

Article

## **Imagining African Studies in Zimbabwe: Contextualising the Conundrum**

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### **Introduction**

Let us look at African Studies

The majestic tower<sup>1</sup>, where scholars and politicians

Can play out their grudges

Or lick each other (we see mostly the scholar's tongue)

The people who should be the judges

Do not get a word of what is African Studies<sup>2</sup>

The tussles for meaning and relevance across disciplines have been an important factor of existence, as disciplines have to justify their worth through words and deeds. In this instance, words and words of deeds are crucial in attempting to understand what purposes 'African Studies' would serve in a particular context.

I have tried to get a golden thread that runs through this piece, to stick to a particular point, but the stream of thoughts have made this difficult. I am trying to present my imagination of African Studies in Zimbabwe, cognizant of the sociopolitical and economic factors that have been in existence. Simultaneously, I find myself caught in the web of the marginalisation of certain forms of knowledge, the privileges enjoyed by established centres of knowledge production and distribution and how they continuously provide the standard. There is also the attempt to try and be 'objective', to prevent the paper from being about a personal 'mourning' about the state of Zimbabwean and African intellectualism. One can never be sure to what extent one succeeds in doing any one of these things.

When reflecting on my potential contribution to this special issue of *postamble*, I was both delighted and intimidated. Delighted that as a young aspiring academic, here I am presented with this chance to put forward my own views and opinions, an opportunity that may not come often for a young African. I was equally frightened by the task set before me, not being well-versed with brevity, and with

the particular area in focus, as the sometimes structured and seemingly rigid form of the academic and intellectual enterprise may not give adequate avenues for venting certain viewpoints. Similarly frightened that what I would write would not be 'scientific' enough to be legitimate knowledge even when views on knowledge are informed by 'Eurocentric' notions such as those of Karl Mannheim<sup>3</sup>. I was tempted to make a historical case, tracing the development of African Studies from what seems to me a largely Western heritage, to the contemporary laudable efforts at grounding African Studies in Africa, both in terms of institutions and relevant experiences.

I would like to believe I am making a simplistic argument, but texts can reveal complexities that are taken for granted, so be it! I will not pretend that this piece, whether it qualifies as an essay, a paper, or an article went to great pains to abide by certain disciplinary or academic standards (although it went to some pain, not so great).<sup>4</sup> It is a constellation of my thoughts, and other people's thoughts on Africa, Zimbabwe, academic freedom and African intellectuals. Above all, I strongly believe that this piece is a manifestation of the struggles and questions that young African academics, or those aspiring to be, have experienced. The search for intellectual identity at the disciplinary, institutional, and continental levels is also found at the individual level. Young academics, in Africa, in Zimbabwe, attempt to establish and occupy spaces in academia, in the intellectual landscape. It is an attempt to find relevance, yet it can also be cast as an attempt to survive in an increasingly hostile environment. Presenting the imaginary case of African Studies in Zimbabwe, the piece is an effort to convey the constant thriving for young and aspiring academics to occupy.

In grappling with understanding the area of African Studies and coming from a country<sup>5</sup> where such an area of study is not established, I have tried and explored the possibilities of an 'African Studies' in Zimbabwe. The first image that came to my mind when I thought of African Studies in Zimbabwe was that of one short man<sup>6</sup> who was well known for his 'Afrocentric' ideas. Students knew that the best way to appease his aging soul would be to infuse elements of

Afrocentricity in every line of an essay assignment and to be as dismissive as possible of Western canons of knowledge. The second image was... many images. trembling hands.

what else can be neutral? that may not raise the ire of certain people...

or endanger me.

what else is more 'scientific'?

that I can write with more objectivity.

I eventually decided to write about Zimbabwe, not as an act of bravery, but because of the desire to map out my imagination, and because I cannot talk of Africa without thinking about where I come from. I find it both easier and numbing at the same time to write about a country where I have lived for most of life through referring to 'factual, academic, credible and acceptable' sources. Maybe like Steve Biko, one day I will write what I like. This time, I will try. So, let us return to our Professor...

