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ZIMBABWE: The Politics of Peace

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The past political developments in Zimbabwe (Rhodesia) have led many people to ask the question: "Is there a politics of peace?" The long and protracted efforts for a settlement of the Rhodesian crisis since 1965, in which round-table discussions have gone hand in hand with resumption of war efforts, necessarily point to an affirmative answer.

The crisis has, without any doubt, become a classic situation in relation to the above question—given the fact that peace efforts have been sandwiched between two equally strong, and but complementary sets of contradictions: one internal (domestic), and the other international.

Internal Contradictions

I. Nationalism versus colonial imperialism.

In Africa, more so than in Asia, imperialism was closely tied to a bicephalous colonial design. In the territories colonized by both the British and the French in West Africa, where the terrain was less hospitable to European settlement, the policy of "colonies de passage" was devised. ["Colonies de passage"—non-settler colonies, i.e., territories not designated for permanent settlement and whose sole purpose was providing raw materials and markets to the mother country (metropole).]

After World War II, faced with the irrefutably crushing fact that these territories were becoming a burden on the national treasuries of the mother country due to steadily dwindling mineral resources and the mounting nationalist demands, the British and the French resolved to deal with the idea of political independence, but with the economic infrastructure remaining under the uncompromised control of the Europeans and the mother countries.

Also, in the territories occupied by the French in North Africa (Algeria) and by the British in East Africa (Kenya), and Southern Africa (Rhodesia and South Africa) where the climatic conditions were more hospitable to European settlement, the policy of "colonies de peuplement" was enacted. ["Colonies de peuplement"—settler colonies, i.e., territories whose underlying purpose was providing a permanent homestead to whites.]

In keeping with this reality, the idea of independence for the so-called "natives," as was suggested in the case of the "colonies de passage," was at best contemplated in terms of a thousand years, and at worst, portrayed as an anathema to the cause of "Western civilization and Christianity."

Whereas in the "colonies de passage" the African had to channel his nationalistic instincts and demands only against the metropole, in the "colonies de peuplement" he had respectively a de jure master (Britain and France as colonial titularies), and a de facto master (the settler population along with the semi-autonomous internal government). Zimbabwe is a good illustration of the "colonies de peuplement."

As in many other parts of Africa and Asia, the early European implantation efforts in Africa met with stiff resistance from the indigenous populations. In Zimbabwe, the war of resistance and liberation of 1896-1898, left any equivocal doubt in the minds of the Europeans that the different peoples of Zimbabwe were capable of inter-ethnic unity, utilizing traditional religious practices and symbolism.

Cecil Rhodes and his British South African Company, despite their victory, earnestly sought the good auspices of the vaShona and ama-Ndebele chiefs in an effort to safeguard peace and harness the maximization of their anticipated economic interests and rewards. [vaShona—derogatory used by the amaNdebele to refer to the group really known as vaZezuru.]

Administered since 1891 as a chartered property of Cecil Rhodes and his South African Company, Zimbabwe, then known as Rhodesia, became in 1923 a British dominion. Within this period, the need for a greater white demographic strength led to a sizeable increase of settlers in the territory.

Along with this increase, the territory gradually witnessed the rise of two social pyramids, politically compartmentalized, yet economically interconnected. On the one hand, there was and still is the white settler society divided into four major socio-economic classes: (1) the large-scale capitalist bourgeoisie controlling transport (railways, coal production) and engaged in primary production and speculation, (2) the white rural bourgeoisie operating in mining and agriculture, (3) the white petty bourgeoisie, urban in character, (4) the white wage workers.

On the other hand, the African or "native society" — at the onset structured along ethnic lines — took on socio-economic characteristics indicative of the impact of culture contact: (1) the traditional African ruling elite, (2) the Western-trained elite (teachers, preachers, clerks, etc.), (3) the African petty bourgeoisie made up of traders and shopkeepers, (4) the African urban workers, (5) the African peasantry.

The polarization of these two societies was, and remains, indissolubly linked to the irresistible fears of the settlers of being overpowered by and thus losing out to the majority African population.

Conflicting theories and positions have been respectively advanced relative to the
issue of unity of the white settler society in the political process. D. J. Murray, in The Governmental System of Southern Rhodesia, argued that the white settler society was not united politically; that significant difference of interests existed among them. Earlier, C. Leys, in European Politics in Southern Rhodesia, presented another view which stated: "in spite of some differences in status or occupation among them, the white settlers constituted a socially and materially privileged group which evinced an overriding group solidarity," and that the sense of insecurity vis-à-vis the African majority was the underlying psychological mechanics for this cohesive racial front.

