

Short discussion series



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CENTRE FOR SEXUALITIES,
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Gendered and Sexual Imagi(nations)

*The 2018 Zimbabwean E(r)ections
and the Aftermath*

Tinashe Mawere

Series Editor: Christi Kruger

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2019

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Centre for Sexualities, AIDS and Gender
University of Pretoria



www.csagup.org
www.justgender.org

Published by: CSA&G Press – an imprint of the Centre for Sexualities,
AIDS and Gender, University of Pretoria
Private Bag X20, Hatfield, South Africa, 0028
www.csagup.org

First published in 2019.

ISBN: 978-1-77592-193-6 (print)

ISBN: 978-1-77592-194-3 (e-book)

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This monograph has undergone single blind peer review overseen by the CSA&G Press editorial team.

Series Editor:	Christi Kruger
Copy Editor:	Rob Hamilton
CSA&G Publisher:	Johan Maritz
Typesetting:	CSA&G Press
Printed and bound by:	ProcessPrintDuction

Cover photo credit: By billi_kasabova through iStock by Getty Images

Financial support:

The production of this monograph was made possible through the continued support of Embassy of Ireland, Pretoria.

Disclaimer:

The views expressed in this monograph reflect those of the Centre for Sexualities, AIDS and Gender at the University of Pretoria, and not necessarily those of Embassy of Ireland, Pretoria or its partners.

Suggested citation:

Mawere, Tinashe. 2019. *Gendered and Sexual Imagi(nations), the 2018 Zimbabwean E(r)jections and the Aftermath*. Pretoria: CSA&G Press, Centre for Sexualities, AIDS and Gender, University of Pretoria.

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Foreword

Gendered and Sexual Imagi(nations) attempts to answer questions that have been central to scholarship within the humanities. Drawing on the concepts which Schneider (1984:181) refers to as the basic building blocks of society, i.e. “the quartet of kinship, economics, politics, and religion”, Mawere explores, on the one hand, the historiography of the Zimbabwean state, specifically the Mugabe era, and the particular ways in which it has been underpinned by a deeply rooted system of patriarchal values. On the other hand, this text asks questions which most authors have shied away from asking. Rather than constructing a perspective which imagines leaders of ZANU-PF and the MDC in natural opposition and fundamentally different because of divergent political visions, *Gendered and Sexual Imagi(nations)* asks its readers to take note of the commonalities shared by male leaders of these parties, and, in fact, held by most male politicians.

In the first part of this monograph, Mawere tells the story of three women – Joice Mujuru, Grace Mugabe and Thokozani Khupe – and how ultimately these women were deemed unfit to occupy the political sphere because of their gender. The text highlights that it was because of their gender, rather than owing to their actions, that they were regarded as undesirable in the political terrain. Through a discursive analysis of the 2018 presidential campaigns, *Gendered and Sexual Imagi(nations)* draws attention to the misogyny that characterised both Chamisa’s and Mnangagwa’s performances. Throughout their campaigns these men drew explicitly on notions of hegemonic masculinity, naturalised gender roles and their own sexual (in)abilities.

Mawere compels us to take a step back and to ask whether social justice is possible while women continue to be marginalised, vilified and objectified. The ways in which we imagine possible futures are crucial for those of us who work within the space of social and gender justice. *Gendered and Sexual Imagi(nations)* reminds us, however, that we need to do more than imagine futures in which the men at the top change while the fabric of society remains the same. Instead, it asks us to imagine a society that appears, thinks, and acts in radically different ways to the ones that we know. We need to ask whether and how we can imagine a society in which women are not relegated to the domestic sphere, and where women who challenge the status quo are not labelled immoral, irresponsible and irrational. However, this would require dismantling of the patriarchal ideologies that prevail as yet another generation of young men flex their muscles, calling for the strongest rooster to step forward.

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Series Editor

Acknowledgements

I greatly acknowledge the support, contributions, generosity and tolerance that different individuals, institutions and scholars directly and indirectly extended to me in shaping this project. Nevertheless, I take the responsibilities for errors of content and analysis that this work might have.

Specific acknowledgment goes to the Embassy of Ireland-supported Gender Justice Project at the Centre for Sexualities, AIDS & Gender (CSA&G), University of Pretoria, which funded this monograph and entrusted it to me. I also acknowledge the CSA&G team for the discussions and continuous engagements that aided this project.

My gratitude to my mentors, Dr Glen Ncube and Prof Catherine Burns, can never be expressed adequately enough, for helping me to develop during my two-year postdoctoral tenure in the Department of History and Historical Studies and the CSA&G at the University of Pretoria and continuously thereafter. Their contributions and academic support helped to shape this project in many ways.

I thank my colleague, Dr Ruth Murambadoro, with whom I engaged in intense scholarly discussions. In addition to sharing spaces, we also generously shared thought-provoking ideas and explored research work together.

I also thank Henri-Count Evans for reviewing the earlier drafts.

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List of Abbreviations

CIA	Central Intelligence Agency
ED	Emmerson Dambudzo
DRC	Democratic Republic of Congo
G40	Generation Forty (40)
GNU	Government of National Unity
MDC	Movement for Democratic Change
NPP	National People's Party
NUST	National University of Science and Technology
UZ	University of Zimbabwe
VP	Vice-President
ZANLA	Zimbabwe African National Liberation Army
ZANU-PF	Zimbabwe African National Union - Patriotic Front
ZARU	Zimbabwe Amalgamated Railway Union
ZBC	Zimbabwe Broadcasting Corporation
ZCTU	Zimbabwe Congress of Trade Unions
ZEC	Zimbabwe Election Commission
ZNLWVA	Zimbabwe National Liberation War Veterans' Association
ZPF	Zimbabwe People First

Introduction: the Historical and Cultural Trajectory

Reminiscences of childhood

I grew up in an overtly gendered, sexist, masculinist and militarist society without even questioning it. We performed gender, sexism, masculinity and militarism in the everyday - we lived and re/produced this life. Everything seemed natural, permanent and common-sensical. We acted out rooster fights, standing on one leg, jumping up and down, and knocking down other contestants with our shoulders and folded arms. This was the game at home, at school, while herding cattle and everywhere else we had a chance to play it. While contestants were playing the rooster in the middle of a circle of spectators, the spectators would be busy singing and cheering:

Jongwe mukuru ndiyani? Jongwe mukuru ndiyani?

Gwaaaaa gwaaaaaa gwaaaaa gwaaaaaa

Jongwe mukuru ndiyani? Jongwe mukuru ndiyani?

Gwaaaaa gwaaaaaa gwaaaaa gwaaaaaa

[Who is the strong rooster? Who is the strong rooster?]

Anyone who wanted to challenge the dominant rooster would posture like a rooster and enter the ring. The rooster was our role-model. Being a strong and dominant rooster was a necessity, and no one wanted to be a hen, because nobody wanted to face ignominious defeat. In most rural households in Zimbabwe the dominance of the single

rooster was commonplace. We witnessed how power and dominance were achieved through fighting, bullying and crushing, jumping up and down, and knocking down other birds. What is interesting is that the dominant rooster did not remain unchallenged. Anyone was allowed to enter the ring to challenge the rooster, reflecting a democratic system where power could be challenged, and at times the balance of power would even be altered. At our homes, our mothers gave chances to the next generation of roosters by killing the old generation of roosters and serving them as relish on special occasions. This indicates some generational awareness and some sense of power succession. However, a strong impression of the dominance of masculinities in society was provided by the fact that a dominant rooster could only be replaced by yet another rooster.

This was our game, which was important because it was an interesting way of improving our physical fitness and balance. However, it also reflected and re/produced the normal order of things in life, where the most masculine dominated, and where the ability to engage in violence or fight physically was a measure of masculinity.

Besides our games at the margins, as well as in our marginal homesteads, the rooster had public and political dominance as it was a symbol of power and authority. Robert Mugabe, Zimbabwe's president until his removal from power by the military in November 2017, was known as *Jongwe* (the Rooster), the rooster was once the symbol of the Zimbabwe African National Union - Patriotic Front (ZANU-PF) party and it featured on party cards, regalia, and the ZANU-PF building (Jongwe Building) in Harare, the party's headquarters (Mawere 2016) (see next image).



ZANU-PF properties with images of a rooster (Mawere 2016)

As children another test of masculinity occurred when we engaged in heated arguments. We resorted to fist fighting, turning to violence as a solution to our disputes. Across societies, models of manhood include being tough, rough and willing to resort to the use of force to resolve issues (Suttner 2014). As a child, to start a fight one would form two heaps of sand and associate each heap with one of the two parties. One would say, *“Iwe, iri ndiro zamu ramai vako, iwe ramai vako iri!”* [Hey, this is your mother’s breast, and for you, your mother’s breast is this one!]. The person who accepted the dare would destroy the other’s heap by kicking it over. It was very belittling and humiliating to have your mother’s breast touched and destroyed by another. The second party would usually respond by knocking down the remaining sand heap. This performance was sufficient to start a fight. It was considered honourable to fight for one’s mother’s breast since the breast was symbolic of sustenance, care and nurture.

Failure to destroy the challenger’s sand heap (mother’s breast) was read as cowardice and one would then be labelled ‘a woman’ (i.e. weak). This reflected the performance of patriarchy and ownership of women’s bodies by men. In this regard, each mother was understood to belong to her son, with an implicit understanding that she should not be touched by other males. Daring to touch (rape) another’s woman was an act of provocation and dishonour and

the offended parties had to fight. The performance also naturalised the role of men as defenders of women and of the nation, disqualifying women from playing this role and, therefore, from becoming leaders. The link between nurturing, suggested by the mother's breast, and agency, suggested by defence of the breast, implied that women were not suited for roles requiring agency (Simon & Hoyt 2008).

Such performances demonstrate how violence is a measure of masculinities, and how this idea is naturalised through passing down such practices from one generation to the next. They also demonstrate how defeat is equated with marginalised femininities, as well as how a clear and rigid distinction is made between masculinities and femininities. The second performance suggests how women's bodies are used as a field on which masculinities are played out and also how women's bodies become targets and are, therefore, vulnerable during performances of masculinities. Bodies of women are attacked to humiliate the men responsible for protecting them, as well as to signpost perpetrators' power and dominance.

Violent masculine elimination of feminised bodies is regarded as necessary to silence adversaries or competitors. Elimination also makes use of embodied feminine bodies as fields of contest. In Zimbabwe, elections have been reduced to wars and battlefields, and, indeed, they are wars because they involve fatalities. Although many women have participated in wars, generally wars are naturalised arenas in which men and not women fight. In the film *G.I. Jane* the would-be female soldier faces challenges succeeding in a male-dominated arena.¹ Although since 1980 election-related

¹ *G.I. Jane* was a 1997 American action film directed by Ridley Scott, showing the experiences of women after public pressure for their inclusion in the US military.

fatalities in Zimbabwe have been prevalent, from the early 2000s they increased as the state turned against its own citizens (Sachikonye 2011, Kriger 2003).

Following ZANU-PF's defeat in a constitutional referendum in 2000, Zimbabwe witnessed growing state and ZANU-PF violence used against those seen to hold contrary points of view (Raftopoulos 2002). ZANU-PF's defeat came about following the formation of the Movement for Democratic Change (MDC), whose origin and support lay with disgruntled groups such as students, people in urban areas, some whites and members of the labour movement, specifically the Zimbabwe Congress of Trade Unions (ZCTU). Faced by the strongest opposition party since independence, ZANU-PF resorted to clear abuse of the state apparatus, marking a grave turning point with regard to relations between the state and its subjects (Sachikonye 2011, Rupiya 2009). From 2000 Zimbabwe's elections have not only been disputed, but have also resulted in deaths, injuries, displacement of people and destruction of property. Much has been written about the negatives characterising Zimbabwean politics (Mawere 2016). However, more research needs to be conducted regarding how politics and elections have employed gendered scripts directly and indirectly.

Zimbabwean elections and gender performances

The 2018 Zimbabwean elections were interesting in many ways. By and large, the major electoral battle was between the ruling liberationist party, ZANU-PF, and the MDC. Most important was the fact that the elections were a manifestation of a past that had been carefully shaped, and a future that had been meticulously planned and benchmarked

as Zimbabwean nationhood. The elections raised questions regarding its legitimacy and justice (emanating from many exposed electoral irregularities), and it was unclear whether or not democracy had been served, particularly in light of the negative reactions of the financial markets and the bloodbath emanating from fatal shootings by the army of protesting civilians in Harare. Most importantly for this work, the elections re/produced, enacted, authorised and left behind a gendered script and a highly masculinised socio-political terrain that goads us into looking deeply and more broadly at issues of gender, sexuality, power and nationhood. We are challenged to begin to understand how all these issues rest on epistemic injustice and epistemological violence.

The background to the election and the election atmosphere cemented and anchored existing gender narratives privileging and naturalising male power. This historical and cultural privileging and naturalisation of male power is figured through the iconography of familial and domestic spaces (Mawere 2016, Nyambi 2012, Lewis 2002, McClintock 1993, Hunt 1992). Following the 2018 elections a more gendered, sexist, masculinist, militarist and violent state emerged, which ultimately further constricted social spaces and curtailed the social freedoms of those whose gendered and sexed identities were regarded as inferior, resulting in a state that offered life only to those who appeared to be both masculine and powerful, together with those who lived within the confines of their ascribed gender identities.

The harmonised elections in Zimbabwe in 2018 initiated a number of debates regarding the position of women in politics and society. It was also the first elections to be held following the overthrow of the masculine regime of

President Robert Mugabe, who had monopolised power since 1980, and his replacement by Emmerson Mnangagwa, who described himself to the West as ‘soft as wool’ and thus as a feminine figure, in contradiction of his public identity as a ‘crocodile’ (merciless and masculine). Complex, contested and interesting narratives regarding issues of gender, power and politics in Zimbabwe have unfolded.

