing whites.⁵⁹

Kariba, which was constructed to harness the massive power of the Zambezi River that separates modern-day Zimbabwe from Zambia, was done in a manner that

⁵⁷ David M. Rowe *Manipulating the Market: Understanding Economic Sanctions, Institutional Change, and the Political Unity of White Rhodesia*, (Ann Arbor, MI: University of Michigan Press, 2001), 65-69.

⁵⁸ Ian Phimster, "Rethinking the Reserves: Southern Rhodesia's Land Husbandry Act Reviewed," *Journal of Southern African Studies*, 19.2 (1993): 226-229.

⁵⁹ Robert Blake, *A History of Rhodesia*, (New York: Knopf, 1978).

resulted in the displacement of the Tsonga people in the north.⁶⁰ For the rich whites the dam was a manifestation of the superiority of the West in utilizing the land, while the Tsonga People, who sustainably lived off the land in a more harmonious way demonstrated what they considered laziness.. While constructing the dam, the colonial police killed eight Tsonga in response to an uprising by the Tsonga people, which precipitated these murders. The white dominant media's interpretation of the motivations for the uprising was that "the agitation of African nationalists from Lusaka" rallied the Tsonga to action. It was never publically discussed that "the loss of one's home and livelihood could not, in itself, motivate rebellion."⁶¹ This was entirely characteristic of the dehumanizing nature of the British brand of colonialism; the Tsonga were not people worthy of having settled lives and homes, they were commodities for the British Empire whose greatest worth happened to be the land they occupied. Ownership of land, a Western concept, was also a privilege only given to white Westerners.⁶²

This pattern of domination via the violent seizing of indigenous land, largely the Shona and Ndebele peoples, continued followed the Second World War.⁶³ At this point, the colonial enterprise was streamlined, with black suppression codified into Southern Rhodesian laws that institutionalized the racist rationales for domination of not only Southern Rhodesia, but the African continent as a whole. Schools were separate, the police monitored the streets, there were 'safe' whites-only neighborhoods gated and

⁶⁰ David McDermott Hughes, xii.

⁶¹ *Ibid.*, 35.

⁶² "Rhodesia: Mzilikaze to Smith," *Africa Institute Bulletin*, 15 (1977), <http://www.rhodesia.nl/mztosm.html>.

⁶³ Larry W. Bowman, *Politics in Rhodesia: White Power in an African State*, (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1973), 46-48.

shielded from the purposefully lesser and uneducated masses, and blacks were in positions of servitude, gardeners, housekeepers, and caregivers, for white families across the country.⁶⁴ These sorts of daily oppressions sprung up quickly following the Second Matabele War, and even during it, as hundreds of thousands of white settlers swarmed the country. Part of the integration of racism and domination woven into the fabric of the colonial existence was the forced deployment of thousands of black African men into battle for the British crown during World War II. These men fought against Germany, Japan, and Italy, principally in North Africa, but when they returned from war they were given nothing more than what they left with.⁶⁵ Whites returning from military action were given large parcels of land in exchange for their service to the Empire. It was at this point in Southern Rhodesian history that the best of land was given to whites, which, in part, “fuelled the war against Rhodesia” that was on the horizon.⁶⁶

During these post-war years anti-black racism was further developed by whites in power in conjunction with spreading unrest and radicalism among black populations within Southern Rhodesia, Mozambique, Zambia, South Africa, Ghana, and the United States. Frantz Fanon published *White Skin, Black Masks* in 1952, and his work, along with non-violent movements for change in the US with Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. and in India with Gandhi inspired resistance groups in Southern Rhodesia.⁶⁷ The City Youth

⁶⁴ See the Land Apportionment Act, 1930 and the Land Tenure Act, 1930.

⁶⁵ Whites were given almost 50 million acres of land, while blacks had a total of 21 – see the Land Apportionment Act, 1930.

⁶⁶ Allison Van Horn, “Redefining ‘Property’: The Constitutional Battle over Land Redistribution in Zimbabwe,” *Journal of African Law*, 38.2 (1994): 144.

⁶⁷ Eliakim M. Sibanda, *The Zimbabwe African People’s Union 1961-87: A Political History of Insurgency in Southern Rhodesia*. (Asmara, Eritrea: Africa World Press, Inc., 2005), 41.

League was founded in 1956, the Southern Rhodesia African National Congress (SRANC) was established in 1957, which gave rise to the formation of the National Democratic Party (NDP), the Zimbabwe African People's Union (ZAPU), the Zimbabwe African National Liberation Army (ZANLA), and thus figures such as Robert Mugabe, Joshua Nkomo, and James Chikerema. These men were the founders of revolutionary activity within Southern Rhodesia; many were schooled in foreign nations in institutions of higher education but, because of the intense racism within Rhodesian politics, were unable to secure positions of leadership in the government or in their careers and thus sympathized far more with their black brothers and sisters who were living in deplorable conditions in the Native Reserves Land. The initial construction of these anti-white supremacy and decolonizing groups was not to promote violence as a means to secure their equality. Instead, they were groups based in the belief in discussion, the utilization of organizing to reach their end, and inclusion of all racial groups in an effort to struggle for their independence.⁶⁸

The first of these anti-white supremacist groups, SRANC (listed above), was committed to a nonviolent resolution to elevate the positions and opportunities for native Africans within politics and society. This organization was where revolutionaries Robert Mugabe and Joshua Nkomo started, and members of the organization rallied against the oppressive legislation restricting the progression of native Africans within Southern Rhodesia. Utilizing rural support they recruited throughout villages and farms and held massive rallies, demonstrations, and gained international support for their anti-racist

⁶⁸ William Frank Gutterage and John Edward Spence, *Violence in Southern Africa*, (London: Newbury House, 1997), 61.

activities. They had many white allies in their struggles for black equality, and aimed to unite with those in diaspora in the US and throughout the world.⁶⁹ When the response to their cries for universal suffrage, anti-discrimination, agency, improved living conditions, and representation was met with uncompromising rejection violence seemed necessary in order to achieve black liberation.

Also during this time the British Empire began to collapse throughout Africa due to increased unrest by native populations within their colonies, many inspired by the decolonization of India in 1948 following the end of the Second World War. Many native people were inspired by Gandhi's methodologies of utilizing the Satyagraha, "insistence on truth," in fighting against oppressions in his own country.⁷⁰ In an effort to limit collapse within Southern Africa, which had a particularly high number of white settlers, the British government created the Federation of Rhodesia and Nyasaland. This Federation, also known as the Central African Federation (CAF) comprised Southern Rhodesia, Northern Rhodesia (modern-day Zambia), and Nyasaland (modern-day Malawi). While its goal was to create sovereign nations within the federation that were still under control via the Commonwealth system, the black population's unrest at their unequal treatment under the law and an on normalized daily basis rendered it unsuccessful like the other last-ditch efforts by the United Kingdom to save their falling Empire and it was dissolved on the first day of 1964, and ten months later, on the twenty-fourth of October, Northern Rhodesia was granted independence after altering laws to

⁶⁹ Gutterage and Spence, 61.

⁷⁰ April Carter, Howard Clark, and Michael Randle, ed. Of "Elements of Nonviolent Resistance to Colonialism After 1945," *Civil Resistance*, <http://www.civilresistance.info/bibliography/B>.

institute popular rule. The British Parliament ironically required majority rule before independence was given to a colony after a century of instituting white supremacist rule, and thus a rupture occurred between the ardently white supremacist settlers within Rhodesia and the more covert racists within the United Kingdom.⁷¹

⁷¹ Robert Blake, *A History of Rhodesia*.