In a country caught in a web of political, ideological and economic contestations with the 'West', the Professor's discourse was characterised by an uncanny silence on the culpability of politicians and bureaucrats in Zimbabwe's demise. There was, to me, a very discomfoting preoccupation with informing us of how much we were intellectually colonised and that without decolonising our minds first, Zimbabwe was doomed. In most of our minds, his obsession with Afrocentricity did not go further than providing intellectual fodder for a political system, a mere strategy for legitimising certain nationalist agendas that prevailed at that time. It was interesting that as the situation in Zimbabwe worsened and the inevitability of either toning down 'anti-imperialist vitriol' or collapse was realised, our Professor also changed his tone and started acknowledging that to some extent, internal elements were responsible for the decadence Zimbabwe had experienced.<sup>7</sup>

Through the lens of the responses of some Zimbabwean intellectuals to the political and socioeconomic crisis and the state of Zimbabwean universities<sup>8</sup>, one can imagine what African Studies as a field of study might have been<sup>9</sup>. Would

African Studies be able to defend itself from the accusations of ghettoisation and compartmentalisation, leading to intellectual and physical isolation of political manipulation and providing spaces for ideological constructions inimical to the existence of the African peoples themselves? Would an African Studies in Zimbabwe prove its worth, not to the West, but to fellow Africans, so that a desire to encourage such a mould of African Studies would come to fruition? Zimbabwe's intellectual landscape may be found wanting, and a brief look at where Zimbabwe has come from intellectually would be useful.

### **A Look at Zimbabwe's Intellectual Development<sup>10</sup>**

*In retrospect, the astonishing thing was the extent to which, at the time, even in the public media, intellectuals, academics and experts in various fields were called upon to air their views and to give opinions on a wide variety of issues. There was an impression of cultural and intellectual ferment and a willingness to check out new ideas. Leftist scholars ejected from at the time less tolerant societies, like Kenya, played the socialist drum quite loudly in cultural and academic circles. South African revolutionaries who had drifted closer to home ground, Caribbean and a motley crowd of other exiles all contributed to the stimulating climate of being at the forefront of social change.*

Stanley Nyamfukudza<sup>11</sup>

The euphoric attitudes pervading Zimbabwe at independence in 1980 have been long swept away by the grim realities of contemporary socio-political and economic circumstances in which people find themselves today. Even in the late 1980's into the 1990s, cautious calls were being made about the trajectory of Zimbabwean politics, higher education and academia. Classified as alarmist and reactionary at that time, it is surprising to find how works written at that point in time provide succinct representations of what has since taken place in Zimbabwe. The predictive validity of such work makes one marvel at the ability of literary works in evoking images of the future that eventually comes into existence. David Moore<sup>12</sup>, among many others, has made efforts at elucidating the development of Zimbabwe's ruling class, spawning the intertwinement of the political and intellectual realms in fostering a particular tradition. The seemingly dominant intellectual traditions stemmed from questioning and critiquing the colonial order, whilst it was at the same time a product of the educational

instruction where postcolonial intellectuals found themselves recipients or participants through the canons of the colonisers' knowledge systems.

The early post-independent years in Zimbabwe were characterised by a desire for critical engagement, or something that was closer to it, as articulated by the party in power at that time ZANU PF. The party prided itself in being the host of several intellectuals, leaders adorned with numerous degrees as evidence of their intellectual aptitude. However, as the euphoria of independence started wearing away, and patrimonialism and accumulation took root, the transparent modes of critical engagement were stifled, as Nyamfukudza notes of how his 1980 book, *The Non-Believers Journey*<sup>13</sup> was cast as an anti-revolutionary Afropessimist narrative.

These embryonic origins of stifled academic and intellectual spaces, and fervent linear nationalistic ideologies gave birth to the conditions prevailing in Zimbabwe today. Having inherited the colonial canons of knowledge, attempts were later made by the ruling elite to create and advance a nationalistic agenda around anti-imperialist and neocolonial tendencies in the postcolony. Caught between a disillusioned local intelligentsia, and the West, definitely not angels in any way, the government, as Moore (2004) notes, became schizophrenic and coupled with the collapsing economy, it rendered intellectual engagement mute.