Zimbabwean scholars C. M. Utete and L. Kapungu agree with Leys' thesis. To them, in addition, the policies of the perennial ruling party from 1923 to 1962, i.e., the Southern Rhodesian Party, were equivalent to peace treaties designed to placate the African majority. [The Southern Rhodesian Party became the United Federal Party in 1962 when Southern Rhodesia became a part of the Central African Federation.] In particular, they have pointed out that not only did these policies remain unchallenged by the majority of the white settler society, equally important is the fact that they instilled an array of false hopes in the African majority.

Paradoxically, the conspicuous presence of discriminatory legal acts, such as the 1930 Land Apportionment Act, which gave the settlers 77% of the economically productive land, made a blatant mockery of this unweathering belief in the constitutional right to the use of the ballot box. The stiff qualifications accompanying the right to vote (property, income and education) further compromised the ballot box issue.

That the African society was overtaken by this constitutional promise is clearly indicated in its various responses from 1923 to 1962. Using, first, improvement associations such as the Rhodesian Bantu Voters' Association (RBVA) and the Rhodesian Bantu Congress (RBC), and later supplementing them with trade union organizations, such as the Reformed Industrial and Commercial Union (RICU) and the African Workers' Trade Union, the Western-trained African elite exerted itself to bring about changes in the economic and social structures by pressing demands for reform.

Of the various actions taken and demands articulated by these organizations, the most threatening and upsetting to the interests of the white settler society was a strike by railway workers, led by B. B. Muromo, in 1945. "By the time the strike was suppressed by the government," writes Utete, "the Africans had won some concessions including higher wages, improved working conditions, and the recognition of their union, the Railway African Workers' Union."7

Apart from the concessions won by the railway workers, the only tangible result to have emanated from the whole package of reformist pressures was the paternalistic and feasible promise from Britain to make use of her "reserved powers" — meaning, Britain would veto any legislation that discriminated against the Africans or changed the Land Apportionment Act. (Earlier, in 1922, Britain had actually recommended the amalgamation of Southern Rhodesia with the Union of South Africa. This was rejected at the polls by the White Settler Society).

In the course of the development of the greater social and political consciousness, particularly among the Western-trained African elite, the period between 1953 and 1962 was the most crucial. It culminated in the boycott of the December 1962 elections by the National Democratic Party (NDP).

During this period, Britain, in an effort to forestall the irreversible wind of change blowing over Africa and Asia, and in an effort to safeguard the interests of the White Settler Society, decided to amalgamate Northern Rhodesia (now Zambia), Southern Rhodesia (now Zimbabwe), and Nyasaland (now Malawi) into a federation. Thus, together with the white liberals, Sir Edgar Whitehead, the prime minister of the old Central African Federation, pressed hard for the implementation of the policy of multiracialism, co-opting in the end most of the western-trained African elite into this scheme — a scheme which was intrinsically designed to serve as a peace mechanism between the African society and the settler society.

Davis M'Gabe wrote that "by the early 1950s, the quasi-political multi-racial society had become the fad. Hardwicke Holderness, Eileen Haddon, Nathan Shammayar, and all the other intellectuals and would-be-intellectuals launched the interracial association in 1953. They debated, had coffee, and occasional dances. In 1955, Colonel David Stirling brought his Capricorn African Society from East Africa to Rhodesia. This was another interracial association on a much bigger scale, and many of the leading nationalists of today were among its ranks. Meanwhile, settler politics also went multiracial. And some Africans almost reached the top of Godfrey Huggins' (later Lord Malvern's) United Federal Party, notably Joshua Nkomo, Jasper Savanhu, Mike Hove, Charles Mzilingezi, and Chad Chipunza. Stankale Samkange took an active part in Garfield Todd's Central African Party, and the Rev. Ndabaningi Sithole patched up a longstanding disagreement with Todd to join the CAP. But in time, the multiracial phase also spent itself."9

Despite the "operation surprise" launched in 1958 by the government against the nationalist leaders grouped into the now-banned African National Congress (ANC), following the spread of resistance among the villagers sparked by the African Youth League, those nationalist leaders who were not detained continued on by organizing the National Democratic Party (NDP). [In 1958, the African nationalist leaders began to organize a resistance movement in the rural areas of Zimbabwe. As long as the nationalist political organizations remained based in the cities, the white settler government did not worry. The attempt by these organizations to spread the waves of nationalism into the rural areas was perceived by the government with apprehension. To the government, indeed, it symbolized potential threat against the backbone of the entire settler social fabric. As a result, in the early hours of the morning of February 29, 1959, Sir Edgar Whitehead called out government troops, and loaded every nationalist from village chairman to the top of ranks of the party into army trucks (See D. M'Gabe)].