Chapter 4

“I WAS TAUGHT TO FEAR BLACK BODIES”

The leader in the struggle to keep white power, Ian Smith, referred to himself as “a bit of a rebel,” noting that this persona was brought on after years of fighting against the world in defense of what he referred to as his country, his land.⁷² Born in Selukwe,⁷³ a mining town in the very middle of the teapot, Smith considered himself an African through and through. He claimed he was unattached to his European roots, that he was loyal only to Rhodesia, and his self-proclaimed devotion to white Rhodesia secured him a spot as the youngest member of the Rhodesian government at age twenty-nine. While initially hesitant to claim a spot as a Member of Parliament (MP) in the Legislative Assembly as a representative for the politically right-wing Southern Rhodesia Liberal Party (SRLP), he rose quickly in prominence through his historical ties to the country and his support of the union between Southern and Northern Rhodesia and the creation of the United Federal Party (UFP) in 1953.⁷⁴ After a decade of involvement with the party Smith broke away and formed his own party to become the Rhodesian Front (RF) and, after a series of separations between his far-right ideas and the Prime Minister, Winston Field, the voting population made up only of white people as black people were excluded from voting, turned over the seat to Smith on 13 April 1964.⁷⁵

This was detrimental to the causes of decolonization, anti-racism, and anti-black

⁷² Ian Smith, *A Bit of a Rebel*, Film (2007; Buckinghamshire, England: Fine Claret Media, 2007)., Online, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=M_x9jRYU1JU.

⁷³ Modern name Shurugwi, Zimbabwe.

⁷⁴ “Ian Smith,” *The Times*, 21 November 2007, accessed 22 January 2013, <http://www.thetimes.co.uk/tto/opinion/obituaries/article2080500.ece>.

⁷⁵ A.P.J. Van Rensburg, *Contemporary Leaders of Africa*, (Cape Town, South Africa: HAUM, 1975), 317.

oppression on multiple fronts. Smith was ardently pro-status quo, and thus pro-white supremacy, in the most damaging of ways to the black population and all people of color in the country. Backed by the Rhodesian Front and the wealth of the large-scale farmers who made up a large portion of the party, he had great clout within Rhodesian politics and with whites in the country, who respected him and his 'nativity' greatly. He stated later in life that his motivations for separating from the former party and founding his own were due to his staunch commitment to the mission of colonialism. He wrote in 1997,

[The liberal party] have allowed themselves to be brainwashed by communist propaganda, which besmirched colonialism as suppression and exploitation... In reality, colonialism was the spread of Western Christian civilisation, with its commitment to education, health, justice and economic advancement into areas which were truly 'darkest Africa'..⁷⁶

Evident in this statement is his unwillingness to view the world from a different point of view, ethnocentrism to the highest degree, racism, classism, sexism, arrogance, and a refusal to accept the ideas and lived realities of those around him. His arrogance was not and should not be explained away as ignorance, for he was confronted with the truth by millions of individuals around the globe throughout his oppressive rule and by countries who refused to engage in international politics with Rhodesia because of such views.

There was never a time when he was in power that black people, in the SRANC, ZAPU, ZANLA, and ANC were not fighting against him. There were demonstrations in the US and the UK against his policies by regular citizens, and he was formally sanctioned by the

⁷⁶ Ian Smith, *Bitter Harvest: Zimbabwe and the Aftermath of its Independence*, (London: John Blake Publishing, Ltd., 2008), 144.

US, the UK, and the UN as president of a country gone rogue.⁷⁷ Such systemic beliefs were not abstract for the daily lives of black people in the country, however. His ideologies were enacted on an institutional level through the Unilateral Declaration of Independence (UDI) from the United Kingdom, which Smith declared on 11 November 1965.

The UDI was a direct result of the British government mandating majority rule in Rhodesia prior to sovereignty being granted to the state and given continued status in the Commonwealth. Precipitated by over a year of contention surrounding white minority rule in Rhodesia and the arrest of notable anti-regime leader Joshua Nkomo it was obvious to Smith and his RF followers that the UDI would not be welcomed by many in the country and abroad. The UDI's unpopularity resulted in the decision only six days prior to its issuance for a ninety day state of emergency to be declared which encompassed regulations such as "allow[ing] arrests without warrants; censorship of newspapers, magazines and photographs; control of meetings and people's movements; and the establishment of detention camps."⁷⁸ When, the next week, independence was declared from the United Kingdom Smith and his cabinet made clear what their reasons for doing so were: "...the people of Rhodesia have witnessed a process which is destructive of those very precepts upon which civilisation in a primitive country has been built, they have seen the principles of Western democracy, responsible government and

⁷⁷ "United Nations: Sanctions Against Rhodesia," *Time*, 23 December 1966, <http://www.time.com/time/magazine/article/0,9171,840760,00.html>.

⁷⁸ "State of Emergency Decreed in Rhodesia," *The Washington Post*, 6 November 1965, A19.

moral standards crumble elsewhere, nevertheless they have remained steadfast.”⁷⁹

Independence from the United Kingdom was declared by whites for whites in order to continue subjugating black people, it was not true national independence. National independence would have resulted in universal suffrage, universal rights, and improved living conditions for the majority of those living within the state boundaries.

While Smith was taught these racist beliefs as part of a long history of colonialism in his country and a process of ingraining ‘white-as-best’ thoughts into the very fabric of white Rhodesian society, he asserted them and set them into law, practice, and moral belief in a way that had not been done before in that country, largely taking a cue from South Africa’s government. To Smith it was unacceptable to mandate black majority rule because blacks were not capable of taking care of themselves and was unabashed and blatant about his belief in white supremacy, saying, “I don’t believe in black majority rule ever, not in a thousand years.”⁸⁰ Consistently Smith used words that were indicative of his worldview on people and race. In defending Rhodesia’s independence the UDI stated as a reason “That the government of the United Kingdom have thus demonstrated that they are not prepared to grant sovereign independence to Rhodesia on terms acceptable to the people of Rhodesia...”⁸¹ In this case ‘acceptability’ was determined by whites wanting to maintain their power over the rest of the population, and that the black people that made up the majority were, indeed, not person enough to engage on a level equivalent to those who were, in Ian Smith’s eyes, the real human beings. Hannah

⁷⁹ Unilateral Declaration of Independence, declared 11 November 1965, Salisbury, Rhodesia, http://en.wikisource.org/wiki/Unilateral_Declaration_of_Independence.

⁸⁰ Ian Smith, *Bitter Harvest*, ix.

⁸¹ Unilateral Declaration of Independence.

Arendt describes this as “...strengthen[ing] tremendously the new imperialist consciousness of a fundamental and not just a temporary, superiority of man over man, of the ‘higher’ over the ‘lower breeds.’”⁸²

This methodology of exclusion of black individuals from the status of human and from all forms of political participation was portrayed as inclusionary instead of exclusionary. Meritocracy was used as the reason for the exclusionary practices, with the rhetoric that the black population had not progressed and ‘performed’ in the way they needed to merit a voice in the political process. Smith became the figurehead of a paternalistic society that was caring for what white Rhodesians often referred to as ‘our black people’ and said he believed in Rhode’s famous dictum ‘equal rights for all civilised men.’⁸³ The so-called meritocracy he wanted to introduce, however, was still based on discrete and total exclusion of those classified as black from the federal political process in the new Constitution.⁸⁴

Marginalization of the black population was enshrined further in the Land Tenure Act of 1969, passed by the Rhodesian Legislature, which formed the basis of territorial segregation in Rhodesia. It provided “...for the classification of land in Rhodesia into a European Area, an African Area and a National Area” all of which were under the supervision of state governmental bodies of white men.⁸⁵ Tribal Trust Lands, which

⁸² Hannah Arendt, *The Origins of Totalitarianism*, (New York: Harvest Book, 1968), 130.

⁸³ Ian Smith, *Bitter Harvest*, 151.