There is convincing evidence of the demeaning and oppressive position of women, alongside their objectification and their disempowerment in politics. McClintock (1995) articulates how, in politics and nationalist constructions, women are disempowered, and used as tools to achieve masculine goals and to reflect the aspirations of men. Even in countries where the number of women holding public office has increased, women remain underrepresented, objectified, under the male gaze and with their political legitimacy undermined by gender stereotypes (O'Neill, Savigny & Cann 2016, Bauer 2015, Iqani 2015, Adcock 2010). With reference to Zimbabwe, such objectification and disempowerment rest on a stereotype of the family. Since, the Zimbabwean family is strictly patriarchal, with older male figures (the ruling elite or the state) monitoring other family members: women, other men and children (Nyambi 2012). This supports Toivanen (2010), who argues that in post-independent Zimbabwe, women carry the emblematic meaning of the violated motherland, yet Zimbabwean agency is defined as distinctively masculine.

Most narratives regarding gender in Zimbabwe are still limited in conceptualising the hidden uses of women as political pawns, as well as how women are made weapons and trophies of war in Zimbabwe's body politic. Female representation has been used as a means of asserting the parochial nature of Zimbabwean politics. The Zimbabwean

constitution makes it clear that gender should not affect electoral processes or limit women's participation in elections. Taking a narrowly quantitative approach to gender comes at the expense of missing underlying issues related to epistemology, i.e. types of knowledge which are internalised and then disseminated as the truth. Enhancing the political involvement of women without addressing underlying disadvantages will fail to improve participation. Women are trivialised in political and social discourse, which deters them from participation, especially competing for top leadership (O'Neill, Savigny & Cann 2016).

Gender, sexuality and power should not be limited to a critique of dominant and absent bodies and voices, but should also explore discourses that inscribe and naturalise particular gendered, sexed and authoritative identities (Yuval-Davis 1997, 1996). The presence of women in politics and public spaces will not advance women's interests without radical change in patriarchal attitudes (O'Neill, Savigny & Cann 2016).

Constitutional provisions which provide for equal participation of men and women are therefore meaningless if there is a failure to address daily culture and everyday forms of knowledge.

Aesthetic violence, gender and politics in Zimbabwe

This work examines the language (political semantics, aesthetics and symbolism) of the 2018 Zimbabwean elections by discursively analysing the narratives and imagery of the elections and the imagined Zimbabwean nation. This is important as Zimbabwean nationalism and politics employ cultural and artistic imagery, with language, music and dance,

sports, food and religion as central themes (Kriger 2003, Turino 2000). Specific attention is paid to the sub-texts of gender, sexuality and power, reflecting the prominence of the principal presidential candidates, Emmerson Dambudzo Mnangagwa of ZANU-PF and Nelson Chamisa of the MDC, and how their prominence was enabled by the everyday gendered texts of a masculinist-militarist nation. Thereafter it draws on how they were imagined (and how they imagined themselves and the nation) during and after the elections, reflecting the evolving identity of the Zimbabwean nation.

I demonstrate how such characterisations and imaginings reveal performances of Zimbabwean nationhood. The main thesis is that the background to the elections – the language and imagi(nations) of the election – were gendered and sexualised, mirroring a grotesquely masculinist, militarist and violent state whose future is imagined in terms of violent male erections and the rape of democracy.

A discursive analysis shows how gender and sexuality are performed, and how both obvious and subtle performances are deeply rooted in the everyday, normalising and authenticating the most obvious gendered and sexualised realities. This analysis is informed by the idea that gendered meanings are made real through performances of the nation and politics entrenched in public discourse that are reasonable to subjects (Butler 1990, 1988). Such an approach may help scholars, researchers and policy-makers who engage with gender, sexuality and nationhood to think more broadly about these issues.

As background, a brief political trajectory is provided for each of three Zimbabwean women – Joice Mujuru, Grace Mugabe and Thokozani Khupe – whose political ambitions

were spectacularly thwarted after they attempted to move beyond their naturalised boundaries. This speaks to the glass ceiling of Zimbabwean politics (Bauer 2015, Zamfirahe 2010, Gidengil 2003). The women were selected on the basis of their association with powerful men, political prominence, ambition, the threat they posed to male power, and their relevance to the 2018 national elections.

The Gender Gaze: Politics, Nation and Women Surveillance

From a national heroine to a shameless and occult Dotito powermonger

Joice Mujuru was born on 15 April 1955 in Mount Darwin. At the age of 18 years, after completing two years of secondary school, she joined the liberation struggle. Dominant historical narratives made Mujuru famous on 17 February 1974, after refusing to retreat, having brought down a Rhodesian helicopter using a machine gun (Christiansen 2007). Narratives after Mujuru's falling out with ZANU-PF rewrote her liberation war history, and attached accounts of her political ascent mainly in terms of her proximity to strong men like Solomon Mujuru. Misrepresentation of women's histories is often apparent in narrations from a male perspective, utilising patriarchal notions of nationalism (Samuelson 2007, Lyons 2004, Nhongo-Simbanegavi 2000).

In 1975 Joice Mujuru served as a political instructor at two military bases, and at the age of 21 years she became camp commander of the Chimoio military and refugee camp in Mozambique. She acquired the liberation war name Teurai Ropa (Spill blood), and rose to become one of the first woman commanders of ZANLA forces.

In 1977 she married Solomon Mujuru (Rex Nhongo), the deputy commander-in-chief of ZANLA. She became the

youngest member of the ZANU-PF Central Committee and a member of the ZANU-PF National Executive. When Chimoio was attacked in November 1977 by Rhodesian forces Mujuru escaped capture. In 1978, despite being nine months pregnant, Mujuru still engaged in active combat.

At the attainment of Zimbabwean independence in 1980 Mujuru became the youngest cabinet minister, accepting the portfolio of sports, youth and recreation. She continued with her education, and eventually earned a doctoral degree. She later served as Minister of Community Development and Women's Affairs; Minister of State in the Prime Minister's Office; Resident Minister and Governor for Mashonaland Central; Minister of Information, Posts and Telecommunications; and Minister of Rural Resources and Water Development.

Following the death of Vice-President Simon Muzenda in September 2004, the ZANU-PF Women's League pressed for a female candidate to be nominated for the post. Further support came from a ZANU-PF faction led by Joice's husband. Given the need for greater female representation in government, Joice was appointed to the post instead of Mugabe's presumptive heir, Emmerson Mnangagwa, who was then Speaker of Parliament. As potential successor to Robert Mugabe, Joice had a long-time rival in the form of Emmerson Mnangagwa. Joice mobilised support among members of the Politburo and the Central Committee, from provincial chairs and amongst the youth. Two strong ZANU-PF factions came into existence: the Gamatox (associated with Joice Mujuru), and the Weevils (Zvipfukuto), associated with Jonathan Moyo (Mawere 2016).

Prior to the ZANU-PF congress scheduled for late 2014, Mujuru was publicly accused of indecency and having worn a mini-skirt, as well as engaging in witchcraft in order to seize political power and oust Mugabe. She and her associates were branded 'enemies' by the main leadership of ZANU-PF and faced widespread public humiliation. At the congress in December 2014 Joice Mujuru was expelled from ZANU-PF. On 8 December 2014 she was dismissed from the position of Vice-President, and replaced by Mnangagwa, her long-time rival. Those close to Joice also lost their ministerial posts.

Following her fall from power Mujuru was invited by colleagues also ousted from the party to lead a new political formation called Zimbabwe People First (ZPF). In 2017 ZPF expelled seven senior members and changed its name to the National People's Party (NPP). The expelled members thereafter claimed ownership of the ZPF brand. In the 2018 elections Mujuru was one of 23 presidential candidates. In Zimbabwe's current political arena her party is insignificant.

During the ZANU-PF succession battle Joice Mujuru's heroic acts were expunged from the public record. She was vilified as a woman who achieved political power chiefly through her sexual relationships with powerful men. She was also deemed unfit to be a mother of the nation since her style of dress was allegedly a sexual invitation to men, communicating her availability after Solomon Mujuru's death. Mujuru was also labelled a witch and an evil woman who was prepared to kill to gain power. Evil women are often depicted wearing black, just as widows are expected to dress. Mujuru's appearance as a widow was seen to buttress her identification as a witch.

Munhuwose kuna Amai [Everyone to the mother]: A dis[Grace]d motherhood

Grace Ntombizodwa Mugabe was born on 23 July 1965 to migrant parents from Zimbabwe, living at that time in Benoni, South Africa. In 1970 she moved to Zimbabwe. Grace married an air force pilot, Stanley Goreraza, and in 1984 gave birth to a son, Russell Goreraza. She was employed as a typist in President Robert Mugabe's office, and became his lover while he was married to Sally Mugabe. In 1996, following Sally's death, she married Robert Mugabe, and thus became Zimbabwe's first lady.

In 2007 Grace enrolled as an undergraduate student at Renmin University (China) to study Mandarin. She graduated in 2011 but admitted that she was not proficient in the language. In September 2014 controversy arose when Grace Mugabe was awarded a PhD in sociology by the University of Zimbabwe (UZ) two months after entering the sociology programme. Her doctoral thesis was not published in the university archive alongside those of other graduates and she faced accusations of nepotism.

Grace Mugabe's political involvement began around 2014, and culminated in her becoming head of the ZANU-PF Women's League. Thereafter she accused Joice Mujuru of plotting against President Mugabe, and secured Majuru's political downfall. As leader of the Women's League, Grace also served as a member of the ZANU-PF Politburo, the party's highest and most powerful decision-making body. In 2016 she involved herself in the question of who should be Mugabe's successor.

Two strong factions in ZANU-PF emerged: Lacoste, led by Emmerson Mnangagwa, and Generation 40 (G40), involving those who had reached adulthood after the country won its independence but fell outside the Zimbabwean war history. Since she had not participated in the liberation struggle, the old guard was naturally suspicious of Grace and her compatriots of similar age. She thus aligned herself with the G40 faction. In September 2017 conflict between Lacoste and G40 escalated, and both factions engaged in public vilification of one other. At Interface rallies of ZANU-PF Youth Grace Mugabe publicly attacked members of the Lacoste group, including Emmerson Mnangagwa.

In response, at Shuvai Mahofa's memorial service, which was attended by senior members of the Lacoste faction, Mnangagwa insinuated that Mahofa had been poisoned by enemies within ZANU-PF, just as an attempt had been made to kill Mnangagwa at a rally in Gwanda through use of poison. Mnangagwa claimed that he had survived the attempt only because he had been quickly rushed to South Africa, where he received expert medical attention. Following reports of Mnangagwa's poisoning, a narrative circulated on social media implicating ice cream allegedly produced by Gushungo Dairies, which was owned by Robert and Grace Mugabe. Following Mnangagwa's allegations, Robert Mugabe conducted a cabinet reshuffle in November 2017 and Mnangagwa lost the post of Minister of Justice.

Grace was influential in the firing of Mnangagwa, having accused him of causing division in the party. She also expressed an interest in becoming Zimbabwe's vice-president. Following his dismissal and fearing arrest, Mnangagwa sought refuge in South Africa. Thereafter Zimbabwean military forces, led by General Constantino

Chiwenga, took control of the country through a *coup d'état*. On 19 November 2017 Grace Mugabe and her G40 associates were expelled from ZANU-PF.

Dominant narratives central to allegations made against Grace included her alleged failure to fulfil the feminine gendered roles of support, reproduction and nurture. She was described in terms of contamination, having allegedly disturbed the natural body politic of both ZANU-PF and Zimbabwe. Since she had polluted and emasculated Mugabe, both had to be removed from the body to prevent further contamination. Grace was seen as having failed in the natural feminine role of 'mother of the nation'. Instead she displayed ruthless ambition in aspiring to lead the nation, an inherently male role. Grace's corruption was reflected through her wayward sons, the disrespect she exhibited towards those whom she disliked through public abuse of them, her triggering of division, and her failure to unite the Zimbabwean family. Her refusal to conform to her gendered role of nurturing the nation, usurping instead the position of 'father of the nation', thus failing to respect liberation war history through which Zimbabwean nationhood had been created, put her in conflict with Zimbabwe's national project.

Given Grace's usurpation of the power and authority of both the party and the nation, Robert Mugabe was seen as forfeiting membership of the *amadoda sibili*, the vanguard responsible for national protection. Grace Mugabe's rise to power was associated with Robert Mugabe's downfall. Mnangagwa's takeover with the support of the military and of war veterans reflected a continuation of the ZANU-PF regime and protection of the *Chimurenga* legacy which equated Zimbabwean nationhood and hyper-masculinities.

Thokozan[u]: The face of change and the sudden ‘betrayal’

Thokozani Khupe was born on 18 November 1963 in Makokoba, Bulawayo. She is a single mother of three children. Her educational qualifications eventually included a certificate in Information Technology, a BA in Media Studies, an MBA and a PhD. In 1987 she became an official in the Zimbabwe Amalgamated Railway Union (ZARU), and in 1991 she was elected Secretary of the Women’s Advisory Council of the Zimbabwe Congress of Trade Unions (ZCTU) and also became a member of the ZCTU General Council. Her trade union history brought her close to Morgan Tsvangirai, also at that time a trade unionist.

Thokozani’s position in the ZCTU led to her involvement in the formation of the Movement for Democratic Change (MDC) in 1999. She was elected to the MDC National Executive and assigned the portfolios of transport, logistics and welfare. Between 2000 and 2018 she served as Member of Parliament for Makokoba. She was a member of the Parliamentary Budget, Finance and Economic Development Committee, and also served on the Youth Development, Gender and Employment Creation Committee. Furthermore, Thokozani held the position of vice-chair of the Women’s Parliamentary Caucus and served as Parliamentary Deputy Chief Whip of the MDC. She was involved in the Parliamentary Portfolio Committee of Defence, Home Affairs and National Security, as well as in the Parliamentary Portfolio Committee of Budget, Finance and Economic Development. Thokozani was an active member of the African Parliamentary Network against Corruption. From November 2005 to February 2018 she was vice-president of the MDC. During the government of national unity (GNU) from 2009 to 2013, she took on the post of deputy prime minister.