At independence, Zimbabwe found itself with a group in the Gramscian sense 'organic intellectuals' propagating the 'socialist' and Marxist-Leninist stance of the politicians at that time. Nyamfukudza notes that even those not familiar with these discourses made efforts to familiarise themselves in hopes of gaining favour among the new political elite or perhaps even entry into political circles.

Institutions of higher education became silent as dissenting voices became equated with imperialistic voices, and the 'nationalist' sword descended heavily on those who would dare raise opinions divergent to the dominant political ideologies, and try speaking truth to power. The state sanctioned activism that

Angela Cheater (1991)<sup>14</sup> has described seems entirely relevant to this time in Zimbabwe, for the only permitted ‘radicalism’ was a radicalism directed against perceived threats to the autonomy and well-being of the ‘nation’.

The comatose economy and repressive sociopolitical climate that have characterised Zimbabwe in recent times seem to have taken a turn for the better since the inception of the government of national unity through the global political agreement (which globe are they referring to?), but this does not seem to have opened up any meaningful spaces for intellectual and academic engagement on the existential issues demanding attention of the new (although there is not much new) dispensation.

### **Finding a Space for African Studies**

Department of African Studies, University of De-Colonisation

African Studies 101: The Europeans Come into Africa

African Studies 102: Early Revolutions

African Studies 103: Our Fight Against Colonial Rule

African Studies 104: Protecting the (our) Gains of In(Dependence)

African Studies 105: The West’s Neo-Colonial Agenda

African Studies 106: American Invasion of Iraq as Justification for Repression

African Studies 107: Strategies for Intimidation and Eliminating Sellouts<sup>15</sup>

The Professor immaculately dressed in...

clothes!!

In...

clothes. I wanted to say Western suit and tie, and so forth,

suffice to say, clothes.

Not that I expected him to be naked,

but my mind has been made to prepare itself for something that might be

‘African’

or

Zimbabwean

enough.

I do not know what that is.

Is the Professor a fan of the British now, because he is wearing clothes?

The ‘silliness’ of my thoughts jolts me back to the present, the being retold past in the imaginary, faced with the Afrocentric Professor. I have been hearing he

has very close ties to the National Machine, he might have a few hectares of land, a lined pocket. I really do not know, but already I am convinced he will not say much to dissuade me from my position. Such prejudice! He has that smile that makes you think he knows already you do not like him, or his smile, or both. He calls for silence, and tells the batch of first year students:

Welcome to this department, where we are constantly trying to remind each other of where we have come from, who we owe this opportunity to lecture and attend lectures to, for this was a white person's preserve. Anyway, I do not have much to say, but to tell you I do not take any academic sources that are not African (which includes black people born in America, and white people I have coauthored articles with, or those who might give me funding) and to assure you that this course will rid you of all the poison the Europeans fed you, and by the time we finish you will be true Africans (like me of course).

By now some may wonder where all this is going in relation to Zimbabwe, African Studies and higher education. Very imaginary! I can see a grimace, a full frown.

*What exaggeration, does this even exist?*

*And not every academic is like that.*

*What a gross overgeneralization.*

*It is academic immaturity*

*speaking!*

True, I have conjured up images, given life to circumstances that may never have existed. But I have also just put in my own words what I have heard repeatedly and seen, in one form or the other.

### **In the name of Africa!**

*African Studies is certainly not like that, and has goals far removed from such narrowness.*

*(ideally, I would again imagine).*

The brief background given on Zimbabwe and the fictional courses given above are meant to set the tone for the climate where one may imagine first what the higher education system is like, and second, what role African Studies can have in such a climate. This is not to say that the system of higher education in

Zimbabwe is exactly that. Zimbabwean tertiary education once occupied a leading position in Southern Africa, and Africa at large. Mama notes, for every academic in the service of political whims, there are a dozen others offering critiques to those whims.<sup>16</sup> Let us say I am giving the worst scenario (or may be not) of what an imagined African Studies, patronized by some African academic, who are in turn patronized by political systems, would be like.