⁸⁴ Rhodesian Constitution, 1969, section 86.1, http://www.worldstatesmen.org/Rhodesia_1969.pdf. The black population was permitted to participate in local elections of leaders in the Tribal Trust Lands and designated African Areas.

⁸⁵ Land Tenure Act, 1969, section 1, http://www.worldstatesmen.org/Rhodesia_1969.pdf.

provided a designated space for Shona and Ndebele Peoples to live, had historically been a measure of ghettoizing in Rhodesia through the Land Apportionment Act of 1930. This not only separated the Indigenous Peoples from the white population via Tribal Trust Lands, but forced urban blacks into townships on the borders of cities that were designated as whites-only. While the Land Apportionment Act of 1930 began the process of segregation, the Land Tenure Act cemented it and furthered marginalization by, for the first time in state laws, referring to whites as Europeans and blacks as Africans.⁸⁶ This resulted in a homogenization of culture and color for both groups of people, which historically had varied cultural backgrounds, languages, and practices.

While Smith may have been aligned with Rhodesia first, he was the Prime Minister to hallow the Europeanization of the white population in an implicit effort to subjugate the black population even further by homogenizing both. Furthermore, through the process of Europeanization he was able to paint more distinct lines between the once more governmentally-recognized varied racial and cultural groups in order to further his cause of showing the struggle between the groups as an end-of-the-world battle between right and wrong, ‘civilized’ and ‘uncivilized’, modern and savage.⁸⁷ This was not done carelessly, rather the new racial classifications were embedded into every part of the new country’s structure in a way that ingrained within the minds of most of the white population that there was something different, better, about their bodies than those who they ‘shared’ the country with. Whiteness, and white consciousness, then, was based on feeling supreme to people of color. Relative separation was a policy in Rhodesia

⁸⁶ See the Land Tenure Act, 1930.

⁸⁷ Jonathan Hallowell, *Britain Since 1945*, (New York: John Wiley & Sons, 2008), 75.

throughout its history but, beginning in 1965, the Parliament passed laws to eliminate the rights of blacks in the country and solidify white supremacy. These included forbidding black people to travel outside the country unless such travel was approved by a white civil servant, forcing all blacks over the age of sixteen to carry an identity pass under penalty of fine and jail time, reinforcing the segregation of public swimming pools, barring blacks from moving to white urban areas unless they have jobs or special permits, preventing black people from being served food and drink in white areas, and declaring white areas as “Europeanized” in order to prevent the “infiltration” of Asians, blacks, and coloureds.⁸⁸

Under these new laws a white person was officially labeled as European, a black person as Native, and those with mixed backgrounds or of Indian descent as Coloured. The categorization of groups based exclusively on the color of skin was done purposefully to hierarchize the population.⁸⁹ European, the supreme group designated by a status of white skin, was associated with the culture, civilization, education, righteousness, and rightness. Native, the ‘undesirable’ category based on blackness was associated with savagery, childishness, incapacity, wickedness, and wrongness.⁹⁰ Those who were Coloured were cast out as shameful for both their races – a group undefined and muddled and, because of creating impurity for both groups, was also less capable.⁹¹ These delineations were based solely on color. They were not rooted in any sort of cultural or heritage distinctions; those who were black but from the United Kingdom

⁸⁸ “RHODESIA: Apartheid Edges North,” *Time*, 1 January 1973, <http://www.time.com/time/magazine/article/0,9171,903639,00.html>.

⁸⁹ *Ibid.*

⁹⁰ Said, 204.

⁹¹ Mushonga, 4-5.

were considered Native and those who were white but lived on the continent for hundreds of years were European. All that mattered to the government was skin. Nothing else.

In a poem written by Rui Knopfli, a Portuguese writer who lived most his life in Mozambique, he writes the feelings that, for him, came with such a categorization.

European, they tell me.
I'm infected with European
literature and doctrine
and they call me European.

I don't know if what I write is rooted in some
European thought.
It's likely...No. It's for sure,
but I'm African.
My heart beats to the doleful rhythm
of this light and this languor.
I carry in my blood a wide expanse of
geographic coordinates and the Indian Ocean,
Roses say nothing to me,
I'm married more to the coarseness of the acacias
and to the long silence and purple of evenings
with cries of strange birds.

So you call me European? Fine, I'll be quiet.
But within me there are arid savannas
and endless plains
with one, languid and sinuous rivers,
a ribbon of vertical smoke,
a black man and a crackling guitar.⁹²

While Knopfli was not a white Rhodesian, his feelings of unity with the land where he lived, and the colonial culture of that land are synonymous with the experiences of most white settlers in Rhodesia.⁹³ There was and is very little alliance to Europe by those who

⁹² Rui Knopfli, "Nacionalidade," in *Poets of Mozambique: A Bilingual Anthology*, ed. Frederick G. Williams, (New York: Luso-Brazilian Books, 2006), 240.

⁹³ See Douglas Rogers, *The Last Resort*, (New York: Broadway, 2010).; Alexandra Fuller, *Scribbling the Cat: Travels with an African Soldier*, (New York: Penguin Books, 2005).; Peter Godwin, *Mukiwa: A White Boy in Africa*, (New York: Grove Press, 2004).

were born or grew up in Rhodesia, and thus there is no place for them abroad. Simultaneously there is no space for them in the lands they consider home because of the destructiveness of colonialism on the relations between whites and the Native population. Where does belonging come into play when the only place many white Europeans, like Knopfli, feel they belong is based on a premise of hegemonic control of institutions by the white minority? While Knopfli may have decided it was okay to “be quiet,”⁹⁴ most white Rhodesians decided that in order to keep their sense of belonging in the country they needed to fight for the supremacy upon which it was built.⁹⁵

For Ian Smith and those in the Rhodesian Front parliament making the new nationality and racial categorization laws what the laws meant for white people and black people in the system were largely ignored or not understood. The laws they made impacted what those with certain pigmentations were allowed and forbidden to do and greatly impacted the formation of the image of oneself and the ‘other.’ This was purposeful, and intentional. Purposeful, in that it provided the white population with a self-image of being greater than the other and thus perpetuated the colonial system that had placed them in positions of powers solely based on their birthrights. Intentional in that Ian Smith, as Prime Minister, and his Cabinet created the state of Rhodesia in a specific way as to prohibit the mandatory creation of a majority-rule state as the British had prescribed. This necessitated the continued institutionalized and systematic subjugation of black people.⁹⁶

Knopfli speaks of being “infected with European literature and doctrine,” another

⁹⁴ Knopfli, 240.

⁹⁵ McDermott Hughes, 85.

⁹⁶ Unilateral Declaration of Independence.

element of existing white consciousness.⁹⁷ This was one of the methods of indoctrination and homogenization of the white and black populations. It was essential, as evidenced by Smith's assessment of colonization following the independence of Zimbabwe, for the neo-colonial regime following the UDI to create a Europeanized Africa. Europeanization signified the eliminating of the culture of the indigenous people, the snuffing out of their ideologies, the crushing of their ways of, the delegitimizing of their faiths, their extermination via their treatment as animals instead of people. Fanon describes this process, of labeling the black folks as less than and whites as more than;

“Inferiorization is the native correlative to the European's feeling of superiority. Let us have the courage to say: It is the racist who creates the inferiorized... The black man has no ontological resistance in the eyes of the white man. From one day to the next, the Blacks have had to deal with two systems of reference. Their metaphysics, or less pretentiously their customs and the agencies to which they refer, were abolished because they were in contradiction with a new civilization that imposed its own. In the twentieth century the black man on his home territory is oblivious of the moment when his inferiority is determined by the Other.”⁹⁸

A person cannot be made to feel inferior without another made to feel superior. It is the sick balance of colonization and imperialism, one that creates, fabricates, and weaves systems of identity for entire populations. The construction of identity from the outside in is one that only fosters negative results for humanity. Oppression resulting from supremacization is bad for most of society, even those who are assembled as supreme, because oppression suffocates even those who are seemingly lifted by it. Growth for the elite is limited when so much energy is placed on suppressing others. For whites in Rhodesia this meant creating an image of the white man as essentially European in custom and culture, tying their roots back to the Continent from whence they came.