At the 1961 Constitutional Conference in Salisbury, the NDP delegation — Joshua Nkomo (chief spokesman), Ndabaningi Sithole (deputy spokesman), Herbert Chitepo (advisor to Nkomo), and George Silundika (advisor to Sithole) — was "outmaneuvered at the bargaining table on every issue, and finally, accepted a draft constitution that gave the Africans 15 seats in a parliament of 65 — this in a country where 94 percent of the population is African."10

The rejection of the 1961 settlement by the Executive Committee of the NDP led to two major consequences. First, Nkomo's leadership came under fire. It is reported that when he was asked about the meaning of the settlement, he replied: "I am proud to say we have moved a mountain an inch toward majority rule." Further, when pressure was put on him by the members of the Executive Committee, about whether his statement meant that he had accepted the settlement, he was quoted as saying: "We did not accept it but we are not going to stand in its way." When Nkomo was confronted by the rest of the African population, particularly the African Youth League, he attempted to exonerate himself by resorting to a very subtle semantic game: "I
did not sign it but I endorsed." [It is fact that Nkomo had duly signed the agreement.]

Second, the United Federal Party (UFP) of Sir Edgar Whitehead was seriously weakened. Without substantial African participation, it could not win.

With the boycott of the December 1962 elections by the NDP, a move described by James Barber as a fatal tactical mistake, the way was paved for the sudden upsurge of the Rhodesian Front Party (RFP), catering, most important of all, to the right-wing interests of the White Settler Society. In 1965, the RFP, under the leadership of Ian Smith, proclaimed the Unilateral Declaration of Independence (UDI).

In looking at the rise of the militant (armed) phase of nationalism in Zimbabwe and comparing it to the militant (armed) phase of nationalism in Algeria, another settler colony, the one fact that most stands out is that had UDI not been proclaimed, the Western-trained African elite would have continued to operate within the limits set by the settler regime, further consolidated by British paternalism.

In Algeria, on the contrary, the nationalists had forthrightly realized that the salvation of the Algerian people lay at the tip of the rifle and that a negotiated independence through the use of the constitutional ballot box and party politics seriously compromised and put into question the enjoyment of the inalienable right to freedom. In essence, the Algerians had realized very early that "settler societies can only be overthrown by an armed struggle or violence by those who are colonized."[12]

II. Ethnicity, Social Interests versus Search of Nationhood

In the context of the quest for peace in Zimbabwe, the impact of the opposing social and political interests of the African society and the White Settler Society must be assessed on the basis and within the framework, of the inner dynamics of the African society itself.

The concept of African nationalism was a misnomer, although it was a necessary heuristic device. As opposed to the European experience in which nationalism became linked with the sense of cultural and economic boundaries, in the African experience nationalism took on the character of an expedient short-term Black unity against the white presence.

The splintering of the African nationalist movement in 1963 into various political organizations — the Zimbabwe African People's Union (ZAPU), the Zimbabwe African National Union (ZANU), and the People's Caretaker Council (PCC) — following the debacle at the 1962 elections and the tactical exclusion of Joshua Nkomo[13] from the party leadership of ZAPU — formed on December 17, 1961 to take the place of the banned NDP — conspicuously makes the apology of the scholarly attempts at questioning the concept of African nationalism altogether.

[Joshua Nkomo was kept out of the leadership of the newly formed political party, ZAPU, because of legal restrictions dealing with the composition of the leadership of new African political parties, in the aftermath of the ban imposed on the NDP. However, it needs to be pointed out that the members of the Executive Committee of the newly-formed party, who were dissatisfied with Nkomo, sought to take advantage of these legal restrictions to keep him out of the new political organization. In fact, on the two occasions (ANC 1959, and NDP 1961) when the government had cracked down on the African political organizations, Nkomo had always managed to be out of the country.]