It is pivotal to be aware that the intellectual and academic activities engaged in at institutions of higher learning are not neutral, despite all the vantage for scientific neutrality and objectivity. Mama rightfully notes that African intellectualism has its basis on a liberatory ethic that did not conform to disciplinary conventions and standards. Early African academia constituted a critique of imperialist and colonialist practices and canons of knowledge and attempts at reconstructing and producing new knowledge.<sup>17</sup>

The postcolonial situation has however wrought conditions that make it difficult for 'active' African scholarship, with the state having declared that academics must remain silent as development is in progress. Academic freedom, in all the senses Moodie has highlighted, be it academic rule, individual freedom, and institutional autonomy has been, and still is under threat in Africa.<sup>18</sup> Cheater, amongst many others, notes how the institution of the new act at the University of Zimbabwe was seen as limited academic freedom in all manner possible and bestowing too much power over higher education to the state.

Critics of academic freedom have pointed out how academic freedom should not lead to academic concerns that ignore the needs of the people that are divergent from the developmental goals of the nation. The crisis comes when developmental needs – 'peoples needs' – are conflated with the whims and caprices of political entities and pseudo-governments. The ability of academics and higher education institutions to elucidate the conditions of African people's existence does not need government sanction. It is government sanction that has in most instances limited opportunities for such.

If there were an African Studies in Zimbabwe, what shape and form would it possibly take? Whose whims would predominate, or would a discipline where centring African issues take precedence over greed-infested ideological tussles and lopsided political motivations? From the year 2000<sup>19</sup> and onwards, such an area of study would be synonymous with the Department of Agriculture, with all areas of study fighting to justify the land reform programme (for the sake of accuracy, the word “reform” would rather be replaced by “mayhem”), and how important it is for us as Africans, as Zimbabweans to guard the gains of our independence. Our African Studies would not be “African” in the sense of showing us other land reform programmes that have either failed or succeeded in Africa. The manner in which hegemonic ‘public’ (read: publicised) has tended to obfuscate any critical elements precludes chances of a fecund African Studies. Our international relations would have to centre on those who praise us, or do not support the West. Any criticism renders a country our enemy, an agent of imperialism.

It is dreadful to imagine that under such a climate of fear and skewed perceptions, who would be responsible for curriculum development? Would we be taught that African Studies is about bashing every white person and rejecting everything ‘Western’ whilst the dear professors and politicians shouting this Africanness luxuriate in conspicuous wealth? One of the most surprising elements in the claims to Africanness has been race and territory. African intellectuals and politicians have reiterated that Western countries must leave Africans to deal with Zimbabweans. They have at the same time said Zimbabwean issues should only be left to Zimbabweans, a call concretised by ‘organic intellectuals’ fighting to retain shreds of legitimacy for political figures and entities.

The dangers of the compartmentalisation and ghettoisation of an African Studies in Zimbabwe come to the fore. It has already been acknowledged that ‘neutrality’ in this area is difficult to come by, but the partisan nature that certain

discourses can be subjected to delegitimises their importance, rendering them mere political rhetoric.

Mbembe and Nuttall<sup>20</sup> argue against the parochial and retrogressive way of African modes of self-writing, and instead of working on the basis of isolation and exclusivity, propose a discourse of intertwinement, where we, like previous Eurocentric thought, do not focus on what Africa is not, but what Africa is, in relation to the wider world in cognizance of the interconnectedness highlighted in the discourse of globalisation. The constant calls to have the analysis of Africa, of Zimbabwe, separate from that of the West even sounds self-defeating to those on the anti-imperialist train.