⁹⁷ Knopfli, 240.

⁹⁸ Fanon, 73 & 90.

Paulo Freire describes the phenomena of supremacization and inferiorization, writing, “Once a situation of violence and oppression has been established, it engenders an entire way of life and behavior for those caught up in it – oppressors and oppressed alike.”⁹⁹ White supremacist regimes are built on societies where violence permeates every sector; in Rhodesia’s case this violence began with the ‘necessary’ policing of the streets to prevent ‘terrorists’ from harming the communities (which of course meant white communities). For the whites living in the cities the struggle between black and white was not only displayed as such, it was portrayed as a struggle for the survival of the entire country – blacks and whites – for which violence and control was necessary to ensure victory by the ruling party.¹⁰⁰ Freire continues in his analysis, writing, “Both are submerged in this situation, and both bear the marks of oppression... This violence, as a process, is perpetuated from generation to generation of oppressors, who become its heirs and are shaped in its climate. This climate creates in the oppressor a strongly possessive consciousness – possessive of the world and of men and women.”¹⁰¹ This legacy of oppression, of the formulation of oppressors, in Rhodesia made its particular mark on the generation that came up following the UDI and the abolition of South Rhodesia via that unilateral decision made by Smith and his cabinet. For those who grew up in this new era of so-called independence the totalitarian nature of the government resulted in their entire worldview being formed by the media they were permitted to intake and the school lessons they were taught by those who bought into the benefits of colonialism..

⁹⁹ Paulo Freire, *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, (New York: Continuum, 2006), 58.

¹⁰⁰ This is gained from discussions with my family members as well as information gained from the Facebook group, “Rhodesian’s Worldwide,” <https://www.facebook.com/rhodesiansworldwide?fref=ts>.

¹⁰¹ Freire, 58.

The systematic measures to infuse white supremacy and colonial domination into Rhodesian society were seen everywhere via propaganda in visual media, leaflets, newspapers, and pamphlets. In newspapers across the country, most notably *The Rhodesian Herald* and *The Bulawayo Chronicle*, censorship after the UDI was shamelessly imposed by the government. Those in power vehemently defended censorship as necessary during Rhodesia's state of emergency. They argued that censorship was elemental in winning the fight against black nationalists. Large white spaces in the papers where the government had edited certain stories, or sections of stories, as inappropriate to be viewed by the public marked the government's interventions into the freedom of the press. Editing in this manner was portrayed as essential to maintain the purity and righteousness of the Rhodesian white population, to preserve white people's spotlessness from the evils of sexuality and liberation and pornography that the rest of the world had fallen victim to in their dirtied, fallen states.¹⁰²

Pieter van der Byl, of the information department orchestrated the censorship in Rhodesia, and was described as "a fanatical right-wing extremist" whose tactics "bore a striking resemblance to that of the Nazis during the declining years of the Weimar Republic."¹⁰³ His workmanship is seen below, where the white blank spaces in the front page of the Rhodesia Herald newspaper indicate immediate censorship by the government – even one day after 'independence' from the UK. Unlike the Nazis, who chose Jews as the scapegoats for their national problems, van der Byl and other members of the Rhodesian Front, including Smith, chose black people along with organizations

¹⁰² Elaine Windrich, "Rhodesian Censorship: The Role of the Media in the Making of a One-Party State," *African Affairs*, 78.313 (October 1979): 527.

¹⁰³ *Ibid.*, 525.

who supported their cause of equality. Included was any group that spoke against Rhodesia, which consisted of the United Nations, the BBC, communists (which was often if not always conflated with black nationalism), the left press, and the Anti-Apartheid Movement. In one letter to the *Rhodesia Herald* an anonymous writer stated their perception of the censorship movement pioneered by the Rhodesian Front members: “...[Mr. van der Byl] must advocate a Goebbels type of press control where the party (or the government) says what is right and the press and everybody else follows along.”¹⁰⁴ The brand of censorship in Rhodesia was under the premise that whites, the Rhodesian Front, the Rhodesian state as a whole was, in fact, the oppressed and not the oppressors. It was under this guise that so many whites bought into the increasingly totalitarian state construct that defined their identities through the institutionalization of their power.



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The Rhodesia Herald Newspaper, first day of publication following Ian Smith’s UDI.

¹⁰⁴ Reeking-Run-To-Seed-Liberal, *Rhodesia Herald*, 2 June 1964.

¹⁰⁵ Rhodesia Herald front page, 12 November 1965. Breakwell Family personal collection.

Hannah Arendt describes the process of buying into the totalitarian state as one “of class struggle on the one hand and rampant jingoism on the other...in actual terms of the oppressed fighting their oppressors.”¹⁰⁶ In order for totalitarianism to take hold in a country it is necessary for those in power to create an atmosphere of ‘life or death’ struggles, one that pits the scapegoated group against the rest in a battle for survival. This allows the totalitarian rulers to portray the oppressors, the subjugators, as the oppressed and the strugglers, thus justifying their terrible treatment of those who are actually oppressed. The Rhodesian Front represented the struggle for white rule as one where what was at stake was their own race, their nationhood, their sustainability as an economy rather than what it really was – a struggle to maintain colonialism when their colonial power were swept more easily by the “winds of change.” Rhodes, for whom after the nation was named, said, “Expansion is everything...these stars...these vast worlds which we can never reach. I would annex the planets if I could.”¹⁰⁷ Expansionism was the worldview that pervaded every word, every action of Smith.¹⁰⁸ Colonialism, imperialism, conquest, domination were the lenses through which he viewed the world and the people who lived in it – especially the people who he viewed as different, less than him. Imperialist consciousness was, and is, composed of a

¹⁰⁶ Hannah Arendt, *The Origins of Totalitarianism*, (New York: Harvest Books, 1968), 118. While in her analysis Arendt is speaking to the case of Jews in France, her themes in *The Origins of Totalitarianism* were meant to transcend her one work of historical analysis and thus I felt they particularly applied to this creation of a totalitarian state, even though it is in a Southern African, rather than European, context.

¹⁰⁷ S. Gertrude Millin, (*Cecil Rhodes*, London: Grosset & Dunlap, 1993), 138.

¹⁰⁸ See Smith, *Bitter Harvest.*; Smith, “A Bit of a Rebel,”; Alan Cowell, “Ian Smith, Defiant Symbol of White Rule in Africa, Is Dead at 88,” *New York Times*, 21 November 2007, http://www.nytimes.com/2007/11/21/world/africa/21smith.html?pagewanted=all&_r=0.

fundamental understanding of the world as hierarchized into higher over lower breeds of human beings.¹⁰⁹

When perpetuating this worldview for the population it is essential for a state to control everything that is fed into the minds of its population. This results in both those privileged by the system perpetuating it, as well as those who are made superfluous by it. Audre Lorde explains this, writing, “For we have, built into all of us, old blueprints of expectation and response, old structure of oppression...”¹¹⁰ The construction of higher over lower breeds of humans is certainly not inherent to the human psyche, but only a learned phenomenon that becomes easy for many to accept when they are privileged by this type of hierarchical system. This was the case for whites in Rhodesia, and is so for most white Zimbabweans now.¹¹¹

There was uniformity to the experience that totalitarianism dictated for whites in Rhodesia. The spectrum on which whites were experiencing the totalitarian state varied, but for the general population this continuum was incredibly limited by the knowledge they were permitted to access and by their own family’s interpretations of any outside information that somehow managed to leak in. Some completely bought into the colonial mindset in a particularly overt racist way, believing those with black skin to be an

¹⁰⁹ The continued nature of this stratification is something that I am incredibly interested in, however have only but a limited space to explore. While it will be explored later in this research it will certainly be given its more deserved attention in later research endeavors.