The exclusion of Nkomo from the party leadership of the then emerging ZAPU has been linked to the fact that, in addition to being — among other charges — petty-bourgeois minded and die-hard reformist, he (Nkomo) had been trading favors to the members of his own ethnic group within the party, the amaNdebele.14

As time has duly shown, the schism transcended both ideology and questions about choice and use of tactics, being to a large degree the by-product of conflicting socio-political interests fueled by ethnic considerations and loyalties.

To the extent that it brought different ethnic groups together, increased Western education coupled with urbanization served as a stronger catalytic force in the rise of nationalism in Zimbabwe than the traditional African institutions.15 As a concomitant, the issue of control of the tools of leadership in the independence movement became tenuously, if not consciously, predicted on the notion of furthering the political gains and strength of one's ethnic group.

In fact, neither during the stage of proto-nationalism nor during the stage of violent nationalistic response to UDI, had any of the various African political organizations (with the possible exception of the African Youth League), branded a radical, revolutionary plank exercising ethnic identity. The constitutionalist path, to the extent that it was also predicted on the notion of politics through the party process, had planted the seeds of ethnic strife in the political arena, if and when it led to a satisfactory conclusion.

Unlike the White Settler Society which had only to face one major contradiction — socio-economic interests — in the pursuit and realization of a politico-racial front, the African society had to wrestle with the ever-present contradiction of ethnicity. M'gabe, in his article, "Rhodesia's African Majority," identified three major groupings in the Zimbabwean African society, all competing for the meagre resources offered by the White Settler Society: (1) the vaShona majority, constituting 80% of the population to the East, (2) the amaNdebele, the next largest ethnic group, constituting about 10% of the population to the West, (3) the vaVenda, the vaTonga and the immigrant workers from Mozambique, Malawi and Zambia, constituting the other 10% of the African population.

Besides the fact of history which has, geopolitically speaking, set apart the vaShona from the amaNdebele and vice versa, the presence of the Western-trained African elite in Zimbabwe has served, and continues to serve, as the leading catalyst to the mounting problem of ethnicity. Suffering from what the scholars of the Marxist school of thought have called "the spirit of economism," the Western-trained African elite in Zimbabwe, like their counterparts in other African countries, have at times appealed to and capitalized on the ethnic loyalty feelings of their group members in their efforts to wield greater political influence and exercise control over the accessible resources.

The two leading liberation movements have both solid ethnic bases. The Patriotic Front (formerly ZAPU) under the leadership of Joshua Nkomo is dominated by the amaNdebele, operating geopolitically from Zambia, which is contiguous to the Matebeland. On the other hand, ZANU, under the leadership of Robert Mugabe, has a predominant vaShona element, operating geopolitically from Mozambique, which is similarly contiguous to Mashonaland.

Far more fundamental, at this point, is the fact that members of these two nationalist organizations have sporadically clashed, inflicting serious losses to one another and, in the process, lessening the impact of their war effort of liberation against the White Settler Society.

Leonard Kapungu wrote in 1974: "the period between June 1963 and August 1963 is one of which every Zimbabwean should be ashamed. Brother turned against brother. Families were broken and friendships ended, and the objective of political struggle was forgotten. In August 1963, the Sithole group formed the Zimbabwe African National Union (ZANU), and..."
the Nkomo group formed the Peoples' Caretaker Council (PCC), which outside Zimbabwe called itself ZAPU.

"Instead of waging the struggle against the Rhodesian political system, the two groups incited their youth to attack each other, and beat or kill even any African who seemed to support the rival group. For fifteen months, the Rhodesian Europeans felt secure while every African in Zimbabwe lived in fear of fellow Africans. ... The Rhodesian government encouraged these misguided activities of the Zimbabwe leaders. It reduced the strength of the police in the African townships, and made very few arrests of Africans killing fellow Africans. After fifteen months, the regime banned the two parties, and tried to appear to the African people as their savior from the claws of disaster engineered by the African leaders."16

In retrospect, the Ian Smith internal settlement plan, inaugurated in April 1979, must be seen as a calculated attempt to take advantage of these two "faits accomplis," i.e., ideological conflicts within the nationalist ranks and ethnic divisions within the African society, and thus safeguard the interests of the White Settler Society. In fact, Smith was able to exchange his premiership with Abel Muzorewa's desire to be the "First Black Prime Minister.