In 2018, following the death of MDC leader Morgan Tsvangirai, Thokozani led a small faction of the MDC which contested the leadership of Nelson Chamisa. Her rationale for contesting the leadership position was that she was the only one of three vice-presidents elected by the MDC congress, whereas the other vice-presidents, Elias Mudzuri and Nelson Chamisa, were appointed by Tsvangirai. Although initially the party organisation supported her, alluding to Chamisa's unconstitutional assumption of party leadership, Chamisa ultimately succeeded in amassing greater popular support and thereafter ascended to MDC leadership.

At an extraordinary party congress held in Bulawayo on 22 April 2018, Khupe was elected unopposed to lead her faction of the MDC. The Khupe faction viewed itself as the genuine MDC, and its members contested the 2018 elections as MDC-T, while the grouping led by Chamisa adopted the banner of the MDC-Alliance. Khupe's faction continues to use the MDC designation, as well as MDC symbols, but its support has fallen away and it has disappeared from the political radar.

During the struggle for the MDC succession, Khupe's impressive history as a stalwart of the party, the role she had played in the struggle for change and her contribution to party leadership were all erased. She was accused of becoming a 'sell-out' and she was called a 'whore'. Particular narratives associated her rise in the ZCTU and her ascent within the MDC with Morgan Tsvangirai. Other narratives positioned her as one of Mnangagwa's several lovers. Calling her a 'whore' implied that she was uncontrollable and was linked to her being a single mother, the head of her family and therefore a social deviant, different to married women who were provided for and who accepted male headship of the family. Khupe's bid for party presidency was seen as

a form of disorder and was fiercely resisted. She had to be dealt with to restore sanity to the party. One way in which to deal with Thokozani was to rename her *Thokoḡanu*, implying that she had sold out to ZANU-PF and so needed to be purged from the MDC leadership.

Life within the margins

Joice Mujuru and Grace Mugabe's respective proximity through marriage to powerful and strong men, viz. Solomon Mujuru and Robert Mugabe, reflects women's ascendancy to power through men. Once the men are removed from the scene, the women's power fades away. Thokozani Khupe's ascent was seen in terms of her proximity to Morgan Tsvangirai, especially through allegations that she was Tsvangirai's mistress. The notion that women only attain political office because of their proximity to powerful men was similarly reflected in the perception that Hillary Clinton's nomination in the US presidential elections depended on her relationship with her husband, former US President Bill Clinton (Stabile *et al.* 2019, Ritchie 2013). Similar views pertain to South Korea's first female president, Park Geun-Hye (Lee 2017). In South Africa Winnie Mandela's powerful position was sometimes ascribed to her relationship with Nelson Mandela (Hassin 2018). Whereas some women are recognised as attaining a position of authority solely through their own efforts, more often women are perceived to attain power only because of their relationship with powerful men. The Zimbabwean narrative demonstrates a well-crafted system in which women are expected to inhabit the political margins to ensure their survival. Any attempt to move to the political centre leads to political extinction. The political centre in Zimbabwe is rendered a male space with buffers to prevent the political dominance of women, regarded as taboo and out of line with Zimbabwean nation-craft.

Buffering Male Spaces: Masculinities and Zimbabweanness

Political eliminations and failed hope for female power

The presence of women like Joice Mujuru, Grace Mugabe and Thokozani Khupe suggests a country that has created opportunities for women to compete for and to access political power. However, in reality the politics which has unfolded in Zimbabwe reflects that such opportunities are not supported culturally or structurally. Hence we see a gendered culture with rigid boundaries for women which advance patriarchy and male dominance. This echoes the views of Christiansen (2007) regarding Joice Mujuru's political authority, to the extent that she attained the position of vice-president while a member of ZANU-PF. Christiansen sees Mujuru as standing for patriarchal interests, rather than for the interests of women. Until her expulsion from ZANU-PF in 2014, Mujuru's inclusion in the male-dominated history and politics of the nation advanced masculinities and a patriarchal vision.

Conflicting representation of women in history is also seen in the representation of Nehanda, one of Zimbabwe's fabled spirit mediums. There are various re/presentations of the Nehanda narrative in historical texts such as Ranger (1967), Beach (1979) and Charumbira (2008), and in fictional narratives such as Solomon Mutswairo's *Mweya WaNehanda* (1988), Chenjerai Hove's *Bones* (1988) and Yvonne Vera's *Nehanda* (1993). There is great concern that writing key

women into patriarchal narratives misrepresents real women's histories and interests, making male experiences and masculinities normative (Gallagher 2001).

Zimbabwe is an example of a society in which it is unspeakable to think about and talk of female leadership. Where women are in leadership positions, their role is to be supportive of men, or necessary to meet an obligatory female quota. Obituaries of Zimbabwean heroines reveal narratives of women's heroism in Zimbabwe largely involving wives of nationalists having become heroines through their support of husbands or owing to their role in family care during and after the years of struggle. The Zimbabwean nation is imagined through dominant family tropes where power and authority are naturalised and vested in powerful male figures and fathers (Mawere 2016, Nyambi 2012, Lewis 2002, McClintock 1993, Hunt 1992). Women's accomplishments in Zimbabwean politics and in the public sphere take place under the masculine gaze. This is shown in the way that Joice Mujuru, Grace Mugabe and Thokozani Khupe were monitored by masculine radar, and were restrained when they attempted to clear boundaries. Having a powerful, authoritative and leading woman is unheard of. Unless the role of women is to strengthen men's power, authority and leadership, or women are believed to be 'useful', women are used as pawns in men's contest for political power. When women's power and authority grow, their leadership is ruthlessly censured, and women's performativity is curtailed to police norms and to confine female authority within well-defined boundaries.

It is essential to reflect on how for so long women's power, authority and leadership have been under the masculine gaze. The 2018 elections in Zimbabwe were male-dominated with the exclusion of three women prominent in Zimbabwean politics. Regardless of whether or not they

acted independently, whether or not they were the products of femocracy, and whether or not they were political pawns or they profited from association with powerful men, Joice Mujuru, Grace Mugabe and Thokozani Khupe made vital imprints on Zimbabwe's political terrain. Owing to political developments which involved accomplishment of male political ambition and realisation of a masculinist and military state in Zimbabwe, by 2018 all three women had been rendered politically insignificant and publicly humiliated, their authority was weakened and they were relegated to political insignificance.

The fall of these women occurred in parallel with the spectacular rise of Emmerson Dambudzo Mnangagwa and Nelson Chamisa, now at the political helms of ZANU-PF and the MDC respectively. The emergence of these men as key political players contrasts with their earlier experience of tribulation within their parties. In 2004, despite almost all of Zimbabwe's provinces motivating that Mnangagwa rather than Mujuru should fill the post of vice-president following the death of Simon Muzenda, Robert Mugabe denied Mnangagwa this position, preferring a female vice-president in order to meet a female quota. Mnangagwa only became vice-president after the ascent of Grace Mugabe to political prominence, and following his conspiracy with Robert and Grace Mugabe to expel Mujuru from ZANU-PF. Once Mnangagwa revealed his presidential ambitions he was dismissed by President Mugabe from his post.²

Nelson Chamisa lost the important position of Secretary General to Douglas Mwonozora in the 2014 congress elections of the MDC.³ This made him virtually a political outcast, given that he had previously been National

² *Herald* "Zanu-Pf expels Mnangagwa" <https://www.herald.co.zw/zanu-pf-expels-mnangagwa/>

³ *Herald* "Fallen Chamisa weighs options" <https://www.herald.co.zw/fallen-chamisa-weighs-options/>

Organising Secretary and National Youth Chairperson. Chamisa made a strong comeback when he was one of two MDC vice-presidents appointed during Tsvangirai's last days fighting colon cancer.⁴ The appointment of vice-presidents beyond congress raises the issue of whether or not democratic procedures and constitutionalism had been followed within the MDC. Thokozani Khupe, whom the MDC congress had elected vice-president, saw the appointments as unconstitutional and as intentionally blocking the political ascendance of women.⁵ The choice of two additional vice-presidents and the appointment of Nelson Chamisa as acting president during Tsvangirai's last days and after his death also raised questions regarding gender representation within the MDC.

The developments described above took place in a country that had failed to align its laws with the national constitution adopted in 2013. Most importantly, electoral reforms were not implemented in accordance with the constitution. As a result, Zimbabwe's electoral structures and systems remain male-dominated and controlled by a militant party-state.

The two narratives most closely associated with the rise to the power of Mnangagwa and Chamisa are the narratives of witchcraft and prostitution⁶, which ultimately exclude prominent women politicians from meaningful political participation. The depiction of women as witches and prostitutes characterises many Zimbabwean literary texts (Gaidzanwa 1985), showing continuation of racist-colonial stereotypes present in historical texts that regard powerful women such as Nehanda, one of Zimbabwe's

⁴ *Zimbabwe Situation* "Tsvangirai appoints two vice-presidents" <https://www.zimbabwesituation.com/news/zimsit-m-tsvangirai-appoints-two-vice-presidents/>

⁵ *The Zimbabwe Mail* "Khupe disputes the appointment of Chamisa as acting MDC-T president" <https://www.thezim>

⁶ See note on language use in the Foreword.

most respected spirit mediums, as witches and attention-seekers (Charumbira 2008). In colonial literature Nehanda is referred to as a very powerful witch who needs to be eliminated in order to liberate her fearful society. Such denigration is founded on a culture that does not recognise the power and influence of women, and can only explain influential women in terms of their having resorted to malevolent supernatural and deviant influences, such as witchcraft and prostitution. Such misogyny is also evident in the North, shown in the vilification of Hillary Clinton during the 2016 US elections (Ritchie 2013). This makes women unworthy of consideration for top leadership positions. The process normalises the inferior status of women, and asserts the superiority of men and the necessity for control. Such practices curtail women's political presence, with their authority confined to leadership of women's leagues, or adopting roles supportive of and subservient to men.

Narratives of prostitution that often develop parallel to women's success extend racist and colonial discourses that restricted the public spaces available to women, and which viewed women who broke conventions of confinement as prostitutes or as otherwise wayward. Historically, including during the post-independence period, women have been denied a legitimate space in both politics and in the urban arena, with their activity limited to the traditional private and domestic and traditional spheres. In the 1980s there were frequent random raids in Zimbabwe focusing on women stigmatised as prostitutes and vagrants (Ranchod-Nilson 2006). Their bodies were imagined in terms of contamination and as disturbing the natural body politic. Women such as Joice Mujuru, Grace Mugabe and Thokozani Khupe who attempted to break some of these boundaries in their ambition to become leaders were labelled witches or prostitutes, or seen as loose or estranged. At

times they experienced violent corrective responses from their parties. In the case of Zimbabwe, this shows the persistence of Aristotle's philosophical view that politics is the place of men (Mulgan 1974).

The Crocodile: Devouring witches and prostitutes

Joice Mujuru rose within ZANU-PF's ranks to become one of the country's vice-presidents. However, just when she seemed likely to be appointed as Mugabe's successor, she was accused of plotting to topple him. In the ZANU-PF factional war between the Gamatox, led by Joice Mujuru, and the Weevils, led by Jonathan Moyo, narratives developed alleging that Joice Mujuru had used witchcraft to achieve her political ambition of seizing control of ZANU-PF and snatching the national presidency from Mugabe (Mawere 2016).

Joice Mujuru was accused of seeking the services of Nigerian witch doctors who purportedly instructed her to enact a series of malevolent rituals.⁷ She was accused of performing witchcraft rituals while bare-breasted. Robert Mugabe claimed that she had ten chickens slaughtered, one for each of the ZANU-PF officials she wanted killed, with Mugabe and his wife Grace topping the list. Other ZANU-PF officials on the list included Emmerson Mnangagwa and Local Government Minister Ignatius Chombo.

Mujuru was also accused of seeking the help of Zimbabwean apostolic sects in her bid to wrest power from Mugabe: "Mujuru wanted to force the apostolic sect led by one Mutumwa to bless her as ruler of the country, but the

⁷

Mugabe on Mujuru witchcraft <https://youtu.be/cOltVFV6wkU>

church refused”.⁸ There were further allegations that Joice Mujuru’s associates had helped her dabble in occult practices in her quest for power. Ray Kaukonde, the Chairperson of ZANU-PF Mashonaland East, is said to have engaged in bizarre practices to secure Mujuru’s victory:

One of the n’angas said, ‘Look for two tadpoles representing Mugabe and Mujuru.’ The tadpoles, which had different colours, would be put in water and made to fight and if Mugabe’s tadpole died then Mujuru would rule.’⁹

These allegations formed the basis of numerous attacks on Mujuru’s person, spearheaded by the ZANU-PF Women’s League, and subsequently led to her expulsion from the party. The allegations also chronicle how women are stereotyped as witches, especially if they possess independence and power that threatens the patriarchal order. Apart from being identified as a witch, there were smear campaigns which implied Joice Mujuru had deficient morals or which denounced her as an ageing prostitute. Those conspiring against Mujuru invited the public to pass judgement on her attire. She was accused of dressing inappropriately:

Today there were media reports saying that I said I have a recording of Mai Mujuru being intimate with a man. What I said is that she should not wear mini-skirts... Even in real life, I have seen her like that. Even women in Parliament came to me complaining, saying, ‘We educated her on how to dress.’ I said, ‘Let her, but not before children’.¹⁰

⁸ Bulawayo 24 “I cannot surrender power to Mujuru,” says Mugabe <https://bulawayo24.com/index-id-news-sc-national-byo-58778.html>

⁹ Bulawayo 24 “I cannot surrender power to Mujuru,” says Mugabe <https://bulawayo24.com/index-id-news-sc-national-byo-58778.html>

¹⁰ Daily News “Grace attacks on Mujuru hit new lows.” <https://www.dailynews.co.zw/articles/2014/11/19/grace-attacks-on-mujuru-hit-new-lows>

In Zimbabwe women who wear mini-skirts are perceived to be immoral and seen as encouraging men's sexual invitations. Stigmatising women who adopt particular forms of dress has the effect of legitimising sexual harassment of women in public spaces in Zimbabwe. Grace Mugabe's sentiment regarding Joice Mujuru's appearance was a nullification of previous efforts to dissociate women's form of attire from assigned negative identities and to debunk the notion of corrective rape. For example, in 1992 a young woman wearing a miniskirt on the University of Zimbabwe campus was harassed and narrowly escaped corrective rape. Female students then protested by wearing miniskirts and trousers (Gaidzanwa 1993). The sexual harassment of women who are said to be inappropriately dressed is prevalent in other African countries, including South Africa, where such acts occur in public spaces such as taxi ranks (Vincent 2008).