¹¹⁰ Audre Lorde, “Age, Race, Class, and Sex,” (presented paper, Copeland Colloquium, Amherst College, Amherst, MA, April 1980).

¹¹¹ Taken from Rhodesian Worldwide Facebook page, websites such as www.newzimbabwe.com, films such as *Mugabe and the White African*, Film, directed by Lucy Bailey and Andrew Thompson (2009; UK: Brit Films, 2009.), DVD., and newspaper articles such as “Mike Campbell, white Zimbabwean farmer, dies,” *The BBC* (London, England), 8 April 2011.

inherently inferior group so dehumanized to the point where, in all actuality, people of color and especially dark people of color were not thought of as people at all. Others, albeit an incredible few, fought ardently against the propaganda pushed out by Smith's regime and knew, whether through knowledge gained from family or in travels, that the regime was racist, that they were not trying to protect the country against the evils of communism supported by black radicalists, and that colonialism was a terrible and traumatizing historical project. One of these few, Peter Godwin, is now a foreign correspondent focusing on human rights issues, grew up in Southern Rhodesia with liberal parents who worked to undermine the Smith government by participating in the opposing political party, the Rhodesian Action Party. They sought to amend the constitution that Smith put in place by creating universal suffrage within Rhodesia, and were influenced by his mother's work as a community doctor and his father's history as a child of a Holocaust survivor.¹¹²

My family was one that fell somewhere in the middle between fighting against the system and surrendering their minds to the state apparatus. My mother, who was twenty-one before she left her country of birth was limited in her knowledge as to the true construction of the state in which she lived and was encompassed. It was in this context that she was taught that black was not only less than white, but that black was more dangerous than white. Her first memories of interacting with people of color outside her home was running across the street when a group of black men exited a bus after a long day of work because she was frightened of their presence. This kind of panic was not

¹¹² Godwin, 197.

inherent in her, but she was taught to “fear black bodies, especially the bodies of men.”¹¹³

This was something, once again, that the media completely controlled. The terror she experienced when a group of black men were near her was only a microcosmic specific incident that resulted from a colonial history that taught white women to fear black men.

Speaking on the subjugation of black people Cornel West said,

“White supremacist ideology is based first and foremost on the degradation of black bodies in order to control them. One of the best ways to instill fear in people is to terrorize them. Yet this fear is best sustained by convincing them that their bodies are ugly, their intellect is inherently underdeveloped, their culture is less civilized, and their future warrants less concern than that of other peoples.”¹¹⁴

The degradation and fear of black bodies among white Zimbabweans is based in a movement in the early twentieth century within that country. It was at this time that fear of black bodies, specifically black men’s bodies, was institutionalized via the codification of the criminalization of black sexuality (particularly that focused towards white women’s bodies). This is the historical setting for my mother’s terror at seeing a group of black men. Her terror began before she was even born and could only be eliminated through fierce decolonization of her mind or by parents who knew of the inaccuracies and oppressions of portraying black men in that way.

‘Black peril’ crimes in Southern Rhodesia formally began in 1903 with the Criminal Law Amendment Ordinance, which punished rape and attempted rape with the death sentence, and the Immorality Suppression Ordinance, No.9, which made those who

¹¹³ Within this thesis I will consistently be quoting Jeanette Nielsen, my mother, from previous conversations we have had throughout my young adult life. None were conducted as formal interviews, but rather during casual conversations we have had about her identity and our family history in Southern Africa as a whole. Because I am an avid journal keeper these dialogues were recorded during, and following, our conversations. Wherever she is quoted, I will put the date, if it is specified in the entry.

¹¹⁴ Cornel West, *Race Matters*, (Boston, MA: Beacon Press, 1993), 85.

had consensual illicit (outside marriage) sexual contact with white women or girls punishable with hard labor.¹¹⁵ The state and press became consumed with this category of crime, which “included indecent assault, acts, or overtures, and the molesting of women for the purpose of exciting or satisfying ‘bestial desires.’”¹¹⁶ Despite the lack of actual rape against white women by black men in such drastic numbers as was being reported there was a decade-long overt moral panic that arose from these pretended attacks against the virtuous white woman, and a continued and more nuanced fear of black sexuality and black men’s sexuality in general that persisted throughout colonialism. In 1930, W. Bazeley, the Native Commissioner for Southern Rhodesia, stated “...the average male native has strong sexual passions...in most ‘Black Peril’ cases, and in nearly all cases of *criminal injuriae*, the culprit is or has been, a domestic servant.”¹¹⁷ There was a perception of the oversexualized man, with no ability to control these impulses, and thus the white pure woman, who was void of sexuality and defense would become the automatic victim. Writing on the negrophobia of white women, Frantz Fanon wrote, “white women...made evasive, shrinking gestures, their faces expressing a genuine fear [when encountering black men].”¹¹⁸

There is within the oppression, dehumanization, and bestialization of the black man’s personhood an objectification of the white woman as only a sexual object rather than a human being with agency. Within ‘black peril’ there was purposeful construction

¹¹⁵ John Pape, “Black and White: The ‘Perils of Sex’ in Colonial Zimbabwe,” *Journal of Southern African Studies*, 16.4 (December 1990), 703.

¹¹⁶ Jock McCulloch, *Black Peril, White Virtue: Sexual Crime in Southern Rhodesia, 1902-1935*, (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 2000), 18.

¹¹⁷ National Archives of Zimbabwe File S 235/475, *Report of the Departmental Committee on Native Female Labour, 1932*, 43.

¹¹⁸ Fanon, 134-135.

of the sexual and violent black man but there was also the construction of the submissive, defenseless woman whose only role for all men (not just black) was as a potential sexual partner. The difference between these constructions, however, is that one was vilified and another idealized in society even though both led to the oppression of agency for individuals within these groups. Both bodies were being attacked, but in different ways. The woman's body was attacked in that it was perceived as a sexual receptacle, a body that existed for two purposes: chastity and service. "But the black man is attacked in his corporeality. It is his tangible personality that is lynched. It is his actual being that is dangerous."¹¹⁹ When the personhood of an entire population is condemned based on physical features that can generally be unchanged it is difficult to undo the trauma that places into society. For the black man, this results in double consciousness, for the white woman this results in what seems to be a 'gut instinct' of fear upon seeing a black man, but is actually a societally taught alarm at any man with black skin.

This resulting alarm that arose in my mother at this corner bus stop was complicated since her fear of these black men was rooted not only in their color but her perception of them as men. Drawing this distinction is critical in understanding the layered complexities of racism within Rhodesia because not all was based off equivalent specific notions of black bodies other than their positionality as less than white. Most white people, including my mother, were surrounded by black people every day within their homes and when running errands. Why were these black individuals less menacing than those men who were returning from hard labor that day? Why were these black individuals accepted in certain realms of white society? These individuals were the

¹¹⁹Fanon, 142.

maids, the nannies, the gardeners, the cooks, the waiters, the cab drivers, the guards, the housekeepers, the black people who were involved in the daily goings on of white lives in Rhodesia. Their acceptability and humanity in the eyes of white Rhodesians was based on their usefulness to their white families and was guided by paternalistic racism focused on rearing them into white ways by incorporating them into white homes.