International Contradictions

I. Ideological conflict: East versus West. In the study of the ideological conflict opposing the East (Marxism-Leninism) to the West (Capitalism), scholars have failed to emphasize enough the fact that, consciously or unconsciously, the leaders of the newly independent countries of Africa and Asia (1960) felt the impact of that irredescent debt they owed to the Bolshevik Revolution.17

The fears of a pervasive social revolution and "red peril" sweeping over the colonies served as the sufficient politico-ideological consideration, leading the European countries (Britain, France and Belgium) to agree to the idea of independence to their "colonies de passage." In this contextual framework, independence became viewed as the "safer" safety-valve of all in the preservation of the European (Western) interests in the continents of Africa and Asia.

In the "colonies de peuplement," such as Algeria and Zimbabwe however, the idea of not granting independence was rationalized as being the "surest" oppositional exponent and deterrent to the domino theory of social revolution and "red peril." In Zimbabwe in particular, Smith launched his UDI (1965) by declaring that "he and his colleagues, in humble submission to Almighty God, were giving Rhodesia a new constitution so that the dignity and freedom of all men may be assured."18

The mild position taken by Britain against UDI, namely, the refusal to use physical force "unless law and order, apparently among Europeans only, breaks down,"19 together with the tergiversations of the United States government20 (until very recently) and the unequivocal support of the two leading liberation movements have both solid ethnic bases.

South Africa?24 left no doubt in any politically astute mind that racialism and world capitalism were intimate bedfellows.

For instance, in Antigua (1969) and in Aden (1966), where capitalist interests were in the hands of the British corporate structure, Britain sent military contingents against the so-called "natives" (respectively Black and Arab) to quell attempts at rebellion, i.e., illegally declaring independence unilaterally.22

On the other hand, the government of South Africa, actively supported by the [Western] international business conglomerate, saw in Smith's UDI the vindication of the similarities in historico-political development of both South Africa and Rhodesia: rejection of British (Socialist) imperialism and victory of a small band of sturdy and industrious colonists (white civilization over "black savagery and cannibalism").23

In 1967, following repeated failures to achieve a majority rule, the nationalist leaders made a sharp turn in the development of new strategies and tactics.

This was not difficult, in view of the existence of a world socialist system which has "ensured the possibilities for national liberation of the colonies and created all necessary external conditions for conducting a successful struggle for emancipation."24 Francis Kornegay wrote: "1967 marked the serious beginning of a bloody revolutionary, civil-racial war on the Southern Rhodesia soil and possibly of a much wider racial conflict on Southern Africa."25

Unlike the Western countries which had tended to rationalize their tacit support of the Rhodesian minority regime, essentially on the basis of their economic and political interests, the socialist countries had tended to rationalize their unconcealed support for the nationalist leaders in search of weapons on the basis of ideological and geopolitical considerations.

(It is only in keeping with the contextual framework that the Soviet Union's support for Nkomo and ZAPU (The Patriotic Front as of 1962) can be best understood. In fact, Nkomo has, on several occasions in recent years, made it explicitly clear that his link with the Eastern bloc was dictated, above all, by the West's staunch refusal to satisfy his needs for weapons.

Also, it is in keeping with this dialectical framework that China's support for Mugabe and ZANU can be fully grasped. Mugabe, like Nkomo, had made ideologically expedient statements that have helped him in moving (in the eyes of the Western world) from the status of a professed disciple of constitutionalism to that of a professed disciple of Marxism.

In his analysis of the politics of Southern Africa, James Dorman, Jr., has advanced the thesis that the Soviet interest in Southern African affairs in general, and Rhodesian affairs in particular, was primarily dictated by opportunism and geo-strategic considerations (control of the Cape of Good Hope).26

On the other hand, Colin Legum viewed this thesis as being too simplistic and shallow to provide a fathomed view of the politics of Southern Africa. In essence, it falls within the mold of interpretations by American commentators who have identified the Soviet interest in Southern Africa "almost solely as an extension of the Soviet cold war competition with the West into Africa."27 Its major shortcoming, particularly, is that it has failed to reckon with the fact that "one cannot understand fully the true nature of the struggle that is taking place in Rhodesia without giving the proper emphasis on the rivalry between China and the Soviet Union," and that in the final analysis, "the exigencies and strategies of the West and China in Africa may coincide."28

The African effort: Stage I

From 1961 through 1972, the African states and the Zambianwian nationalists sought to achieve peace by resorting to peaceful means: mobilization of world opinion through the United Nations and the Commonwealth Conference.

In close conformity with their conscious assessment of their own strengths and weaknesses, yet in complete misjudgment of the weight of international contradictions, the African states — long before the creation of the Organization of African Unity in 1963 — brought to the attention of the United Nations the need to address the precarious political situation in Zimbabwe.