### **Power and Discourse**

I may be allowed to use a non-African (Michel Foucault<sup>21</sup>) scholar to give expression to situations tempered by the greediness and mediocrity of some of us Africans (I try to desist from calling it African greediness and mediocrity, for it may carry a different meaning then) proves irresistible in this instance. Our imagined African Studies in Zimbabwe under conditions of fear, repression and muted or worshipping intellectual critique would be most susceptible to the vagaries of the powerful, politically and economically (these being the same in most instances). In trying to map the possibilities of an African Studies, I seek here to cement the view that the African Studies to emerge would be dominated by power interests, at etic and emic levels. Such an African Studies would be susceptible to national power ramifications, and the 'remote' controls of such interest groups such as funders and established 'communities of knowledge' that are responsible for validating knowledge.

Seeking truth has always been a difficult task, what with the postmodern views on the multiple truths and realities that exist simultaneously. X African Studies in Zimbabwe would both accept and reject postmodern discourse, and in the process establish a regime of truth, a hegemonic ideology that informs most of

the publicised ‘intellectual’ work, considering the non-existent freedom of speech and limited avenues for expression in a media-restrictive environment.

Events in Zimbabwe and the rhetoric preceding or following them suggest an inclination to attribute responsibility to exogenous forces for all that has gone wrong and take endogenous credit for the little that goes right when convenient. As Mama has noted, Zeleza discusses the role of scholars in authenticating and propagating chauvinist and racist ideologies, legitimating discredited regimes and facilitating genocidal policies and practices. Examples are given of the Banda regime of Malawi, and intellectuals in South Africa, Rwanda and Nigeria.<sup>22</sup>

As I mentioned earlier, the struggles for intellectual spaces are also about survival, economic and socio-political. There are always dangers that an African Studies lacking any sense of academic freedom may fall to the same neo-patrimonialism that has plagued African bureaucracies. If political entities become patrons, and academics clients, what nature of subjectivity do we expect? Such patron-client relations are certainly bound to further delegitimise African Studies, and give credence to its dismissal by cynics and equally retrogressive etic and emic forces that cannot see merit in anything done in Africa.

The relationship between power and knowledge cannot be ignored when it comes to African Studies, for the discipline is not innocent in itself. x

### **(de)Territorialisation and (de)Racialisation**

Zimbabwe to and for Zimbabweans. Zimbabwe vs The West (or whites). The crisis that has plagued Zimbabwe for over a decade x has been presented by some in very essentialising terms, which if uttered in South Africa, would be reminiscent of the xenophobic elements that have reared their ugly heads regularly. Are Zimbabweans xenophobic? Is there what we can call an intellectual or academic xenophobia – an ideological xenophobia? Outsiders have nothing to contribute to solving our problems? Painstakingly naïve, one



It is a question that the writer still has in my mind, to which an answer has not yet been found. So we introduce African Studies, who is in, and who is out? Those in Africa, born in Africa, interested in Africa, positively and negatively?

### **Between African Poverty and ‘Western’ Capital**

The internal strife, academic bankruptcy and threats to life in dear Africa, to mention just a few aspects, have proved unbearable for many, academics included. `Academics have been forced to leave higher education institutions and go for voluntary sector organisations, private entities or to form their own research institutions, which may in turn be compromised by following the research agendas of funders.

What then is an academic to do, faced with the pragmatic realities of survival and a sense of moral responsibility and obligation to seek and speak ‘truth’? Of what relevance is their work if not informed by what the ordinary man, woman and child experience, but by the need to appease owners of capital, a need for humane survival that the patronised institutions of higher education cannot offer if one chooses not to dance to the tunes of the patrons?

I have often come across statements to the effect that African scholars make difficult choices that academics in other parts of the world may not have to endure. I cannot agree more with such assertions, particularly when it comes to matters of life and death, with not only the lives of academics, but of friends and family also threatened by the choices that academics make.

One senior academic I had a conversation with was agreeable, highlighting that African academics, in a neoliberal dispensation that has seen the increasing commercialisation and commodification of higher education, have been reduced to existential intellectualism, pandering to the hands that feed them.