During public events Joice Mujuru was sometimes referred to as 'Runaida, the girl from Dotito'. There were insinuations that Joice was a name she had acquired during the liberation war, and that her real name was Runaida. Although Dotito rightfully reflected Mujuru's rural roots, reference to it was generally intended to be derogatory. In this way Joice's authority was erased from the national map. Given the underdevelopment of most rural parts of Zimbabwe, by making reference to her alleged original name (Runaida) and to her reputed rural home (Dotito), Joice was effectively exiled to a caricatured remote and rural village, where she was made to adopt the identity of an old village prostitute failing in matters of civility.

In some liberation war narratives, woman combatants are denigrated as having provided a sexual economy for male combatants, who are deemed to have been the real fighters. This is a global phenomenon, as shown by the

1997 presentation of British women parliamentarians as Prime Minister Tony Blair's 'babes', and the aggressive sexualisation of Sarah Palin, the nominee for vice-president alongside John McCain in the 2008 US Presidential elections (O'Neill *et al.* 2016, Perks & Johnson 2014, Harmer & Wring 2013). Depiction of Mujuru as a woman of loose morals was, therefore, both an attempt to stigmatise her and a scheme to continue imposition of such a narrative. Prostitution was seen as marring the national moral fabric and was, therefore, regarded as destructive to the nation; hence calling women prostitutes is a lethal masculine weapon used in politics to undermine them.

Disparaging allegations about Mujuru earned her the epithet of being the leader of the 'Gamatox' faction, with the intention of contaminating ZANU-PF and destroying its legacy, again elaborating on her image as a witch. Gamatox is a very dangerous chemical generally used as an insecticide, and it is highly toxic to humans. However, the appellation Gamatox has also been construed positively, since it was the only insecticide seen as powerful enough to destroy the 'weevils' eating away at ZANU-PF from the inside (Mawere 2016).

Emmerson Mnangagwa and Grace Mugabe were influential in tainting Mujuru's identity, and fostering public humiliation of Mujuru and members of her faction. Factoring in the historical contest for leadership between Mujuru and Mnangagwa, it is possible that Mnangagwa carefully planned the negative re/presentations of Mujuru and consequently was behind her political downfall. This is credible since Mujuru's liberation war credentials and seniority within ZANU-PF made her Mnangagwa's most formidable competitor.

After Mujuru's expulsion from ZANU-PF, her liberation narrative was expunged. Some dominant liberation narratives may have exaggerated Mujuru's acts of valour in the liberation struggle, as many heroic narratives do. However, there is no doubt that her erasure from liberation history diminishes the contribution of female combatants to the struggle and makes it easier to justify their exclusion from important political arenas. Zimbabwean history is characterised by a slim liberation war history for woman combatants, with limited attention given to them, and mostly relegation to supporting roles (Chung 2006, Lyons 2004, Chadya 2003, Nhongo-Simbanegavi 2000).

It is reasonable to link Mujuru's downfall to her political ascendance threatening male power structures in ZANU-PF. In a society vilifying witchcraft and prostitution, such accusations destroyed Mujuru's reputation and marred her public image. However, the most important issue here is that the accusations re/produced narratives that depict women as witches and prostitutes with a polluting effect on the nation. Even further, it endorsed the stereotype that women could not be trusted and that when they are desperate they are uncontrollable, and their subsequent actions are dangerous and life-threatening. As a family member who allegedly threatened the lives of other people, as well as the well-being of the party and of the nation, Mujuru had to be shamed and punished to save the family from death and to discourage all those conspiring against the natural order of things, who constituted a danger to the family. The same narrative of witchcraft and prostitution was also assigned to Grace Mugabe, the wife of President Robert Mugabe.

After Joice Mujuru had been ousted, Mnangagwa suspected that Grace Mugabe's climb to political prominence threatened his own assumption of the presidency, and he

plotted strategically. He was instrumental in the ZANU-PF faction aligned to war veterans and to the army that organised the fall of Robert Mugabe, through his wife, Grace Mugabe. This ultimately terminated Grace Mugabe's political career.

During the worst of the conflict between the Lacoste and the G40 factions, led by Mnangagwa and Jonathan Moyo/Grace Mugabe respectively, Mnangagwa was flown to South Africa with the assistance of the military after claims of poisoning.¹¹ There were narratives insinuating that he had been poisoned, allegedly by ice cream produced by the Gushungo Dairy, owned by the Mugabe couple. Mnangagwa never publicly or directly implicated Grace Mugabe in the alleged conspiracy against him, nor did he point to the ice cream as the source of his poisoning. He kept his public narrative sufficiently vague and ambiguous, to enable different people to create their own understanding of what had happened to him. However, it appears that Mnangagwa's social media mercenaries (*Varakashi*) were responsible for public narratives directly or indirectly implicating Grace Mugabe and the ice cream. During the ice cream saga, Mnangagwa seems to have employed Shona banters such as *kurova bembera* (veiled accusations which do not mention the accused's name), which requires one to announce the presence of an enemy, especially a witch, and *anyumwa bere nderake* (the guilty are quickly offended by veiled accusations), implicating anyone who felt hurt by *kurova bembera* as the culprit and the witch, since the *bere* (hyena) was known to be used by witches. When Grace Mugabe was offended by the allegations of ice cream poisoning and reacted, she fell into Mnangagwa's trap through accepting responsibility for his poisoning, since *kurova bembera* is a

¹¹ Herald "Mnangagwa clarifies poisoning statement" <https://www.herald.co.zw/mnangagwa-clarifies-poisoning-statement/>

known and acceptable Shona practice for exposing witches who cause ill health.

These *Varakashi* narratives were disseminated quickly via social media. Social media also propagated and re/produced various ice-cream jokes which expanded Grace Mugabe's negative identity further. It also revived her earlier stigmatisation as a loose woman who had allegedly cunningly snatched Mugabe from his first wife, Sally Mugabe (Mawere 2017). Grace Mugabe was portrayed as a witch, and, therefore, as dangerous to the ZANU-PF family and to the Zimbabwean nation. The story that Grace Mugabe had attempted to bewitch Mnangagwa was linked in the public eye to allegations that she was also poisoning her husband's mind, which extended to views regarding the physical and symbolic bewitching of ZANU-PF and the Zimbabwean nation. Similarly, during Bill Clinton's presidency, his wife, Hillary Clinton, was accused of poisoning her husband's thinking and of, therefore, influencing his decisions in a way that collapsed the distinction between the public and private spheres (Ritchie 2013, Brown & Gardetto 2000). The Zimbabwean war veterans, most specifically Victor Matemadanda, the Secretary General of the Zimbabwe National Liberation War Veterans' Association (ZNLWVA), made it clear that Mugabe had 'lost it' because of his wife, Grace Mugabe.¹² During the *coup d'état* that wrested power from Robert Mugabe, the military announced that it would get rid of criminals around Robert Mugabe and restore the country's legacy.¹³ General Sibusiso Moyo, who announced Operation Restore Legacy on Zimbabwe's national television service, stated that the 'first family' (i.e. Mugabe's family) was 'now safe'.

¹² *Herald* "The Victor Matemadanda story" <https://www.herald.co.zw/the-victor-matemadanda-story/>

¹³ Zimbabwe National Army Full Statement (Operation Restore Legacy: 15 November 2017) <https://youtu.be/1mr3CfR-eFY>

The restoration of legacy included wresting back power from Grace Mugabe and the G40, who did not have a liberation war history, and restoring power to those with the requisite experience of the liberation struggle. The national legacy which needed to be protected therefore lay in the *Chimurenga* ethic and involved making sure that Zimbabwean leadership remained the preserve of those linked to the liberation struggle. This fell in line with Robert Mugabe's speeches during his contests with the MDC, especially with Morgan Tsvangirai, whom he derided for allegedly having run away from the liberation war (Mawere 2016). Mugabe expressed the sentiment that Zimbabwe had arisen 'out of blood' and that mere votes could not change how the country was run.¹⁴ This view was echoed by numerous utterances related to the nation-state presidency by generals such as Vitalis Zvinvashe, Paradzai Zimhondi and Augustine Chihuri that connected *Chimurenga* history with the right to assume national political power. This presented Zimbabwe as a warrior-masculinist national project, echoing Ranger (2004)'s notion of patriotic history, which he argues asserts the continuity of the Zimbabwean revolutionary tradition along the lines of ZANU-PF ideology.

Grace Mugabe's relationship with Robert Mugabe and her involvement in the politics of the nation were generally regarded as an unfortunate negation of agency and as toxic for Robert Mugabe, ZANU-PF and the nation of Zimbabwe (Mawere 2017, 2018). Grace Mugabe entered public life in the late 1990s, but became embroiled in politics only at the time of Joice Mujuru's fall from grace, culminating in 2014 in Grace's assumption of her first political position – leadership of the ZANU-PF Women's League. Her rapid rise to power was associated with her expressions of hatred, her ready use of hate speech and her

¹⁴ Mugabe mocks the vote <https://www.iol.co.za/news/africa/mugabe-mocks-the-vote-1.404654#.Va91XPmqkqo>

inflicting pain on others, which divided ZANU-PF and the nation and negated the efforts of nation building.

Grace Mugabe rose because of factions that emerged as a result of Mugabe's advanced age and his failure to provide a clear succession plan. Her ascendancy was facilitated by an alliance between those who professed protection of Mugabe's interests and of his legacy through power being handed over to Grace, and those who felt they had been discriminated against in politics because they lacked liberation war credentials (Mawere 2017). Grace represents what is politically known as the *mafikizolo* (those without history), i.e. women who rose to certain positions through their association with powerful men rather than ascension by their own efforts through the ranks or through making sacrifices.

Grace Mugabe's political emergence saw the expulsion of war veteran leaders such as Christopher Mutsvangwa from the government and from the party, with the culmination being the ejection of Emmerson Dambudzo Mnangagwa. Mnangagwa's fall created a narrative of state capture by emasculated men and by people without a history, leading to the creation of a narrative of the need to restore and protect the liberation legacy, a task which could only be performed by those with a history of the liberation struggle. This ultimately led to the *coup d'état* in November 2017, when the armed forces laid siege to members of the G40 group, whom the army denounced as "criminals around President Mugabe". It is noteworthy that the army was aligned with the war veterans and that its leadership comprised war veterans.

In the November 2017 *coup d'état*, code-named 'Operation Restore Legacy', the army generals made it clear that

they wanted to purge the nation of poison spread by the *mafikizolo*, and they wanted Zimbabwe to retain its national purity. By and large, Grace Mugabe's rise to power was associated with Mugabe's fall from grace, since he had represented the archetype of Zimbabwean masculinities, *amadoda sibili*, associated with both Zimbabwean gate-keeping and with nationhood. Muwati, Mheta and Gambahaya (2010) argue that the notion of *amadoda sibili/varume chaivo* (real men, implying that there are men who are not real men) is a recurring patriarchal theme in nationalist history and practice that defines Zimbabwean nationalism, citizenship and leadership. The model is founded on supposedly respectable, responsible, flawless and loyal men initiated into such practice through the liberation struggle. Most emanating grand discourses have exonerated Mugabe as an unfortunate victim, utilising the 'evil woman motif', in which the demise of a great man is traced to his association with a bad woman. All of Mugabe's perceived weaknesses are attributed to Grace, Robert Mugabe's unfortunate replacement of his first wife (Mawere 2016).

Instead of Grace nurturing Mugabe in accordance with the values of Zimbabwean nationhood, popular narratives depict her as having distracted him, using him, and usurping his power and authority in order to erase the legacy of liberation and to change the national image. A national image may be symbolically expressed and re/produced through the character of national women, and more specifically through those who are married to, or close to male leaders. The national image is expressed through centralisation of women's biological reproductive role, hence locating them as cultural carriers, ideologically re/producing the nation. When national women are subordinated politically, they are symbolically located as mothers of the nation (Yuval-Davies 1997, McClintock 1993). If the

national women are poisonous, as Grace was alleged to be, the noxious contagion spreads through the nation, and ends with the nation destroyed and dishonouring of the nation's men. Dishonoured men are seen as feminised, and hence as unable to offer the nation the protection which it needs.

Grace Mugabe's entrance into public life in Zimbabwe occurred when Sally, Mugabe's first wife, came to the end of her life. Grace became Mugabe's partner during Sally's last years and her period of pain, perhaps predicting the start of the process of national poisoning. Although Grace did not immediately enter into politics, her arrival in Mugabe's world in the late 1990s coincided with the beginning of a national crisis, collapse and demoralisation of the nation (Mawere 2016).

Grace was perceived as a young wife and was associated with materialistic urban women, generally feared as poisonous to families. She was accused of discouraging Robert Mugabe from relinquishing Zimbabwean leadership and retiring from office. She allegedly encouraged him to continue in office so that she could amass as much wealth as possible for herself, and live a flamboyant life as a first lady, hence earning the nickname *Gucci Grace*. The narrative goes that if Sally had been alive, she would have persuaded Mugabe to retire much earlier, rather than poisoning his brain, as Grace allegedly did. This characterised Grace Mugabe as a gold digger and exploitative, contrary to her expected role of mothering the nation.