Although at the time the world body was still pretty much entangled in the Congo crisis, the independent African states, assisted by the Asian states, decided to push forward Nkomo's petition. As a concomitant, "The Afro-Asian states in the Fourth (Trusteeship) Committee submitted to the General Assembly a draft resolution asking the Special Committee of Seventeen (later
In the process of the debate in February 1962, the African states (Ghana, Guinea, Ivory Coast, Liberia, Nigeria, Tanganyika [now Tanzania] and Sierra Leone) and Asian states, together with the member states of the Eastern bloc, attacked Britain's stand that Southern Rhodesia lay beyond the competence of the United Nations, that only Great Britain had responsibility over that territory, that since 1923 Southern Rhodesia had enjoyed a special autonomous status with wide international recognition, and that this status consisted of full control over its internal affairs.

Britain was reluctant to bring the Southern Rhodesian case under the jurisdiction of the United Nations, and the African states resolved that Britain was trying to protect the interests of her "kin and kith." But, as A. Gupta poignantly noted, "the African states will continue to keep faith in Britain as the competent authority to bring about a peaceful settlement in Rhodesia." 30

In fact, from 1962 to 1965, the African states whose demands had received a sympathetic ear at the levels of the UN General Assembly and even at the Security Council, initiated a long package of resolutions. It called on Britain to convene a constitutional conference of all parties which would ensure majority rule on the basis of "one man, one vote," to "not transfer power and attributes of sovereignty until the Southern Rhodesian government became representative of all its people and to refuse recognition of an illegally independent Rhodesia." 31

In addition to pressuring Britain at the United Nations, the African states took advantage of the annual OAU meetings and the Commonwealth Conference meetings to further mobilize world opinion.

Prior to the UDI proclamation, for instance, the OAU member-states meeting in Accra (October 1965), agreed that they would use all possible means, including force, against an illegally constituted regime in Rhodesia. At the same time, they also agreed to a plan of action in case Britain granted independence to a minority regime in Rhodesia. The plan was: to refuse recognition to such a government, to recognize a government in exile, to hold an emergency meeting of the OAU Council of Ministers with a view to involving the United Nations more directly in Rhodesia, to reconsider relations with Britain, and to treat the white minority government in Rhodesia on the same footing as South Africa.32

Along with the weight of world opinion, it was hoped the plan would help in compelling Britain to resolve the crisis immediately.

When Smith proclaimed UDI on November 11, 1965, the African states were caught unprepared. This forced them to resort to hasty and contradictory moves and in fact, helped in consolidating the Rhodesian Front position. Also, it gave Britain needed ammunition to defend her concept of "return to legality" as opposed to the concept of "majority rule: one man, one vote." For instance, of the 36 OAU members only 9 [Ghana, Guinea, Mali, Congo (Brazzaville), Tanzania, UAR, Algeria, Sudan and Mauritania] carried out the Council of Ministers' November 3, 1965 decision that if by December 15 Britain had not ended the illegal rule of Mr. Smith, the OAU members would sever all relations with Britain.33 This lack of a cohesive action starkly exposed the divisions prevailing among the African leaders and raised questions about the future effectiveness of the OAU.

On the international level, however, the support won by the African member-states of the Commonwealth Conference from their Asian counterparts was instrumental in 1965 in forcing a thorough discussion of white minority rule in Zimbabwe.

For instance, when President Julius Nyerere of Tanzania failed to gain what he considered adequate assurance that majority rule would precede independence, he refused to sign the Commonwealth communiqué at the 1965 Conference. Again, at the Lagos Commonwealth Conference in January 1966, the African member-states succeeded, with the assistance of their Asian counterparts, in forcing Britain to agree to the idea and implementation of the Commonwealth Sanctions Committee.

As opposition from the African and Asian leaders grew louder, Prime Minister Harold Wilson of Britain was compelled in the end to make a half bow to Commonwealth sentiment. In the final communiqué, the British government stated that it would not agree to independence before majority rule unless and until the people of Rhodesia as a whole were shown to be in favor. In addition, it declared that if the regime in Rhodesia refused to negotiate an ending of the rebellion by the end of the year, Britain would withdraw all its previous proposals for a negotiated settlement of the dispute and would sponsor a resolution at the United Nations Security Council providing for effective and selective mandatory economic sanctions.34

In keeping with both the early lack of success recorded in the years between 1962 and 1965, when Britain refused to go along with the African demands at the United Nations and the lack of concerted response to the ultimatum against Britain, the African response to UDI in the first stage could best be described as a mixed record of setbacks and success. This was partially due to the fact that, like the Zimbabwean nationalists themselves, the leaders of the newly independent countries of Africa had placed a strong faith in Britain in the realization of a peaceful settlement of the Rhodesian crisis.