Zimbabwe may not have been spared such a crisis, considering the extent of the economic decline that the country faced. The poverty endured by intellectuals might have exacerbated the political system’s lack of legitimacy, whilst at the

same time fostering critiques that are overwhelmingly informed by the need to survive, either by escaping victimisation, currying favours, or acquiring scarce funding. The crisis of resource deprivation also exemplifies the conundrum African and Zimbabwean academics find themselves in when trying to establish and maintain rigorous disciplinary practices

### **On Gramsci, Intellectual Labour and an Imagined African Studies**

Antonio Gramsci talks about how everyone labours intellectually. How do we move away from the accusations of intellectual elitism that have plagued other disciplines, of committing the folly or representation when we actually speak for ourselves, not for the ordinary person? Political systems have since time immemorial turned to groups of ‘thinkers’ who in turn espouse high sounding philosophies in efforts to lend credit to the political systems. Suffering from a Habermasian ‘legitimacy crisis’, African governments have not found a shortage of academics willing to labour intellectually in return for glorification, a piece of land, and assured favours from the most despicable and likeable of despots. Of course, after all, they are actually likeable people; they are human. The way serial rapists and killers are likeable? Only that when they are politicians they have ‘charisma’ and the other repressive and ideological apparatuses to silence even the voices of the most ardent of dissenters. It seems the sword has been allowed to become mightier than the pen in Africa.

The possibilities for progress in a holistic African Studies would be slim in a Zimbabwe where forms of art, from music to poetry and painting to dance, have been subjected to forms of restriction, governed by regulations that limit media, political and personal rights and freedoms (even the responsibilities cannot be exercised). My imagination sees a holistic African Studies that steeped the study in African circumstances, be it music, poetry or theatre. Numerous forms of activity involve intellectual labour, and although not necessarily academic, African Studies in a different Zimbabwe and Africa can accommodate diverse forms of expression, and channel the opinions and needs of Africans in modes that can be closer approximations to actuality.

If the citizens of Africa, those with experiences in Africa, find time to go through the various issues covered in African Studies, will they find themselves, their aspirations and needs? Truly easier said than done, but an African Studies dominated by elite local interests and what Mama has called the externalisation of African scholarship, and the uncritical reliance on external paradigms, concepts and methodologies which simplify and homogenize Africa, will be an unfecund African Studies.<sup>23</sup>

What may be needed then are synergies, theoretical and pragmatic, epistemological and ontological, not only of knowledge, but also of ordinary existence.

### **Whither African Studies?**

I have given one extreme end of the possibilities of African Studies in Zimbabwe, which may not seem to carry much promise. What African Studies in Zimbabwe will look like is for anyone else to imagine, for imagination is not my monopoly, neither is thinking the monopoly of a particular group of people.

Despite the negative picture painted in Zimbabwe, as well as elsewhere in Africa, African X Studies as a discipline has a wealth of contributions that it can make. One has to try and run, not just move, away from the repeated 'developmental needs' that are dictated from 'states' and their functionaries, whilst acknowledging the significant role that African Studies can play in various societal sectors.

If knowledge is indeed power, then the capacity of African institutions to produce knowledge, that is knowledge by virtue of its importance to the contexts within which it is produced, and beyond, should be encapsulated in African Studies. The production of knowledge for 'scientific purposes', to obtain the validation of particular communities of knowledge, is surely not a crime, but could be of much benefit if geared to inform and change the circumstances that riddle the people who are constantly the subject matter of the discourses produced. Certainly not everyone in academia is interested in some form of

activism, and not every activist with ideas and intellectual capacities is in academia, hence the need for these synergies in transforming the knowledge and existential landscape in Africa.

Mama has rightly noted that the methodologies and epistemologies utilised by African scholars are not shorn of cultural and contextual specificity as some may want to assume, but are evidence of the particularities and peculiarities that these scholars encounter.<sup>24</sup> After centuries of being a wholesale consumer of knowledge x and producer of unacknowledged knowledge, African Studies offers the platform for a recognisable discourse centred on Africa but finding wider expression and appreciation. Barring the excesses of political and economic manipulation, both internal and external, which may compromise the integrity of scholars and the discipline at large, African Studies can do a lot in placing Africa on the map of intellectual activity, and speaking to the issues of people's existence.