Sally Mugabe is regarded as a woman who had been in the struggle and who fulfilled the role of providing support to her husband, and, therefore, mothering, caring for and healing the nation where necessary. However, since Grace was too young to recall the history of the liberation war, and

she did not fit in with the old guard (who were suspicious of the younger generation), Grace associated with the G40 faction. Like Grace, G40 members lacked liberation war credentials and the sense of having participated in the making of Zimbabwean history, and they were, therefore, seen as hostile to the ethos of the liberation struggle and nationalist history. They also lacked the criteria for party and national leadership. The G40 faction was associated with American intelligence agencies (security and intelligence services, including the CIA), through one of the G40 brains, Professor Jonathan Moyo. Association of the G40 with a foreign nation made G40 members appear threatening, and provided a potential point of entry for national defilement, as well as posing a threat to Zimbabwe's sovereignty. The G40 was thus allocated a negative identity similar to that given to the MDC, and seen to be acting as an instrument of foreign nations seeking to poison the Zimbabwean nation (Mawere 2016).

More striking were narratives, attributed particularly to Temba Mliswa, a former ZANU-PF member and now the Member of Parliament for Norton in Mashonaland West, who said that the G40 were gay gangsters. Given the national project rooted in *Chimurenga*, such identities, constructed in terms of the threat posed by foreign bodies, are seen as polluting the Zimbabwean national identity and threatening its re/production, survival and progression. These discourses of defilement were associated with the MDC and with Morgan Tsvangirai, a founding member of the MDC and its former president. Robert Mugabe once claimed that a victory for Tsvangirai and the MDC would make the dead turn in their graves. The turning of ancestors in their graves reflects unspeakable, gross national poisoning that invites the anger of the ancestors. Morgan Tsvangirai had also been Anglicised and he was caricatured as

Tsvangson (or Teaboy) in mockery of his alleged foreignness, femininity, homosexuality and status as a poisoned national body, incapable of leading Zimbabwe (Mawere 2016).

Robert Mugabe's expulsion from the leadership of ZANU-PF occurred because of his association with national pollutants perceived to have defiled his masculinity as the 'son of the soil'. Mugabe was no longer a member of the *amadoda sibili* responsible for national protection, since the G40 group took advantage of his age to corrupt him, while his wife had assumed his role and responsibilities. Grace Mugabe was accused of, amongst others, failing to satisfy her gendered role of support, and failing to re/produce and nurture the nation. She was seen in terms of the troupe of contamination, disturbing the natural body politic of ZANU-PF and of Zimbabwe. In this view, since she had polluted Robert Mugabe, both had to be eliminated from the political body to avoid further contamination. In a parliamentary debate in 1995, the Minister of Education, Sports and Culture, Aneus Chigwedere, said "When your finger starts festering and becomes a danger to the body you cut it off" (Long 2005: 88). This turn to body politics demonstrates the impermissible existence of national pollutants in Zimbabwe. Mugabe was seen as having become contaminated through his wife and he had to be removed to save the nation.

Just as narratives of witchcraft were used to eliminate Mujuru, similar narratives were involved in Grace's exclusion, and Mnangagwa was behind their construction. The narratives added to the hatred of Grace's personality and invited sympathy for Mnangagwa, the unfortunate victim of Robert Mugabe's witch-wife. The narratives also roused the nation to resist the temptation to hand over the country to witches, keeping it instead in the obviously safe hands of men.

In addition to presentation as a witch, Grace Mugabe was also paraded as a prostitute and wayward wife who had poisoned Mugabe's brain and destroyed his manhood. At various times and depending on which ZANU-PF faction was in the ascendant, Grace's marriage to Mugabe was used as justification for protesting against Robert Mugabe's remaining in power.

Grace married Mugabe at 31 years of age, following the death of Mugabe's first wife. However, from the 1980s onwards she was Robert Mugabe's secret lover and she gave birth to a daughter with Mugabe. In a patriarchal nation such as Zimbabwe, because Grace had started out as a mere typist and had become Mugabe's secret lover, she was associated with the archetype of the young, immature, loose urban woman, the 'small house' or husband snatcher (Mawere 2017, Gaidzanwa 1985). "Small houses" are notorious for corrupting bosses and tainting men, for using *juju* to maintain relationships with married men, and for destroying families. When Grace's secret relationship with Robert Mugabe became public knowledge, Grace was castigated for having become Mugabe's mistress. The alleged destruction of the Zimbabwean national family by Grace Mugabe was therefore made common-sensical by tracing her marital history back in time and locating her as Mugabe's 'small house' during his marriage to Sally.

Recent public discourses have named Grace Mugabe *Marujata*, which refers to a loose, pompous wife who lacks direction. This attribution linked to alleged extramarital affairs involving people such as Gideon Gono, the former Reserve Bank Governor; James Makamba, Telecel's major shareholder; and a number of Robert Mugabe's nephews, such as Patrick Zhuwao. These narratives also have the backdrop that Grace Mugabe started her affair with Mugabe

while she was married to her first husband, Goreraza (Mawere 2017).

Whether or not these allegations are true, it is noteworthy that dissemination of various versions of these narratives was a ZANU-PF factional tactic intended to produce and publicise Grace Mugabe as a prostitute available for penetration by anyone. In a nation where both women's sexuality and the sanctity of their marriages are linked to the purity of the nation, and also related to male honour and to national honour, the sexualities of women are heavily policed. Strict control of female sexuality is an essential mechanism of nation formation since women's sexuality is charged with political and symbolic meaning (Ranchod-Nilson 2006, Nagel 1998). Grace Mugabe's behaviour was positioned as a diversion from the acceptable template for the construction of Zimbabwean nationhood; hence she was punished and her behaviour justified the thwarting of women's political and public participation in ZANU-PF and national leadership.

In many ways Grace Mugabe is depicted as having betrayed Zimbabwe's masculine and national honour, and as embodying a direct negation of national expectations. Prevailing narratives point to her *mafikizolo* identity and lack of awareness of her limitations as reasons for her betrayal. Public narratives about Grace, therefore, largely project her as Robert Mugabe's careless wife who not only bewitched, adulterated and emasculated her husband, but did the same to ZANU-PF and the entire nation. The sacking of Mugabe was, therefore, seen as a necessary step to cleanse, disinfect and restore re/production and legacy to ZANU-PF and to the Zimbabwean nation.

“I was left in charge”: Of a son’s rightful inheritance from the father

Narratives of witchcraft and prostitution also pervade the MDC’s succession issue. The MDC was founded and led by Morgan Tsvangirai until his death in February 2018. Tsvangirai is hence generally regarded as the father of the MDC. During his lifetime the MDC failed to come up with a succession plan, which provided a lacuna in which the divisive leadership issue led to the formation of two factions, both of which contested the Zimbabwean elections in July 2018. One MDC faction was led by Nelson Chamisa and the other was headed by Thokozani Khupe. A gender script was evident in the debate regarding succession, since male leadership was made common-sensical.

At the MDC congress in 2014 Nelson Chamisa was a candidate for the post of Secretary General, but ultimately lost to Douglas Mwonozora. Former President Morgan Tsvangirai then appointed Chamisa as a vice-president of the MDC, allegedly disregarding the party’s constitution.

During the MDC party’s 19th anniversary celebrations Chamisa claimed that Tsvangirai had chosen him to lead the party.¹⁵ He revealed that he had received blessing from Tsvangirai to assume leadership of the party when he addressed an audience at the Morgan Tsvangirai memorial lecture.¹⁶ On several occasions, Chamisa rose to head the MDC, which presented the greatest challenge to ZANU-PF rule since the country’s achievement of independence, presenting himself as Morgan Tsvangirai’s son. This was not merely to assert his loyalty to Tsvangirai and the

¹⁵ *Bulawayo 24* “Tsvangirai left power for me” <https://bulawayo24.com/index-id-news-sc-national-byo-148514.html>

¹⁶ *News Day* “Chamisa ringfences presidency” <https://www.newsday.co.zw/2019/02/chamisa-ringfences-presidency/>

MDC and to draw attention to the fact that he had been politically mentored by Tsvangirai, but also to claim his rightful inheritance, i.e. leadership of the party. He therefore played out the MDC leadership wrangle within dominant patriarchal notions of family to make his ascendance to power seem more sensible.

Chamisa claimed, “*Ndakasiigwa chitanda namudhara Tsvangirai?*” (Tsvangirai passed on the baton to me). The late Morgan Tsvangirai is generally referred to as the father (*mudhara*) of the MDC party. In the succession debate, Chamisa presented himself as the loyal son of the late Morgan Tsvangirai, and he was described in the same manner by most of his supporters. This naturalised and normalised Chamisa’s role in the MDC in the post-Tsvangirai era. Nelson Chamisa re/presented Thokozani Khupe as a mother who should not compete with a young man and seek to take on the role that his father had played – instead, she should assist the young man to claim his rightful inheritance. This located Khupe in the traditional female role of mothering and caring, and thus maintained the status quo. Generally, it is expected that an heir will be male; females are not considered legitimate heirs. Elias Mudzuri, who had been appointed together with Chamisa as Vice-President, and who was also a contender to become MDC President, was re/presented by Chamisa as *mudhara* (an old man), a narrative which made him irrelevant to the new generation that was expected to take over and to move the party forward. This aligned with the issue of generational consensus central to Chamisa’s attainment of power in the party, as well as with his campaign to become President.

When Khupe insisted that, based on her seniority, she should be made MDC President, she was maligned as resembling an estranged mother intending to steal her son’s

inheritance and to disturb the natural family order. In this regard Khupe disregarded historically correct femininities required to fit in within the MDC, which invited punishment from conservatives. In politics and nationalist discourse, the symbolic family used to provide guidance and police actions frequently constructs women as central to the procreation of citizens and re/production of the nation, while men are given positions of protection and leadership (Wenk 2000, McClintock 1993, Hunt 1992). The general narrative that emerged when Khupe insisted on taking the MDC's top post was that only a witch-mother and a prostitute would want to destroy her son, to rob him of hope, to rob him of his future and to deny him his rightful inheritance.

In protest against what she regarded as the unconstitutional appointment of Nelson Chamisa and Elias Mudzuri as MDC Vice-Presidents, Thokozani Khupe stopped attending the MDC's national executive meetings, but continued to attend Parliament, which offended some MDC members. On 22 May 2018, when the Supreme Court in Harare considered a dispute between the Khupe and Chamisa factions over the use of the party name and symbols, a crowd of MDC supporters outside the court sang derogatory jingles as she left the court. As she moved towards her vehicle, the crowd followed her, singing:¹⁷

Iwe Khupe
Tengesa uwone mashura
Tengesa uwone
Iwe bure
Tengesa uwone mashura
Tengesa uwone
Hure bure bure bure bure...

¹⁷ Herald "Chamisa faction draws flak over Khupe attack" <https://www.herald.co.zw/chamisa-faction-draws-flak-over-khupe-attack/> ; MDC-T supporters vie for Dr Khupe' blood <https://gr-tv.com/tv/mdc-t-supporters-vie-for-dr-khupe-s-blood-qzsQ5pk7qkQ.html>

[Khupe, if you sell out you will be severely punished,
if you prostitute the party you will be severely
punished]

Hence Khupe was branded a sell-out. In Zimbabwean politics identification as a sell-out has a historical trajectory attached to the notion of *Chimurenga* and usually the image is that of a female. One of Zimbabwe's early nationalists, Ndabaningi Sithole, said:

*...clearly, the honourable choice is the life of hardship,
even death, than to go down in the annals of a nation as
a collaborator or indeed a woman. The choice before me is
simple: am I a man or a woman?* (Sithole 1970: 144-145).

Seeing sell-outs as women sexualises the issue by making it synonymous with sexual penetration by a foreign body. This explains why the MDC and specifically, Tsvangirai, was taunted by ZANU-PF members and accused of being homosexual: the idea was to feminise party members and hence imply their unfitness to lead the nation (Mawere 2016). There is a clear naturalisation of prostitution, defilement, weakness, homosexuality and betrayal in femininity. Anyone identified as a sell-out attracts the gaze of gate-keepers, and has harsh punishment meted out to them.

Since the MDC's formation its members have also categorised political rivals as sell-outs, inviting those who are patriotic to crush such forms of national betrayal. The MDC's founding President, Morgan Tsvangirai, frequently utilised this narrative himself. The adoption of such slurs by the MDC reflects a re/production of ZANU-PF politics and reveals how this notion is a ZANU-PF theme that has persisted in the MDC. In the song quoted above, *Tenges*

uwone mashura is a warning to Khupe that she will be severely punished if she betrays the party. As a single mother and an independent woman, Khupe signifies women unrestricted by marriage, a structure that had been abused by both colonial and post-independence patriarchy and used as an instrument for women's confinement. At the same time, she represents single women who are regarded as social deviants and whose sexuality is always under the suspicious male gaze.

When Thokozani Khupe was allegedly harangued and beaten by MDC youth at Tsvangirai's funeral in Humanikwa, Buhera, the song quoted above was sung, together with others with insulting themes, including *Into oyenzayo siyayizonda* [Your behaviour is a disappointment] and *Hatidi zvokupihwa order nemasasikamu* [We do not want instructions from mad people].¹⁸ In an interview Khupe said that she believed the attacks on her took on tribal and gender lines. She claimed that she was attacked because she was a woman.¹⁹

Thokozani Khupe's sexuality, like that of Joice Mujuru and Grace Mugabe, received the patriarchal gaze. It was manipulated in ways that purported to show her as unfit to lead the MDC. Her association with Mnangagwa marks her as an estranged MDC mother who is a potential point for foreign penetration, and who has also permitted a foreign and polluting body, namely ZANU-PF, to penetrate the MDC. Allowing her to assume the party presidency was seen as adulterating the party.

Khupe's identity is that of a single mother who usurps the son's inheritance, in order to benefit her lovers while destroying the family. This narrative entrenches Chamisa's

¹⁸ Drama at Tsvangirai's Funeral: MDC supporters attack Thokozani Khupe <https://youtu.be/-thteCEW-hI>

¹⁹ MDC-T Khupe breathes fire after violent attack at Tsvangirai burial <https://www.voazimbabwe.com/a/mdc-t-vp-tsvangirai-burial/4263498.html> Violent clashes between the Khupe and Chamisa factions erupted at Tsvangirai's funeral forcing Khupe and her faction to hide in a grass-thatched hut, which Chamisa's supporters allegedly wanted to burn down.

insistence on securing party leadership within dominant patriarchal family structures. Such patriarchal family structures have been used to inform nation-craft, as the family structure is seen as a microcosm of the nation. In this sense the use of violence to defend the family is permissible; hence MDC succession politics have been characterised by violence and the presence of semi-military brigades.