Beyond the avenues of "international legalism" and multilateral pressures against Britain lay better arm-twisting techniques which, though humanly less appropriate, were logistically more realistic for the task of effecting the goal of human dignity and freedom: support for armed struggle.

**The African effort: Stage II**

In the course of the development of greater international political consciousness among the leaders of the African states, the period between 1970 and 1979 stands as a poignant landmark in the search of a peaceful and just settlement in Zimbabwe. Until then, there was serious vacillation among the African states as to "the extent and scope to which the OAU should embark on its policy of liberation," which constituted one of the cardinal principles of the OAU charter: "Absolute dedication to the total emancipation of African colonies which are still under colonial domination."35

In the study of the role of the OAU in the furtherance of the cause of liberation in Zimbabwe, two types of inputs need to be extricated. One is the input which is indissolubly linked to the role of conciliator between the warring factions of ZAPU, ZANU and FROLIZI [Front for the Liberation of Zimbabwe]. In 1963, for instance, the OAU, in an effort to meet its fears of seriously weakening the liberation struggle, extended recognition to both ZAPU and ZANU, leading subsequently to a military division of labor. ZAPU would eventually operate from the southeastern part of Zimbabwe while ZANU would eventually operate from the northeastern part.

Moreover, the OAU in 1971 withheld recognition from FROLIZI — a newly formed organization by disgruntled elements from both ZAPU and ZANU — largely because it was disputed by ZAPU and ZANU branches and was accused of owing its existence to tribal cliquish tendencies.36

The second input is intimately associated with the moral and material support...
given to the liberation movement. For instance, in 1972 the members of FROLIZI took the decision to infiltrate Black guerrillas inside Rhodesia for a first strike, in close conjunction with their goal of winning financial support from the Organization of African Unity. In 1972, the various nationalist and liberation factions agreed, under pressure from the OAU, to the idea of formation of a united nationalist front to present counter-proposals to the Pearce Commission sent from England to make another imprint in the quest for a peaceful settlement. The new front, better known as the African National Council (ANC), under the direction of Bishop Abel Muzorewa, rejected the proposals of the Pearce Commission, as they failed to tackle the real issue of majority rule based on one man, one vote.

Two years later, members of the ANC, through their spokesman Muzorewa, were pressured by the Presidents of Zambia and Tanzania to enter into negotiations with the Smith regime, which at that time showed some willingness to talk with the nationalist leaders. The ever looming eventuality of African victories in both Angola and Mozambique, “following the coup d’etat of April 25, 1974, which toppled the Portuguese racist regime,” drove the Smith regime to realize Rhodesia would have extensive borders with states not likely to be her allies. Thus, “with the prospects of the war of liberation being intensified and the security of Rhodesia being more and more threatened, Smith, at last — even though still unequivocally — decided to talk to the leaders of the majority of that country.”

The resulting agreement, which granted to the African majority 6 more seats to the then existing 16 seats in Rhodesia’s Legislative Assembly was vehemently denounced, primarily because it did not concede the democratic principle of majority rule based on one man, one vote.

In the same way as they had pressured the disputatious leaders of the liberation movement (ZAPU, ZANU and FROLIZI) in 1974 to enter into dialogue with Smith under a united nationalist front, so too in 1976 the front-line states pressured them again into merging into a “patriotic front,” with a view of speaking with a single voice at the Geneva Conference. This conference was heralded as the most promising step yet taken toward providing a solution to the crisis. It received moral and, in some cases, practical support of many governments, including those of Britain, the United States, the front-line states and South Africa. The OAU also gave its blessing to the initiative. And the people of Zimbabwe, with high hopes of a final breakthrough, gave their enthusiastic support. However, due to conceptual misunderstandings about the principle of majority rule, the talks collapsed.

In the context of the quest for a peaceful and just settlement in Zimbabwe, efforts and pressures dictated by a certain commitment to the principle of total eradication of colonialism must be dialectically weighed against those other types of efforts and pressure induced by an array of forces and pressure induced by an array of forces and pressure.