My mother knows this paternalism well, as the government and her parents taught it to her. It still pervades her psyche to this day. She writes,

“I was visiting my oldest daughter in Virginia. We had been out shopping and were on our way home. It’s August, hot as Hades, and there, stopped on the median, was an Ice-cream Boy!

I yelled out, ‘Hooray, look, it’s an Ice-cream Boy!’
‘Except he’s more like an Ice-cream Man, mommy,’ observed Kimi.

Ice-cream Boy. Why on earth we named the men who roamed our neighborhoods on sweltering African summer days, selling scrumptious ice-lollies, Honey Beats...was beyond me. Until I thought about it...

Over thirty years after her departure from Zimbabwe my mother still refers to those in service professions as “boys” or “girls.” This comes directly from her subconscious view of black people, especially black people working for white people, as occupying the same social and intellectual level as the Victorian model of children. These black workers are seen as mischievous, yet harmless, human beings who have limited intellectual capabilities. She continues,

I grew up with house servants...

My parents were not the norm amongst families in Rhodesia. We did have someone who worked for us all my growing up years. It was usually a male and my mom never, ever had a nanny for us...The men who worked for us are well remembered and with great fondness. Rinus ran off a burglar who was trying to

fish things out of my bedroom window. Linus was an amazing [sic] gardner. Johanness had nicknames for us... Generally, we were referred to as picanninny missus or picanniny baas. Weird when you consider we were being referred to as missus or boss by adults to whom we should be referring to as Mr. or Mrs. And then their last name.”¹²⁰

There was a presumption by whites onto their black workers as to what they needed.

They needed Western education, Western medicine, Western standards of living that were focused on consumerism, Western religions, Western philosophies, Western culture in order to have their quality of life measure to what it should be. There was a belief that black people wanted and needed these things in order to ‘better’ their lives, which resulted in massive attempted deculturization. White people and white society wanted to rid the black people of their native cultures and ways, including shaming the use of natural medicine and local healers and participating in traditional ceremonies. W.E.B. DuBois expressed frustration that, “again, through the efforts of our best friends [Negroes should] be compelled to have our wants and aspirations interpreted by a person who cannot understand them.”¹²¹ For my mother’s family this meant that they were providing the black worker a ‘better’ life than he or she would have otherwise.

While my mother’s house servants, as she called them, had good standards of living and lives in comparison to many house servants and workers throughout Rhodesia it became evident that such an interpretation of their lives being good was untrue. Their struggle for emancipation, that resulted in great numbers of deaths and significant suffering and trauma was based on an understanding of their inequality before the law

¹²⁰ Jeanette, “Tikki, Johannes, Jameson...”, *Stirring the Pot: Observations on the myths of my life*, 23 August 2012, <http://muffstirsthepot.blogspot.com/2012/08/i-was-visiting-my-oldestdaughter-in.html>.

¹²¹ John B. Kirby, *Black Americans in the Roosevelt Era: Liberalism and Race*, (Knoxville, TN: University of Tennessee Press, 1980), 19.

and in the minds of white Rhodesians. There were three men who worked in my mother's home as she was growing up that she remembers especially well, and with fondness: Tikki, Johannes, and Jameson Chinaka. Tikki, who worked for my mother's family for twelve years, the longest of any of their house servants, was not even known by his real name. Tikki, which was the word for money, was the English name given to him either by his parents or himself.

The stripping of a name and the taking on of the master's language is an important process in subordination of a person, individually, and a People.¹²² Peter Godwin, a white Zimbabwean, writes, "Older Africans, whose parents couldn't speak English, tended to have an arbitrary English word as a name. They believed that having a name in the white man's language would attract the white man's power."¹²³ Whether those who took on English names were doing so to "attract white man's power" is inconclusive, but the taking on of an English name signifies an important psychological break in the colonization process. It is at this point that the subject acquiesces something so linked to identity with the master's identity and when the master, and those who occupy positionalities of master see those that have been subjugated as willingly participating in colonization. There is no thought to the reality that agency is so incredibly limited when such changes are made with the threat of violence, of imprisonment, of physical and emotional destruction of life hangs over your head.

Tikki's situation was further complicated by his status as an immigrant, for Rhodesia was not his true home. He had gone there to escape the ravages of successive

¹²² Fanon, 1-24.

¹²³ Peter Godwin, *Mukiwa: A White Boy in Africa*, (New York: Grove Press, 1996), 23-24.

wars in Mozambique, Rhodesia's neighbor to the East, which had left thousands displaced by the time he came to work for my mother's family in Salisbury (modern-day Harare). Writing of him, my mother says:

“And Tikki. Tikki worked for our family for the longest. He was a small, slightly built, very dark man from Mozambique. He was very meticulous in his person and could make the most amazing roast potatoes... Tikki had a wife, though she didn't live with him....Tikki owned more suits than my dad, which we found very amusing. He could be seen strutting down the driveway, suit on, umbrella in hand, off to do whatever he did once he left our house. He was quite the character!”¹²⁴

My mother knew nothing of Tikki's actual life, which meant that her relationship to him was built off his service to her and her family. When I questioned her as to the living situation of his wife, if he had any children, and what his history was in Mozambique she had no answers. She remembered his cheery personality, yes, and his delicious roasted potatoes, but she had no idea who he actually was because he was not significant enough as a person for her to view him as having a life apart from his role in hers. She lived with him for twelve years and really knows nothing about him. Instead, what she remembers are her warm feelings toward him and as a man who had more apparent wealth than her father, who hired him.

What stuck out most to my mom is not unique – if Tikki had worn pants and a ragged t-shirt to work, would she have commented on his style? Most likely not, as her descriptions of her other two house workers never included their dress. Tikki's, however, was assessed by her as so much nicer that she felt it merited noting how she described who he was. This in no way is meant to trivialize the love she had for a man

¹²⁴ Jeanette Nielsen, 23 August 2012.

that was involved in her life from 1970 until she left for the United States, only to frame how deep the love could be when it was based off matters that, looking back, seem trivial even to her. The impact Tikki had in their lives was real, and my mother and my grandparents were terribly upset when he became ill. My mother writes,

“Tikki got sick after I left home and ended up dying in his kaya at our house. He had become sick over time and my parents sent him to the hospital. He was in the hospital for a while, was sent home and was improving, but his wife, who suddenly appeared one day, sent for the Nganga (witch doctor). The Nganga left some muti (medicine) in a Coke bottle for Tikki. A couple days later he died. My mom and dad paid for his burial so that he wouldn't be sent to potter's field.”¹²⁵

Their genuine care for him is evident in their treatment of him, yes, but more so in their burial of him. Treatment of a house worker could be equated with not wanting to go through the trouble of finding another, while paying for a burial in an area where his family wanted him to be was a sign of respect and love. He never did return to Mozambique, however, even in death.

My mother's relationship and feelings towards Tikki in comparison with the men at the bus stop is indicative of the complexity of racism in Zimbabwe and the construction of whiteness there. The resulting discord and dissonance that exists due to the fluidity of internalized racism is difficult to articulate within collective histories. Her disparate reactions are also indicative of the government's incredible ability to build society on multiple levels of racism, and thus permeate the mind's of those within the nation-state with multiple levels of racism – ever more effective in spread colonization of both the minds of the oppressed and those privileged by the system. When speaking about Rhodesia, and about white Rhodesians, I have found it more appropriate to talk

¹²⁵Jeanette Nielsen, 23 August 2012.

about racisms within the country rather than one racism. There's biological racism, subconscious racism, intentional racism, unintentional racism, racism resulting from coldness and apathy, racism rooted in nativism, racism rooted in jingoism, overt racism, institutionalized racism, racism in reserving the best of oneself, one's kindnesses for those who share one's particular group. These forms of racism all interact with the individual on a personalized level while concurrently interacting with the systems that those individuals compose. This makes it ever more clear to visualize the construction of whiteness as one that reinforces and encourages racism as a clear component of what it means to be white. Being white necessitates the forced exclusion of others from that same category; it requires the ability to cast off those not part of being white into a place where they can either be ignored or used as commodities to benefit the whites.¹²⁶

As white people in Rhodesia continued to engage in these two activities that were constantly in dialogue with one another, exclusion and commodification, the combination of both resulted in another element of white identity – making superfluous the bodies of black people. In every sense black people in Rhodesia were *homo sacer*, a political and social status described by Giorgio Agamben meaning “the sacred man” and was an individual in Roman law who could be banned or killed, but not sacrificed.¹²⁷ Agamben distinguishes between individuals who are bare life, *zoē*, or those who are able to actively participate in society, *bios*. In this distinction is an understanding that what qualifies personhood is the ability to act as a political agent in some form or another with the given agency by the state to do so. There is, as an essential component of humanity, the ability

¹²⁶ Delgado and Stefancic, 30.