In the song mentioned previously, the name *Khupe* is interchanged with *bure* (whore), a derogatory Shona word used to describe women identified as prostitutes or as having been sexually penetrated by a number of men. Khupe is located as selling out her body for penetration (*kutengeswa*) by a foreign body, ZANU-PF for her personal gains. In Zimbabwe, compelling a woman to take on such an identity is an attack on the woman's personality, her humanity and her credibility. It also provides evidence of how women's bodies are policed by patriarchy, and how such policing is used to deny women the opportunities which men enjoy. In policing women's sexuality men assert their authority to define the nation (Mayer 2000).

During colonialism African traditional leaders colluded with the colonial state to restrict the movement of African women in urban areas, leading to organised women's campaigns, such as the 1934 beer hall boycotts, as a fight for social space (Barnes 1992). The post-independence government has also restricted women's free movement in various ways. In 1982 the government granted women who were 18 years or older the legal status of adults. However, in the following year the government embarked on Operation Clean-up, in which over 6 000 women, including ex-combatants, were arrested by soldiers and police on a charge of prostitution because they moved about unaccompanied after nightfall (Ranchod-Nilson 2006). Such surveillance

of women has continued, with multiple arrests of women entertainers like Bev Sibanda (Mawere 2016). Use of derogatory language to address Thokozani Khupe was a way to restrict her political space within the MDC while opening up room for Nelson Chamisa to manoeuvre.

Women's sexualities are linked to politics. Identifying Khupe as *bure* reminds us how all women are seen as unable to protect the purity and integrity of the self, their parties or nations. A popular narrative is that women are more likely to engage in betrayal and should not be trusted. Thokozani Khupe's sexual identity was used to prohibit her from leading the MDC.

The Chamisa faction called Khupe *bure* to pathologise her. In Zimbabwe women labelled as prostitutes have been associated with the spread of incurable infections such as HIV. Thokozani Khupe was further presented as poisonous and hostile to the survival of the MDC, with allegations that she fronted the interests of ZANU-PF and of Mnangagwa. Narratives of her alleged affair with Mnangagwa suggested that Khupe was poisoned, and her ambition to lead the MDC was seen as symptomatic of a poisoned body.

Khupe's surname was Shona-nised to *Khupenga/Kupenga*, to denote derangement. The permanence of Khupe's alleged madness was emphasised by naming her Thokozamu, an apparent reference to her single breast, since she had lost a breast to cancer earlier in life. This narrative depicted how Khupe's poisonous political condition was clearly imprinted on her body and was permanent.

As a woman Khupe has been sexualised and presented as a body penetrated by or with, the potential of being penetrated by enemies of the party and hence undermining the purity

of the MDC. The song *Hatidi zvokupihwa order nemasasikamu* affirms refusal to take instructions from a party leadership that had been penetrated and polluted by ZANU-PF.

Let them climb but bring them down because they cannot shine

Society is uncomfortable with women who engage in sexual relations before marriage, as well as with women involved in extra-marital affairs, divorced women, single women, single mothers and women who succeed. The plots against Joice Mujuru, Grace Mugabe and Thokozani Khupe largely exemplify the fear of strong, independent and daring women in both the public sphere and the political economy.

Vilification of women who try to climb political ladders is not unique to Zimbabwe – it is a regional and global phenomenon. Nkosazana Dlamini Zuma, senior in both the African National Congress (ANC) and in South African national politics, lost to Cyril Ramaphosa in the ANC party elections of 2018. Nkosazana Dlamini Zuma was expected to become South Africa's first female president but her political ambitions were shattered because of her links with President Jacob Zuma, and also because of discomfort with women in leadership. Joyce Banda, the first female president of Malawi, was accused of corruption and removed from office. In the USA Hillary Clinton lost in the presidential elections of 2016. Generally, women are allowed to take political office but they are seldom trusted to fill top positions that require greater agency.

Gendered and Sexual Imagi(nations) and the 2018 Zimbabwean E(r)ections

The election rhetoric

The previous sections are a background to what unfolded during the Zimbabwe 2018 elections and afterwards.

Rhetoric played an important role in Zimbabwe's previous elections. Zimbabwe's 2018 election narrative, especially the messages and the election imagery employed, as well as the re/constructions of the identities of the main contestants, Chamisa and Mnangagwa, mirror prevailing gendered, sexualised and macho-nationalist discourses, not only in Zimbabwe but globally.

Party and national leadership are constructed as the natural role of men, and women are relegated to supporting roles, or to physical and symbolic objects of the manifestation of male power and authority. This continues the existing discourse of specific roles for each gender (Mawere 2016, Eisenstein 2004, Peterson 2000, Nagel 1998, McClintock 1993). In various ways both Chamisa and Mnangagwa exhibit masculine qualities of leadership and heroism, and their capacities and right to power rest on notions of sexual virility and the undermining of female bodies. This is a continuation of the *amadoda sibili/varume chaivo* (real men) narrative that characterised the rule of former President Robert Mugabe.

In the 2018 elections the manhood narrative that characterises Zimbabwean nationhood was dramatised through electoral rhetoric characterising political campaigns involving winning or losing as gendered and sexualised.

Names and political messaging

The 2018 elections saw the emergence and circulation of strong masculinist epithets to describe the main candidates. Names have meanings in specific contexts insofar as they are based on ideology (Pfukwa 2003). Although names can be an expression of character and intentions that are positive for those who are named and those who do the naming, names can also be adulterated to convey negative meanings. Designations such as *Nero*, *Wamba dia Wamba* and *The Bullet Train* were associated with Nelson Chamisa's presidential campaign, and supposedly referred to his capacity to lead the MDC and to become the new Zimbabwean president.

These designations idealised Chamisa as youthful, virile, modern and powerful, and positioned him as an alternative national leader to Mnangagwa, who was depicted as weak and older. *Nero* was a name used to cordially and informally refer to Chamisa and it constructed him as open and approachable. *Wamba dia Wamba* associated him with Ernest Wamba dia Wamba, a former academic at Harvard who had been a militant in civil conflict in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC). It portrayed Chamisa as militant yet intelligent, hence as someone who applies a combination of force and reason. *The Bullet Train* situated him not only as young, modern, fast, intelligent, intelligible and forceful, but also as able to discharge fast and powerful bullets that re/produced Zimbabwe. This projected his identity in both military and sexual terms.

Since such narratives linked with some of Chamisa's popular political banter, they constructed him as a phallic, masculinist figure whilst feminising Emmerson Mnangagwa, because of the latter's reputed loss of sexual virility owing to age. Mnangagwa was seen as the converse of Chamisa, as he symbolised a return to the past and was, therefore, unable to optimally re/produce the nation.

In contrast, Mnangagwa's presidential campaign was associated with the name *Ngwenya* (Lacoste or crocodile), constructing him as powerful and calculating, given the power, cunning and precision of attack of the crocodile. If one considers the manner in which Mnangagwa took control of both ZANU-PF and the Zimbabwean nation, one can see how he could be perceived as patient, tactful, lethal and powerful.

The epithet *Crocodile* positioned Mnangagwa as brave and as possessing a rich liberation war history and respectable masculinity, associating him with the famous Crocodile Gang of the liberation war period (Mazarire 2017, Ncube & Chinouriri 2016, Tavuyanago 2013). Although Mnangagwa was not actually a member of the Crocodile Gang which carried out acts of sabotage and established the form that the liberation struggle took, he was certainly affected by it. In 1964, drawing inspiration from the Crocodile Gang, Mnangagwa helped destroy a Rhodesian steam locomotive at Masvingo Railway Station. He was caught and faced criminal charges. Mnangagwa narrowly escaped the death sentence because of his youth (Mazarire 2017, Chung 2010). The act of sabotage linked Mnangagwa to the Crocodile Gang and to the name Lacoste, which drew attention away from the disadvantages of his advanced age. However, in other circles, the epithet *Crocodile* reflects his shrewd, merciless and dangerous character. This fits in well with a history that links Mnangagwa with atrocities

such as the *Gukurahundi*, when civilians in the Midlands and Matebeleland provinces were killed under the guise of flushing out dissidents in the 1980s.

In order to suggest informality, Mnangagwa was also referred to using just his first two initials, E.D. In an interview with Sky News, during which he appealed to developed countries to re-engage with Zimbabwe, Mnangagwa said that he was as soft as wool, to counter his tough public image.²⁰

Given their competing masculinities, the 2018 elections became a public arena for Chamisa and Mnangagwa to demonstrate which of them had the power and authority necessary to father Zimbabwe. In doing so, both employed narratives of gender and sexuality, and referred to the bodies of women as if they constituted a playing field in the contestation for national leadership.

The bullet train and trophies of masculinity

Chamisa made himself popular through showing an aptitude for public speaking, based on skills acquired during pastoral training, as well as the use of both traditional Shona idioms and modern street slang. Yet taken out of context his use of language had gendered and sexist undertones, and gave an advantage to his competitor. Even read in context, his use of language demonstrates how gender, sexuality and the bodies of women provide convenient turf for political and nationalist expression, especially those that eulogise male power.

²⁰ Mnangagwa: 'I'm as soft as wool' <https://news.sky.com/video/mnangagwa-britain-is-better-with-female-pm-11463019>

Mnangagwa's social media mercenaries, *Varakashi*, tried to humiliate and trigger protests against Chamisa by decontextualising his political banter, implying that he was insensitive regarding gender issues and that he undermined women. The intention here was to generate political mileage for Mnangagwa and for ZANU-PF, rather than to debunk the prevailing normative masculine language of politics.

It is important to unpack language used by Chamisa, in order to show how it is part of the everyday and how it re/produces gendered texts. Prevailing gendered identities are naturalised, and enacted consciously and subconsciously, displaying how the naturalised language of politics and nationalism is grounded in gender insensitivity and sexism, as well as in the dangerous masculinities and violence that characterise Zimbabwean nationhood. The language shows evidence of the insidious elimination of women from politics and the use of women as political pawns or sacrificial lambs. Political expressions used in the 2018 Zimbabwean elections reveal how women are employed as symbolic objects in the struggle for male power and for nationalist constructions.

During his speech at the #RunForChange event in May 2018 in Harare, Chamisa made sensitive statements about the space of women and the need for strict gender divisions. When he introduced his wife to the public for the first time, he described to a significant extent the socially acceptable role of a good wife:

*Inini ndakataura ndikati mudzimayi wangu MaiChamisa
havaṣwanikwe kunyaya dzokuita sezvinoita vana
MaiMnangagwa nevamwe mai vavayaye zvekupesvuka
pesvuka... Vanenge vachibatsira baba vakatsigisa musha,
kwete kuti baba ndebvu, mai ndebvu, poita kunge mbudzi.*
[I made it clear from the onset that my wife, Mrs

Chamisa, will not be found jumping up and down as if she wants to usurp my role, as Mrs Mnangagwa and other women do. She will support me as the husband, holding the family together and in dignity, and not be at the same level and showing no difference as if we are goats, where both the she and the he goat have beards].²¹

Nelson Chamisa made the comment in the context of wives of national leaders becoming involved in politics and influencing their husbands.

However, what Chamisa also implied is that good men fail if they do not exercise control of their wives. He made it clear that he had established limits for his wife, as any reasonable man would do, thereby identifying himself as a 'real man'. He chided emasculated men whose wives robbed them of their manhood, and suggested that such men were incapable of running the country. He thus implied that Mnangagwa was demented when Mnagwanga referred to the apparent absence of Chamisa's wife from the public sphere: "I heard Mnangagwa saying, 'Where is Chamisa's wife? And, and I said, '*Aah aah aah, Garwe* is not right'."

Politics is clearly regarded as a game only for men. Chamisa revealed that his wife knew her proper place, and he attacked women who entered male spaces and public spaces, including the realm of politics. Chamisa implied that such behaviour represented an unacceptable psychological disorder.

Chamisa asserted his power and authority, and thus his fitness for the presidency through his ability to keep his wife in the right space, i.e. in the domestic sphere. For him,

²¹ Nelson Chamisa introduces his wife to #Run for change marathon participants <https://youtu.be/HL68LyTijxk>

failure to understand properly roles and responsibilities and to act accordingly accounted for Zimbabwe's failure to grow and flourish. ZANU-PF had failed to father the nation and it should, therefore, be relieved of this responsibility.

Nelson Chamisa used sexualised imagery to articulate ZANU-PF's failure to enable the nation to flourish.

Addressing another rally, he said:

*Haungati wagara nemwana wevaridzi usingamuvarisi
wozoti kuna vatezvara vava kuda kutora mwana wavo
chimbondipaino one night chete.*

[You cannot stay with someone's daughter without making her bear children, and then when your in-laws come for her, you ask to be given one more night with her.]

This metaphor suggests that ZANU-PF was given an opportunity to make the nation flourish but that it had failed. It is striking that such failure is seen in terms of heterosexual reproduction. Imagining of the nation as a heterosexual family is a global phenomenon (Peterson 2000). Those who failed to reproduce merited exclusion. This conflated with Chamisa's ridicule of Mnangagwa as too old, tired and wasted to re/produce the nation. Chamisa simultaneously presented himself as young, fresh and energetic, embodying the sexual virility necessary to re/produce the Zimbabwean nation, to get it to grow, and to provide the nation with the joys of motherhood.