In situations as Zimbabwe has found itself, doubts are bound to arise as to the efficacy of African Studies. One wishes for an African Studies that can instill basic respect for human dignity and rights, one that can assist in appreciating difference and diversity, where political leaders and scholars alike can accept and build upon these differences and other forms of criticism. Where higher education systems are dysfunctional anyway, it would be delightful to have African Studies help identify the sources of demise and assist in improving them, otherwise it will just become a vehicle for political and ideological manipulation. African Studies and higher education are closely intertwined with the sociopolitical and economic climate prevailing, and the usefulness and relevance can be determined by such, and vice versa. Maybe one day, the professor will come in and say:

Welcome to this course. In this class we encourage questioning, free thought and originality, as well as a constant attempt to bring whatever material we may come across closer home. We are expected to read as widely as possible, and to be able to apply our material to our experiences. By the time we finish, we must be well rounded enough to

be relevant to our institutions here at home, as well as to any other institutions throughout the world.

Hopefully by that time, his class will be international enough in orientation, not everyone will be ‘African’ by his definition. The likelihood of impartiality may be difficult to imagine, for I have not been impartial in any way. One hopes the numerous strands that the piece touches on, the tangents it embraces, make a statement enough of that struggle cited to establish and occupy intellectual spaces in Africa.

This can also be construed as manifesting the complexities of trying to configure what African Studies really is, or what it constitutes to study a continent that has been raped for centuries, politically, socio-economically, and most pertinently, intellectually. There is no doubt that African Studies is valuable, and tempered with the experiences Africa has and is going through, can make an invaluable contribution to knowledge, policy and practice, and change and improve lives.

## Notes

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<sup>1</sup> Majestic tower seeks to portray an image of elitism, not that African Studies in itself is a majestic tower in practice (maybe it will be).

<sup>2</sup> This is in no way painting a picture of my views on African Studies as it stand today, but an imagined Zimbabwean African Studies as Zimbabwe stands today. I would want to believe the actual discipline of African Studies is making constant efforts to ensure that the discourses utilised, the knowledge produced, the goals of the discipline, in addition to fulfilling the academic intellectual and epistemological premises it stems from, also resonates with the desires of Africans in their diversity.

<sup>3</sup> See, for instance, Mannheim, Karl. *Ideology and Utopia: An Introduction to the Sociology of Knowledge*. Ideology and utopia [\*Volume 1 of Collected works of Karl Mannheim\*](#) (Routledge, London, 1997)

<sup>4</sup> Although drawing from what other people have said, this piece thrives more on the author’s imagination of an African Studies in Zimbabwe would be like, the purposes it would serve, and its relevance. This is not in itself a rejection of the importance of ‘scientific standards’ in total, but a recognition of their limited use in this particular instance.

<sup>5</sup> To my knowledge no departments of African Studies were there when I studied in Zimbabwe, and even now. It may be assumed in Zimbabwe that the issues that African studies covers are subsumed under the other social sciences that also try to focus on Africa

<sup>6</sup> This Professor is not imaginary at all. To borrow from Emile Durkheim’s, he is a social fact, an actual thing, existing over and above my imagination to create (or wish him away), and he sure has the capacity to exert external ideological force over individuals. His love for Africa unfortunately seems to go beyond the people who constitute it. For him, the whole (a continent with people dying, of hunger, repression) is greater than the sum of its parts (individual rights and obligations, transparency and accountability, intellectual critique).

<sup>7</sup> This may be the capricious nature of intellectuals in their struggle for intellectual survival that Edward Said critiques in *Representations of The Intellectual* (1996), where certain academics lack any meaningful convictions or moral principles and are swept by the winds of political and ideological change, swinging where the pendulum goes. One can appreciate the need to transform views delegitimized by historical circumstances, such as scholarly work that supported apartheid or any other forms of repression cannot occupy meaningful spaces in postcolonial situations. Considering attempts to relativise everything, one may say intellectual morality is thus relative, hinged on the powers of the day.