¹²⁷ Giorgio Agamben, *Homo Sacer: Sovereign Power and Bare Life*, (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1998), 72.

to exchange ideas and act for ones own destiny, by representative or directly. In Hannah Arendt's words, "Its [speech] loss entails the loss of the relevance of speech...and the loss of all human relationship... the loss of a community willing and able to guarantee any rights whatsoever."¹²⁸ For black people within Rhodesia there was no opportunity to have relevant speech, as it was determined insignificant by the community that held power, and this became a hallmark of the colonization process in Rhodesia. Making unimportant their ideas by making them irrelevant to the construction of the government and society which ruled them enforced their dehumanization within the social strata and positioned them at the very bottom.

It is in the absence of meaningful discourse among citizens where each participant's views are listened to and considered valid, or even a community that believes all members are capable of such discourse that the ultimate destruction of rights occurs and tyranny and domination envelopes all. Doubtless the black population felt this in a daily-lived condition that was incredibly evident to them and to those watching the institutionalization of the racisms targeted towards their bodies and was traumatic, personally and historically, for these people. What is little spoken of, however, is the absolutely destructive nature such a community inherently possesses for everyone's lives, for those who are not in direct positions of political or social power. As Freire noted, "Reality which becomes oppressive results in the contradistinction of men as oppressors and oppressed,"¹²⁹ it is often the case that human beings throughout the world are inhabiting positions of both oppressor and oppressed. One may dominate their lives the

¹²⁸ Arendt, 297.

¹²⁹ Freire, 51.

majority of the time, but their identities in both of these interplay depending on the circumstance. This is why it is crucial to recognize that, "...we cannot say that in the process of revolution someone liberates someone else, nor yet that someone liberates himself, but rather than human beings in communion liberate each other."¹³⁰ Oppression hurts almost everyone and an oppressive government is painful and traumatizing to all who are born into it or arrive into it via other means.

What made the Rhodesian state so unique is its creation of whites who were *bios* in their own minds, because the state dictated such, while in reality the majority of whites were *zoē*. There was little agency, political or otherwise, given to the white population, but because they thought they had such agency, that they were free in the country they were certainly privileged by, they actively participated in the underpinnings of creating a superfluous black population. Speaking of growing up in wartime Rhodesia, my mother talked of how they only got television in 1972, that it was only on for five hours at night, in black and white, and that it was old shows from the fifties. There were curfews. There were certain days that they could drive and others they could not. There were rations. There were travel restrictions. There were identity checks. There was censorship in their films. There were purse checks. There were censored letters from family. There were teachers who were fired for supporting majority rule. There were army men armed with machine guns on every street corner. There were bomb raids. There were bombs. There was complete control of her world.

The only information about Rhodesia was on the nightly state news, or through the BBC if the family was obstinate enough to tune in surreptitiously; my mother's

¹³⁰Freire, 114.

family was not one that did. Whenever information leaked in from the outside, when economic sanctions against the state were discussed by these sources the state was quick to correct whatever could potentially disarm the public's vision of Rhodesia in a certain way. The government portrayed economic sanctions as an attack on their sovereignty and their ability to exercise state agency in a particular capitalist way, the black freedom fighters as terrorists who were raping women and mercilessly destroying villages and wanted to criminalize and imprison whites for no reason, the UK as a royalist dictatorship, and South Africa as the stalwarts of democracy, freedom, and righteous upholders of tradition in Southern Africa. Without the internet, inside a country ravaged by war, landlocked by other war-torn nations and an Apartheid South Africa it is not difficult to see how believing in a system that told its white citizens their lives, their safety and security, depended on trusting the government that privileged them would be easier than fighting against something that was wrong and that felt wrong for so many when looking back.¹³¹

Rationalization of character is an essential component to maintaining whiteness and holding onto the white consciousness of privilege. When the humanity of those who you have dehumanized, intentionally or otherwise, persists in evidencing itself in your daily observations it becomes more and more difficult to treat those human beings as less than such without it. Part of this results from a desire to separate oneself from any notion of responsibility from the world you find yourself living in. While there is some truth to being born into a certain place and time with no choice, as Arendt so aptly addressed, "...racism [is] the very realistic, if very destructive, way of escaping this predicament of

¹³¹ Windrich, 530-534.

common responsibility.”¹³² Part of eliminating any sense of responsibility for the conditions in which racism and imperialism had violently thrust so many into was also a creation of the duty white men and women had to educate, to lift up, to better the black man and woman. It was the necessary project of imperialism to justify their savage actions by claiming devotion to God’s work on Earth. The easiest and fastest way for the system and for the individuals in the system to substantiate their claims to the land and the people on it was through moral compulsion.¹³³

My mother remembers being taught in class of the discovery of Rhodesia by Cecil Rhodes, of his coming upon savage beasts in human form in his newfound country and feeling compelled to offer British civilization and culture and upbringing to those in this darkest of places. Many classes were taught by religious figures in the Episcopalian or Anglican churches who justified their missions in Rhodesia with the necessity of bringing God to the heathen – a nineteenth and twentieth century iteration of the missions of South and Central America. The next part of the lesson, however, was to show the relative educational and intellectual success of one or two black members of society who, despite the obstacles that were not spoken of to the students, had risen to some station as a police officer or guard – a protector of the state that oppressed the majority. Commonly thought of as the whites providing a better life for the blacks, this protectorate view of colonialism was viewed as noble by most whites. What the government said, that only merit should allow black people to rise in the ranks, was determined on Westernized notions of what should be considered successful and even when a black person proved so

¹³² Arendt, 236.

¹³³ McDermott Hughes, 37 & 83.

and performed in the specific ways necessary whites were still preferred and given the positions of power. Why? Because exclusion and oppression, regardless of merit, was, and is, the primary aspect of whiteness in Zimbabwe.

Chapter 5

AN INCOMPLETE STORY

In many ways, this is an incomplete story, as it is the nature of any autoethnography. How does a nation of people move past such purposeful institutionalized methodologies of hatred, exclusion, superfluity, and dehumanization? Is there a means by which healing can come from hundreds of years of physical, emotional, spiritual, and cultural violence where one population was told, repeatedly and through various scopes of indoctrination that their ways were better because their skin was lighter? While difficult, I think moving past white supremacist thoughts and forming new systems of being is possible. There is a way for whites to come to an individual consciousness of their own positionality as oppressor, regardless of their intentions or lack thereof. My mother, a white woman who identifies as African, struggles with that identity on a daily basis. One of the privileges of the privileged is that, because society cares about you, you are not required into feeling your race every moment of every day. Either, as a privileged white person, you must come to think about your identity on your own, or be pushed into doing so by others who have begun their decolonization process.