Zimbabwe is imagined in terms of heterosexual re/production. To prove to Zimbabweans that he retained the necessary power and authority, Chamisa often referred to sexual virility as an appropriate indicator. At yet another

rally at Maboleni Business Centre in Lower Gweru where he challenged Mnangagwa, and where it is claimed that he said:

*As we go to an election this year, we must say goodbye to elderly leadership. We want young and energetic leaders like me. Is there anyone who can doubt that I am energetic? Just give me any woman here and see if I will fail to score.*²²

However, this passage was dismissed as incorrect reporting by the *Herald* newspaper. Chamisa spoke about what a developed area would look like and the kind of leadership that would achieve such development. His actual words were apparently: “*Asi kuti musvike ipapo, munoda mutungamiriri mutsva, a young man. Pane angadhauta here kuti mukandipa ndinogohwesa here chopu chopu?*” [For us to get to that level, we need a new and young leadership, is there anyone with doubts that I can score (achieve) in that regard?]²³

The *Herald* may have taken advantage of Chamisa’s careless statements about women, and selected certain parts of his speech to report out of context.

Nevertheless, in a context in which national development is expressed in terms of the reproduction of bodies, Chamisa’s reference to the elderly leadership of Mugabe and Mnangagwa which had failed to get the nation to flourish or to re/produce, new and youthful leadership had gendered and sexual undertones. This was especially the case when Chamisa’s youth was masculinised while Mnangagwa’s advanced years were feminised. Chamisa implied that the elderly leadership which Mnangagwa represented lacked the sexual virility necessary to re/produce Zimbabwe. In the

²² *Herald* “I can impregnate any woman, says Chamisa” <https://www.herald.co.zw/i-can-impregnate-any-woman-says-chamisa/>

²³ Did Chamisa brag about ‘impregnating any woman’? <https://zimfact.org/did-chamisa-brag-about-impregnating-any-woman/>

patriarchal nation of Zimbabwe, impotence is regarded as failure and men who are impotent are seen as emasculated. Chamisa located the future of the country in young men such as himself with the sexually virility required to re/produce Zimbabwe.

Using this logic, which conflated development and re/production, Chamisa's ability to 'score' became synonymous with sexual penetration and thus provided evidence of his virility or masculinity. Patriarchy is seen to objectify women's bodies and sexual organs. In this case scoring, i.e. the language of sport, was used to point toward Chamisa's energy and manhood. Women's legs were imagined as goal posts and women's vaginas reputedly could not resist Chamisa's strong and energetic shots. Sport is a major hegemonic instrument and is used in political articulation, implying that female bodies are sportsfields on which games are played (Mawere 2016, Lin, Lee & Nai 2008, Chomsky 1988).

Chamisa saw Zimbabwe as a failed nation because impotent men were at the helm, and thus the Zimbabwean nation resembled a female body that could only re/produce if penetrated by the right man. Hence Chamisa's capacity to impregnate attested to his ability to transform the nation and to make it re/produce. The elections, therefore, re/presented subjugation of the female body as an indicator of manhood and capacity, reminiscent of the sentiments of Eisenstein (2000), i.e. that the female maternal body is reduced to a space for configuring the nation. At the same time, erections, penetrations and potency are configured as symbols of power and authority. This obviously re/produced the politics of aggression seen in Zimbabwe.

Addressing his supporters at a rally in the United Kingdom, Chamisa suggested a wager to further buttress Mnangagwa's impotence, implying a lack of national support for the latter:

*If Mnangagwa wins 5% in a free election, I will give him my sister. I have a sister who just turned 18 and is looking for a husband.*²⁴

When Chamisa boasted that Mnangagwa would be given his young sister if he won the elections, he again drew attention to Mnangagwa's alleged incapacity to perform sexually. Chamisa's sister was a symbol of the nation. At 18 years of age, she was seen as young, fresh and capable of a healthy re/production, if given to the right capable man. Winning the nation was, therefore, like winning the sister; it was winning control of women, of the nation and of feminised men.

Chamisa's rhetoric reflects how sexual dysfunction emasculates men and robs them of masculine value. The rhetoric also brings to light how women are used and decided for, and even made the object of masculine transaction. Chamisa used female bodies to suggest a pitch on which masculinity is tested, and women become trophies given to the masculine force. Later in his campaign, after much pressure, Chamisa apologised for earlier statements, although he failed to admit to any fault in what he had said. He argued that he had simply meant to suggest the impossibility of Mnangagwa winning a free and fair election. A group of women who supported Chamisa issued a statement arguing that Chamisa's hyperbole had been taken too literally by his enemies and that it had been sensationalised by ZANU-PF's spin doctors. They argued

²⁴ News24 "Mnangagwa akahwinha ndomupa sisi vangu" <https://www.news24.com/Africa/Zimbabwe/mdc-leader-chamisa-under-fire-after-he-jokes-that-he-can-give-his-sister-18-to-mnangagwa-as-wife-20180508>

that it was ZANU-PF which had undermined and hurt women throughout its time in government.

Although inevitably political opponents try to take advantage of one another, absolving such use of language is frightening. It is important to challenge such banter, to interrogate why it exists and to ask why it takes the form that it does. It is also important to question why it is acceptable to use such sexualised political repartee and why female bodies have to be available for use in political communication. It is crucial to perturb such forms of political banter and hyperbole, since they are significant conveyors of toxic knowledge and practices. Although Mnangagwa winning free and fair elections was regarded as unthinkable, just as it was inconceivable for Chamisa to summarily marry off his sister to Mnangagwa, one needs to ask whether alternative ways to imagine the unthinkable are not available. Chamisa's statement revealed how patriarchy's control of women is common-sensical. It shows how women are viewed as goods to be traded, objects of wagers, and men's possessions, to be given willy-nilly to other men.

Depiction of women as trophies of men's victories was also characterised in the following statement made by Chamisa:

Varume vakadzvi muchaita vatatu vatatu kana nyika yanaka.

[When the country gets on the right path, men will have several wives each.]

This statement does not simply imply that Chamisa had no problem in accepting polygamous marriage. Rather, it mirrored Chamisa's depiction of women as objects of men's gratification and trophies of war. It also extended to how women who are members of political parties are viewed and

belittled. In MDC politics women who are active members of the party are referred to as *murivo wemusangano* (political relish and objects of amusement). They are generally regarded as loose and their presence in politics is limited to adding colour to politics or to sexually satisfying male party members, who are viewed as real, serious and active politicians. This is partly why women who are ambitious and who wish to assume top leadership positions are thwarted.

Chamisa turned to sexual hyperbole to describe ZANU-PF's patterns of spending, showing the extent to which sexuality is a commonly available form of expression in politics and economics. At various times, he said:

Vanhu vezanu pf vanodya mari kunge mishonga yemusana
[ZANU-PF members spend money as if they are
consuming Viagra].

In this case, Chamisa assumed that male virility was of supreme importance and worth spending money for to ensure its continuance.

As will be described below, Mnangagwa's campaign also used the bodies of women to perform politics. The *ED Pfee* slogan which was the hallmark for Mnangagwa campaigns, was gendered and sexually suggestive, and it generated sexual visual images.

Pfeerorists, sexual virility and power

As in the case of Nelson Chamisa, Mnangagwa's politics was also laden with gendered and sexist undertones, revealing the character of Zimbabwe's nation-craft. The manner in which Emmerson Dambudzo Mnangagwa ascended to the helm of state in Zimbabwe can be summed up in the idiom *ED Pfee*, associated with his election campaign, code-named *ED Pfee*.

Pfee is an idiophone characterising force, sharpness, the unexpected, the uninvited and piercing entry. In ZANU-PF circles, *pfee* was used in reference to Mnangagwa's forceful, resounding and strongly felt political success after fighting against all odds for the leadership of ZANU-PF. The meaning was expanded to describe his triumph in winning the Zimbabwean presidential elections, and hence in beating the famed youthful leader of the MDC, Nelson Chamisa. The slogan ED *pfee* and its jingle form *ED pfee* carried the same message: it announced the grandiose arrival of Mnangagwa as Number 1 in ZANU-PF and also Number 1 in Zimbabwe, just as was suggested in the song of Jah Prayzah (Mukudzeyi Mukombe) entitled *Kutonga Kwaro* (The Hero's Rule). The popular hit song *Kutonga Kwaro*, on the album of the same name, has lyrics that include *Rasvika Gamba* (The Hero has Arrived). The song characterised the November 2017 coup and the campaigns of Mnangagwa and ZANU-PF in the 2018 elections.²⁵ What ensued was the image of a nation in the hands of gigantic military masculinities prepared to, and able to, restore the Zimbabwean nation's lost masculinity.

Veneration of military masculinities as the proto-type of Zimbabwean nationalism is not new, as *Chimurenga*, which provides a foundation for Zimbabwean nationalism, has its origins in military masculinities. The word *Chimurenga* originates in the Shona ancestor, Murenga Sororenzou, who was a hunter, great warrior, war genius, war-song composer and nation-builder (Vambe 2012). The right to power and violence in the name of the nation is, therefore, permissible, as shown in the glorification of the masculine and militant Murenga (Mawere 2016). Such adoration of military masculinities leads to war being valued and legitimised in a manner that naturalises violence as a solution

²⁵ Video of Mnangagwa dancing to *Kutonga Kwaro* <https://youtu.be/hShgh9wS7-s> ...

to conflict, and makes militarism a foundation of society (Cock 1989). Such a militarist culture accounts for much of the violence in South Africa (Cock 2004) and for violence in Zimbabwean politics, especially around elections.

The origins of the slogan *pfee*, like those of many other political slogans, are difficult to identify. Munashe Chipadza, a student at the National University of Science and Technology (NUST), claimed to be behind the ED *Pfee* slogan. He posited that the slogan had its origins in the ZANU Pfee slogan, to which another e was added to suggest the ZANU PF entrance or win.²⁶ For him, the revision to ED *Pfee* reflects Mnangagwa's easy climb to the national presidency.

However, the popularity of the slogan is ascribed to Admire Sanyanga (Chief Shumba), the man behind the ED *Pfee* hit song and now a man accused of rape.²⁷ The arrest of Chief Shumba on alleged rape charges provides some dramatic irony to the sexual imagery and imaginations of the *pfee* idiom as its visuality became an actual manifestation of rape. The song became an anthem at the rallies of Mnangagwa and ZANU-PF.²⁸ Commenting on the song, Matotoba says, "This slogan does not only mean Emmerson Dambudzo *pfee*, but it also means Economic Development *pfee*", and he goes on to say that *pfee* means *kupinda pakamanikana* (a challenging manoeuvre).²⁹

In Zimbabwe, mimesis and jokes have become a powerful form of political expression. The term *pfee* has added to the many Zimbabwean mimeses and political expressions

²⁶ <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=g2yft5ltTQM>

²⁷ 'ED Pfee' singer in court on rape charges - <https://www.newsday.co.zw/2019/08/ed-pfee-singer-in-court-on-rape-charge/>

²⁸ <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=GYvVcdj-gLQ>

²⁹ <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=gPTaheYdXEc>; <https://bulawayo24.com/index-id-opinion-sc-columnist-byo-141030.html>

(Mawere 2016). As is true of other political expressions and mimeses, *pfee* has gained divergent meanings, some of them subversive. Particularly interesting is how the hit song ED *Pfee* has been dramatised in political discourse.

As an idiophone of manner describing force, sharpness, unexpected, uninvited and piercing entry, *pfee* resonates with penetration, rape, masculine and militarist force or entrance. Thus Mnangagwa's rise to power can be perceived in gendered and sexualised terms. A thin line separates ZANU-PF politics, Mnangagwa's political success and the politics of sexuality manifested in performances of the ED *Pfee* song at ZANU-PF rallies.³⁰ In this performance, a woman dances in a way that suggests that her body is being penetrated by a man. Penetration was used to celebrate Mnangagwa's victory, showing how the bodies of women are both illustrations and signifiers of male conquest. Political victories are equated with the male pleasure of penetrating female bodies. However, since defeated males are feminised, the body of the woman could also become a canvas on which to depict Nelson Chamisa's conquered body, because of his lack of experience of the liberation war.

Pfee approximates the nature of phallic objects such as penises, guns and bullets, knives, arrows and spears which should be sharp or forceful enough to pierce objects or bodies. Mnangagwa's entrance in November after the military-assisted coup, and his victory in the 2018 elections, despite his unpopularity and his advanced age, was acted out and summed up by *pfee*. Attaining national power during the Mnangagwa dispensation was depicted involving an act of force, as with characterisation of Robert Mugabe's period in office, when *genderised* masculinities or the politics of the balls determined national leadership (Mawere 2016).

³⁰ Performance of ED *Pfee* song at a ZANU-PF rally <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=gPTaheYdXEc>

It is reasonable to argue that *pfee* symbolises the use of masculinity, militarism and violence to gain power and to exercise authority.

The actual demonstration of *pfee* as a show of force was mirrored by the presence of the army and military machinery on the streets during ‘Operation Restore Legacy’ as a preparation for Mnangagwa’s entrance. The show of force was also demonstrated on 1 August 2018, following the disputed elections, when civilians took to the streets in protest. The army opened fire on the protesters, killing at least ten people and injuring many more. The militarist crushing of dissent was also seen in January 2019 during protests against fuel increases called by the ZCTU. Application of militarist masculinities in Zimbabwe has a long history and is foundational to the nation.



The fatal shooting of demonstrators on 01 August 2018.³¹

Zimbabwean nationalism is understood as contained in land-centric struggles summed up in the legacy of *Chimurenga*. For decades ZANU-PF has used the symbols and rhetoric

³¹ <https://www.zimbabwesituation.com/news/govt-exposes-insincerity-on-investigations-into-august-1-shootings/>

of the liberation war to legitimise its remaining in power. Imagined along the lines of the struggle and obligations to protect the legacy of the struggle, oppositional voices, women and emasculated men are accused of adulterating the *Chimurenga* legacy. They need to be kept under control and their influence on national leadership needs to be curtailed. ZANU-PF members who have dissented have had their life stories rewritten, and heroism and glory associated with the liberation war erased from the records.

Zimbabwean nationhood has, therefore, been narrated as under threat from outsiders or pollutants, hence requiring the military presence of sons of the soil to counter such threats. A liberationist narrative has been constructed in which national protection and leadership is preserved for those with liberation war credentials, while those without such experience are seen as pollutants. The way has also been paved for the involvement of the army in politics. In Zimbabwe's game of power and dis/possession *jambanja*, which means violent force, is usually used since enemies need to be vanquished. Militarised masculinities are, therefore, seen as prudent in Zimbabwean politics and in nation-craft (Mawere 2016).