<sup>8</sup> One can look at the newspaper articles written and television programmes where Dr Tafataona Mahoso appears among many others. His arguments provide succinct evidence of attempts to provide intellectual legitimacy to the political systems and practices in Zimbabwe

<sup>9</sup> The media and other forms of literature are replete with instances of academics and 'intellectuals' who have given their views, in support of and against what has been happening in Zimbabwe. For reasons that are unreasonable, no attempt is made to mention names.

<sup>10</sup> This section largely draws from Stanley Nyamfukudza's 'To Skin a Skunk' (2005), through which I outline... It is not a retelling of intellectual growth since Rhodesia, but a brief outline foreshadowing the contemporary intellectual dispensation in Zimbabwe post-independence.

<sup>11</sup> Nyamfukudza, S. "To Skin a Skunk: Some observations on Zimbabwe's Intellectual Development." *Skinning the Skunk: Facing Zimbabwe's Futures* Eds. Palmberg, M. and Primorac, R. Stylus Publishing, LLC, 2005)

<sup>12</sup> See for instance: Moore, D. "The Ideological Formation of the Zimbabwean Ruling Class." *Journal of Southern African Studies* 17(3) (1991) pp 472-495; 'Zimbabwe's Triple Crisis: Primitive Accumulation, Nation-State Formation and Democratisation in the Age of Neo-Liberal Globalisation' in *African Studies Quarterly* 7, no.2&3, 2003: [online] URL:

<http://web.africa.ufl.edu/asq/v7/v7i2a2.htm>; 'Marxism and Marxist Intellectuals in Schizophrenic Zimbabwe: How Many Rights for Zimbabwe's Left' in *Historical Materialism* 12(4) (2004); 'Intellectuals Interpreting Zimbabwe's Primitive Accumulation: Progress to Market Civilisation' in *Safundi* 8(2) pp199-222, 2007

<sup>13</sup> S. Nyamfukudza. *The Non-Believer's Journey* (Harare: Zimbabwe Publishing House, 1980)

<sup>14</sup> Cheater, A. "The University of Zimbabwe: National University, State University or Party University." *African Affairs* 90 (1991) pp 189-205.

<sup>15</sup> I have just put this imaginary collection of courses in tandem with the knowledge climate that has existed in Zimbabwe in the recent past, especially the dearth of alternative voices that are not part of the political polarisation that has riddled the country. Although I have already acknowledged the exaggeration involved, many who have gone through some of the institutions, without fear or coercion, will attest to high such imaginary courses sound so close to the reality experienced at some point.

<sup>16</sup> Mama, A. "Is it Ethical to Study Africa? Preliminary Thoughts on Scholarship and Freedom." *African Studies Review* 50(1) (2007) pp 1-26.

<sup>17</sup> *Ibid.*, 2007

<sup>18</sup> Moodie, G.C. "Academic Freedom and Transformation of Higher Education." *English Academy Review* 14(1) (1997) pp. 9-16.

<sup>19</sup> The year 2000 saw the fast track land resettlement programme which went some way in reconfiguring the Zimbabwean political field and repositioning Zimbabwe in the international arena. It ushered in a new phase of 'revolution' and nationalism'. It is not within the ambit of this paper however to discuss the merits and demerits of the specific phase initiated in 2000, for that can form the subject matter of another paper. The year 2000 is highlighted due to the ramifications it eventually has in reshaping the country's economic and socio-political trajectory.

<sup>20</sup> Mbembe, A. "African Modes of Self-Writing." *Public Culture* 14(1) (2002) pp 239-273 and Mbembe, A. and Nuttall, S. "Writing the World from an African Metropolis." *Public Culture* 16(3), (2004) pp 347-372.

<sup>21</sup> Foucault, M. *Power/Knowledge: Selected Interviews and Other Writings*. (Pantheon Books: New York, 1980)

<sup>22</sup> Mama, A. "Is it Ethical to Study Africa? Preliminary Thoughts on Scholarship and Freedom." *African Studies Review* 50(1) (2007), pp. 1-26.

<sup>23</sup> *Ibid.*, 2007

<sup>24</sup> *Ibid.*, 2007