For my mom it was the second. In writing her thoughts in the beginnings of this self-transformation that is never really complete, she said,

I'm doing this more for myself than for anyone else. I have so many thoughts swirling around my mind as of late that I feel blogging about them is my only vehicle. Why now? Well, I can blame my youngest daughter for that.¹³⁴

Through years of discussion with my mom about her background, I finally began the

¹³⁴ Jeanette Nielsen, "Why on earth would you DO that?," *Muff Stirs the Pot*, 7 August 2012, <http://muffstirsthepot.blogspot.com/why-on-earth-would-you-do-that.html>

process of questioning her identity and what it was constructed on the past two years of my life. It has resulted in thousands of tears, hours of phone calls, late nights, and mother-daughter connections. The breaking of both of our hearts, but in the most positive of ways, was the outcome of these dialogues. To restate what was said in the first portion of this exploration into whiteness, “There is nothing so whole as a broken heart.” It is only through the breaking of our hearts that growth and change can happen – for a person, but, I think, also for a nation.

White collective responsibility is essential in the movement for change within the war-torn nation of Zimbabwe. Very little has changed since the end of the white supremacist regime in 1980. Robert Mugabe, one of the founders of the nation and principal organizers of the struggles beginning in the 1950s has only perpetuated the colonial enterprise by reenacting the systems used by the oppressors to continue subjugating his people and relegating them to positions of less-than-human.¹³⁵ As Hegel discussed, the master over slave relationship has only morphed into something different, but recognizable.¹³⁶ For Zimbabwe, what was once a nation of white is greater than black has turned into black as white is greater than black.

By this I mean to say that Mugabe, a black man, is reenacting systems that privileged whiteness in his own country by continuing to privilege it on a global scale.

¹³⁵ Martin Meredith, *Mugabe: Power, Plunder and the Struggle for Zimbabwe*, (New York: PublicAffairs, 2009).

¹³⁶ Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel, “Phenomenology of Spirit,” trans. A.V. Miller ed. J.N. Findlay, (Oxford, England: Oxford University Press, 1977).

While the people in Zimbabwe are starving,¹³⁷ suffering from HIV/AIDS, malaria, cholera, typhoid, and other terrible and preventable diseases,¹³⁸ he lives in a palace, flies around the world receiving premier medical treatment, and mass murders political dissenters.¹³⁹ He has become the new Ian Smith, the new dictator set on crushing those beneath him to further raise himself up in material wealth and global power. He has exploited his land to reach his goals, allowing investors from China and the US to destroy rural lands and displace thousands to mine diamonds.¹⁴⁰ He has allowed neoimperialism to seep into his country's pores while claiming to still be the freedom fighter he was decades ago. His failures as a man have been transformed into the failures of all blacks by many white Zimbabweans, however. So much so that many refuse to call themselves Zimbabwean and still refer to themselves as Rhodesian in an all-too-evident display of continuing faith in the projects of white supremacy and domination over the bodies of blacks.¹⁴¹

Susan Griffin and Karin Lofthus Carrington, in their book, *Transforming Terror*, make an astute analysis of how as a society we can overcome the terrible histories we face and the awful lived realities that pervade the current world. They say, "If we are to

¹³⁷ "Starvation stalks Zimbabwe villagers," *news24*, 13 September 2012, <http://www.news24.com/Africa/Zimbabwe/Starvation-stalks-Zimbabwe-villagers-20120913>.

¹³⁸ "Statistics: Zimbabwe," *UNICEF*, 24 February 2003, http://www.unicef.org/infobycountry/zimbabwe_statistics.html.

¹³⁹ "Zimbabwe president Robert Mugabe in Singapore for medical checkup," *The Guardian*, 3 July 2012, <http://www.guardian.co.uk/world/2012/jul/03/zimbabwe-president-mugabe-singapore-medical>.

¹⁴⁰ Victoria Eastwood and Robyn Curnow, "Inside Zimbabwe's controversial Marange diamond field," *CNN*, 16 March 2012, <http://edition.cnn.com/2012/03/15/business/zimbabwe-marange-diamond-field/index.html>.

¹⁴¹ Rhodesians Worldwide.

heal ourselves, we must move past denial to remember what the world is suffering. No re-membering of the soul can occur if we do not share the weight of terrifying memories together.”¹⁴² The collective soul of black people was dismembered intentionally over hundreds of years of colonization. During this process the collective souls of white people was destroyed, because that is the only possible result of participating in such a rigorous process of dehumanization. Colonization, neo-colonization, and oppressions are detrimental for everyone involved, including those privileged by the systems. Humans create the systems with the intent to lift up the few, but in many ways they are also robbed of their humanity when they other those who do not look, act or believe like them. The majority of people are unaware and ignorant of their part to play in these processes, but that does not leave them less responsible. The memories of colonization for those in Zimbabwe should be recognized as ‘terrifying’ by all those involved – white, black, and coloured alike. That is the first step in creating paths to change; in recognizing that the enterprise of objectification, commodification, and subjugation was, indeed, a terrible time, not only of glory. It is in this way that decolonizing the minds of white Zimbabweans will be the most difficult, for they are slow to let go of their pride.

Continuing their analysis Griffin and Carrington write, “Not only physical but psychological wounds must be named, delineated, witnessed, and acknowledged. For this reason, justice is also crucial to peace, not as retribution but in order to bring the truth into public consciousness as well as assert the right we all have to be free from violent

¹⁴² Susan Griffin and Karin Lofthus Carrington, *Transforming Terror: Remembering the Soul of the World*, (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 2011), 2.

attack.”¹⁴³ This is an especially important course for Zimbabweans to take, as Mugabe has placed his efforts on redressing physical wounds and not the psychological. His rhetoric is aimed at re-wounding those who were oppressed by Rhodesia in an effort to maintain his power over those living in Zimbabwe. Responsibility for the pain of others is critical in the development of peace within the country and for communities within it. Taking responsibility pain means acknowledging harm done not only on a person by person basis, but to communities through individual complacency in systemic theft, genocide, criminalization, relocation, and impoverishing. Without it progress and meaningful transformation will not come because the wounds of the past and the present are too deep to pretend they are no longer there. Instead they fester within society and create even more pain for all those who were part of the struggle for black freedom, all those who aimed to keep white power in place, and the children of those people and of that struggle.

Helene Shulman Lorenz, a relative of Holocaust survivors, wrote,

“While we can hope for a future in which there could be an honest public accounting of a genocidal past that many have colluded to disown – combined with a successful process of memorial, restoration, reparation, and rededication – at present we have only hints of what such a process could be. In order to think about what type of theory can help in the recognition and healing of memory and trauma in broken communities, we need to imagine an interruptive, non-normative ethics that is willing to go outside the defense of the status quo to support and nurture a process of social mourning. That is, we would need to stop doing rapid recovery and business as usual, and begin to imagine entering into disturbing contexts where a new type of meditative listening and witnessing can be processed in community.”¹⁴⁴

The only way change can be wrought within the country is if the meager amounts of

¹⁴³ Griffin and Carrington, 2.

¹⁴⁴ Helene Shulman Lorenz, “Interrupted Subjects,” in *Transforming Terror*, 96.

whites remaining there and the hundreds of thousands in diaspora come to a realization, first on an individual level, of the roles they play in black oppression and the perpetuation of white privilege . It is crucial for each person to understand that their actions, their beings, reinforced systems of tyranny, domination and cruelty. This cannot be a haphazardly-constructed and quick process. It will most likely take generations of individuals making concerted efforts to change their worldviews and their thought processes to truly heal from the destruction and violence of the past and present. It must be marked by genuine concern, which is where the difficulty is raised, but where the real possibilities for collective healing take place. The only balm for collective trauma is collective responsibility. Then, and only then, can recovery begin to take root for a nation of peoples that has known nothing but trauma for the past one-hundred and fifty years.

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