Since it evokes the nature of phallic objects and phallic force, the ED *pfee* slogan and jingle is a performance of potency, especially given the context in which Mnangagwa was chided by Chamisa as being elderly and incapacitated. ED *Pfee* is similar to some of the sexualised jingles used in the construction of former president Robert Mugabe during previous elections. For example, the jingle *Bhora Musedhe* (Strike the Ball into the Net), used during the Mugabe era, evoked an image of forceful penetration of the vaginas of women as symbolic of political victory (Mawere 2016). Such sexual images propel violent masculinities and naturalise

conquering of the bodies of women. What has thus surfaced is that the Mugabe election and ruling culture has continued in the post-Mugabe era, which raises questions regarding how the new dispensation differs from the old one.

One detects recurring features in the language and idiomatic expressions of Nelson Chamisa and Emmerson Mnangagwa as they competed for power. Politics, elections and governance in Zimbabwe have manifested as erections and penetrations of feminised bodies.

General e(r)ections: Penetrating and re(producing) Zimbabwe

DITITO BAR 🗣️ TALK! Zimbos has no chill, VP Chiwenga went to Russia to update Putin on the issues affecting Zim right now, asked what the problem is and he simply said we are having problems with our erections! He came back with plane load of viagras, on my way to get my share



A joke about Vice-President Chiwenga's pronunciation (source: https://twitter.com/sekuru_gudo/status/1029209037102039041)

In Zimbabwe, it is absurd to talk of the 2018 elections without mentioning the language of male erections and penetration. Using the renowned mispronunciation of 'elections' by Constantino Guveya Chiwenga, the Zimbabwean Vice-President, the militarist and king-maker, they are indeed 'erections' (as shown in the joke above). Given that the Zimbabwean context conflated penetration and victory, the 2018 elections were strong performative acts of erections, as shown in the electoral rhetoric of Nelson Chamisa and Emmerson Mnangagwa. In the Zimbabwean context elections are associated with firmness, force, violence and tension, characterised by guns, bullets, spears and erections. Conflation of erections with power and authority is not unique to Zimbabwe. It has been witnessed elsewhere when violent masculinities have manifested.

The close relationship between the penis and weapons of destruction is demonstrated further in images which characterise former South African President Jacob Zuma. Zuma's favourite song, *Umshini Wami* (My Machine Gun), was sung by Zuma's supporters during his trial in 2005/6 on charges of rape brought by Fezekile Ntukela Kuzwayo, aka Khwezi.³² Although in its original sense the machine gun refers to a lethal weapon, it also alludes to Zuma's militance as a South African liberation struggle hero.

Zuma's militance in the liberation struggle was matched by his sexual militance. The context extended the meaning to Zuma's other powerful weapon, his penis or masculinity, which he allegedly used to shatter the body of the complainant (as well as to impregnate a number of young women out of wedlock when he already had several wives of his own). It is interesting that the song was most often

³² Zuma leaves court after judge withdraws from trial <https://youtu.be/JOWtzQhPnY>

sung in periods when Zuma faced adversity and when he needed to assert his power and authority (Suttner 2009, Gunner 2008).

Research literature documents how frequently rape is used as a weapon of war. Using a woman's figure, Zimbabwe was projected both as feminine and as a trophy to be seized by the most masculine individual. The man who exhibits greater virility is entitled to penetrate the nation and is, therefore, afforded the right to control and own the nation. Chamisa used the narrative of sexuality and the bodies of women in an attempt to feminise and banish Mnangagwa from the community of men and to position himself as the most capable available man. ZANU-PF was convinced that Mnangagwa's manhood and potency were embodied in his requisite history, since he was an experienced member of the tried and tested *amadoda sibili* and, his electoral victory was, therefore, seen as inevitable. The language and imagi(nations) of the election were in many ways sexualised and gendered. They mirrored a grotesquely masculinist and militarist state with a future imagined in terms of erections and penetrating woman's bodies.

Erection of a straight-jacket leadership and a masculine-military state

Robert Mugabe's regime, which came to an end in November 2017, was known to be one of the most parochial and violent totalitarian regimes in modern Africa. His excessive use of masculinity and the creation of a masculinist securocracy that later on deposed him are well documented (Sachikonye 2011, Kriger 2003). The recent, more visible role played by the military in giving direction to ZANU-PF and the government, which

led to the demise of Robert Mugabe, reflected the extent to which ZANU-PF as a party was militarised, as was the Zimbabwean state. The use of brutal force was evident during the land occupations of the 2000s and during earlier elections, in which the MDC won a majority of votes cast but was regarded as a national threat by ZANU-PF, and hence election results were rigged. Lately there has been evidence of the increasing use of force, including public displays of military weapons and military personnel, military roadblocks and arbitrary arrests in what the military has termed 'Operation restore legacy', which saw Mugabe's downfall and the accession to power of Emmerson Mnangagwa. When he took office, Mnangagwa appointed senior military leaders, war veterans and ardent supporters to crucial positions in both ZANU-PF and the government.

During his long period in office, Robert Mugabe expressed sentiments such as that Zimbabwe had emerged as a free nation only as a result of the use of the gun and the shedding of blood. This articulates that Zimbabwe has a warrior-masculinist national project and makes sense in a country where the state feminised men who did not go to war. The Zimbabwean state also feminised men who could not enact conventional male roles or who showed no evidence of manliness, hence their re/invention as homosexuals in a heterosexual nation founded on the *Chimurenga* ethos and the re/production of the land. Mugabe was feminised through his association with the G40 group and the usurpation of his position by his allegedly poisonous wife. The Mnangagwa dispensation was positioned as rescuing the nation and thus as restoring a lost legacy.

Under Mnangagwa's government there has been no shift from the militarism, the heavy-handedness and the politics of fecundity associated with the Mugabe regime. The

cleansing ceremony in the post-Mugabe era has turned out to be a refinement of the old system, trapping Zimbabweans even further in the very system that Mugabe helped to create. A closer look reflects that Mnangagwa's appointment solidified the Zimbabwean national project, trapping people in discourses of militarism and macho nationalism. Although Robert Mugabe left office in November 2017, his systems of control remained intact and were perfected in order to be useful to the 'new' dispensation: thus Zimbabwe continues to be a masculinist and military state. Celebration of the new dispensation suggested the precarious future of a fly attracted into a crocodile's mouth.

Unfortunately, the MDC party has not shifted away from the liberationist narrative of ZANU-PF that richly rewarded violence, warrior masculinities and macho men. Violence is central to the MDC's politics of survival, especially when ruptures occur within the party. The violent split of the party in 2018 was revealing as it carried within it gendered and sexualised texts. The succession battle in the MDC took place along parochial lines, with power and authority within the party reserved for men.

The prevailing politics and nation-craft of the 2018 elections removed hope for the creation of a more democratic space that offered equal opportunities to all citizens. Mnangagwa's takeover of Zimbabwe with the support of the military and of war veterans, and Chamisa's takeover of the MDC using similar aggressive tactics and utilising a culture of male privilege, were a continuation of Zimbabwe's gendered and militarised nationalism.

The emergence of Mnangagwa as head of state and government did not bring about change with regard to the position of women in Zimbabwe. The small number of

women who contested the 2018 elections was cause for concern. Very few women are in positions of influence in Mnangagwa's 'new dispensation', mirroring the on-going restrictions that women face. Those who have been affected are temporarily masculinised, because of their history in the liberation struggle or their ties to it.

The limited number of women in positions of authority suggests an absence of meaningful progress in moving away from Mugabeism. Statistics alone are insufficient to reveal the extent to which Zimbabwean society is gendered. A meaningful shift does not depend on just replacing men with women, or having equal numbers of men and women in positions of authority. Rather, it lies in real representation founded on unpacking and replacing a system of knowledge imbedded in everyday performances that construct and normalise negative masculinities, and that disadvantage women.

Conclusion

In Zimbabwean politics women have been used, exposed and abandoned in order to restore gendered and militarist nationalist identities. Women have been sacrificial pawns to preserve the masculinist politics of nationhood that naturalise the supremacy of male power and authority.

In different ways Joice Mujuru, Grace Mugabe and Thokozani Khupe all took on the challenge of being strong women in politics. However, when they trespassed on male territory, all were silenced. This has also been the experience of women elsewhere, including in South Africa. For example, Winnie Madikizeka-Mandela was an anti-apartheid activist in her own right, not only because of her marriage to Nelson Mandela. Yet despite the fact that she was imprisoned, banished, restricted, placed in solitary confinement and tortured, narratives of her contribution to the South African liberation struggle nevertheless construct her along the lines of supporting her husband. When Winnie Mandela and Nelson Mandela divorced, narratives regarding Winnie maligned her directly and indirectly as a malevolent woman.

It has been shown that women's lives are constrained in comparison with the lives of men. When women cross certain boundaries they are seen as having defiled bodies, and there is a belief that they need to be excised from the body politic. What define Joice Mujuru, Grace Mugabe and Thokozani Khupe to the extent that their contributions to the national project and their political activism are erased need to be seen in the context of gendered and sexualised bodies under the male gaze and, therefore, policed to confinement.

The strength of Joice Mujuru and Grace Mugabe depended on proximity to the masculine and military state. In a similar way, Thokozani Khupe's power was related to her proximity to Morgan Tsvangirai, a strong trade unionist and opposition leader. In the polarised society of Zimbabwe, with its gendered straight-jacket identities, the political ambitions of Joice Mujuru, Grace Mugabe and Thokozani Khupe were seen to disturb Zimbabwe's body politic. The three women were, therefore, sacrificed for the greater good of the masculinist and military state and of political formations.

The 2018 elections in Zimbabwe were a re/production of Zimbabwean nation-craft. The elections acted, authorised and left behind a gendered script and a highly masculinised socio-political terrain. In this way the elections re/produced Zimbabwean nation-craft in which military masculinities dominate and determine whether or not the nation will survive. This ensures on-going limitation of women in politics and in public life; anyone who attempts to ignore the boundaries is crushed. There is clearly an urgent need for further unpacking of issues of gender, sexuality and nation at the symbolic and epistemological levels.

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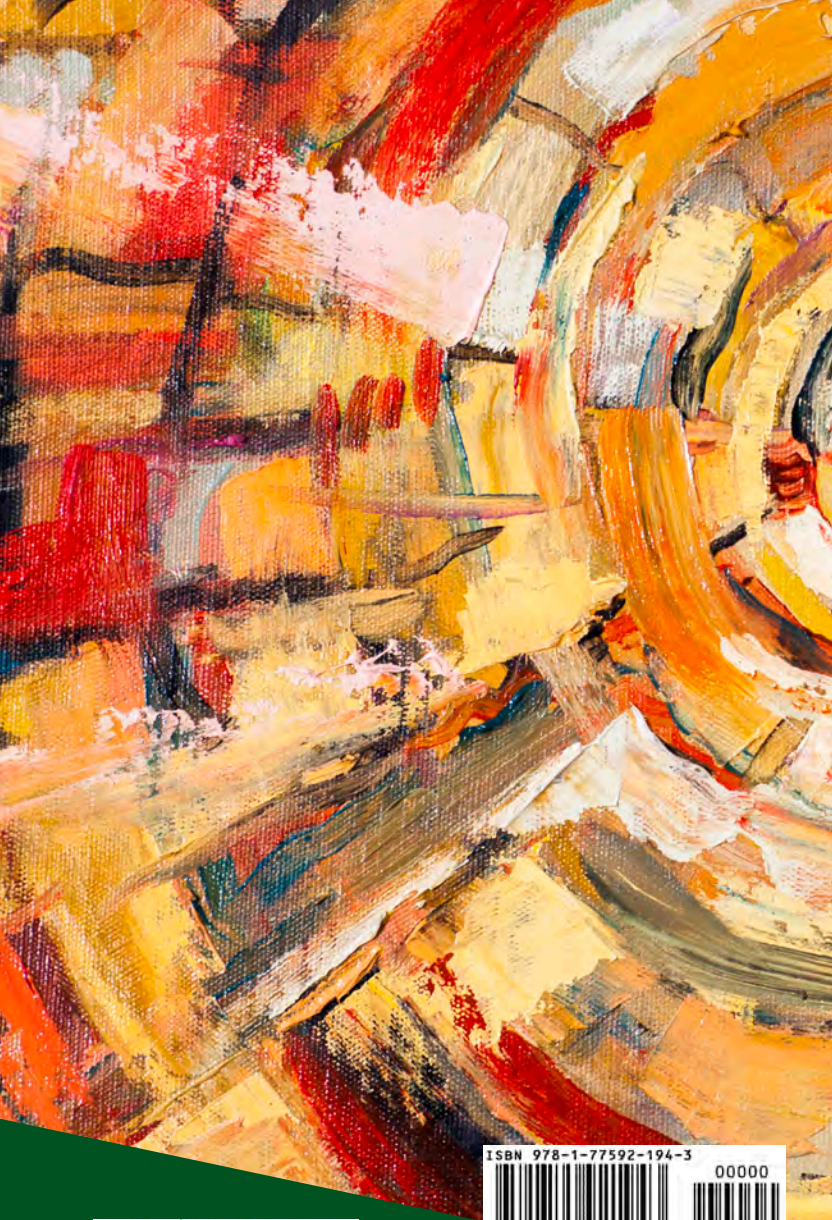
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About the author



Tinashe Mawere is a researcher at the Centre for Sexualities, AIDS and Gender (CSA&G) at the University of Pretoria (UP). His interests are identity construction, gender and sexualities and the workings of popular culture in political and social contexts. Tinashe joined the CSA&G and UP's Department of Historical and Heritage Studies, as a postdoctoral researcher in May 2017. Prior to this, he was at the University of Western

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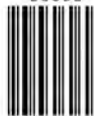
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ISBN 978-1-77592-194-3



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