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**Except for Tanzania, the frontline states of Zambia, Botswana and Mozambique were extremely vulnerable economically and militarily.**

personal as well as national and geopolitical interests.

Except for Tanzania, the frontline states of Zambia, Botswana and Mozambique were extremely vulnerable economically and militarily. For instance, since 1973, Zambia's economic torment had been increasing. The closure of the frontier — rationalized by the Rhodesian authorities as a retaliatory measure for the political asylum and support given to the freedom fighters — dealt a heavy blow to the Zambian economy. A landlocked nation, Zambia depended largely on transport routes through Rhodesia. In 1976, the total deficit for the Zambian economy was estimated at $240 million.

On the other hand, Mozambique lost more than $48 million in rail and port revenues in 1976, according to published estimates.

On November 6, 1976 The Economist reported that Rhodesian army units crossed into Mozambique killing both Zimbabwean guerrilla fighters and Mozambican soldiers.

In the midst of such devastating odds, both Zambia and Mozambique staunchly continued to provide support to the freedom fighters — a development that hardly compounds an astute political mind. In human as well as international political affairs, lofty principles and goals have sometimes been ritualized in order to shield deeply concealed Machiavellian sub-principles and sub-goals.

According to Timothy Shaw and B. V. Mtshali, for instance, President Kenneth Kaunda of Zambia has, within the context of the conduct of his foreign policy, skillfully utilized the Southern African problems in general, and the Rhodesian crisis in particular, to enhance the visibility of his country and to advance his foreign policy interests. In particular, Shaw has argued that “Zambia’s advocacy of change in Southern Africa is inseparable from its national interest and security.” In this same framework, it has been argued that Kaunda’s staunch support for Nkomo was inextricably linked to his goal of serving as a “big brother” to a future leader of Zimbabwe.

In addition to engaging in secret agreement with Smith in 1974 (The Rhodesian-Zambian Agreement), and with South Africa’s Vorster in 1975 (The Pretoria Agreement), Kaunda strongly advised Nkomo in 1976 to hold bilateral talks with Smith. “The central point of the talks,” wrote Sithole, “was that certain nationalists would be appointed to positions in the Rhodesian government as it was then constituted, with Nkomo as foreign minister. This was the understanding before Smith and Mr. Nkomo began their negotiations. Excluded from the discussions were Mr. Nkomo’s colleagues in the combined African nationalist leadership.

Finally, reports by well-informed Zimbabweans have indicated that Kaunda had, at one time, banned Robert Mugabe from Zambia in an effort to deter outbursts of leadership competition between Nkomo and Mugabe. However, when it became clear to him that the survival of Nkomo depended on his ability to develop cordial relations with Mugabe, the ban was lifted. Hence, the emergence of the Patriotic Front in 1976. Equally important, in a meeting in Lusaka in 1976, Kaunda reportedly pressured Muzorewa to quit the presidency of the ANC and let Nkomo take over.

As a newcomer into the club of the front-line states, President Samora Machel of Mozambique has sought to utilize the Rhodesian crisis as an opportunity for further testing the stamina and the revolutionary zeal of his popular army units (Frelimo), especially in wake of the December 1975 rebellion against his government.

Moreover, as a consequential part of his experience of having been at the command of the revolutionary war in Mozambique, Machel has tended to support military leaders such as the late Josiah Tongogara [ZANLA commander-in-chief, who was assassinated in January 1980], rather than political leaders like Mugabe. Implicit in this attitude is the desired goal of having someone at the reins of an independent Zimbabwe with whom he could establish a better and friendlier dialogue as a result of professional club loyalties.

Finally, like Kaunda, Nyerere, too, succeeded in making his country the seat of the African Liberation Committee, and skillfully made use of the phenomenon known as the “politics of Southern Africa” to respectively win greater international visibility for Tanzania, thereby earning the title of statesman and political philosopher par excellence. In his respected capacity as the “unofficial chairman” of the front-line states, Nyerere, indeed, was instrumental...
in the realization of the ZIPA agreement in 1975.

Frustrated over the fact that he could not arm-twist Mugabe into stepping down in favor of Sithole, founder and first leader of ZANU, Nyerere tried to impose a unified military leadership that would put an end to the perennial bickerings between Nkomo, Mugabe, Sithole, Muzorewa and Chikero-

The idea of a "third force," a composite of military leadership units from ZANU (ZANLA) and ZAPU (ZIPRA), was launched with the help of Colonel Asim Mbita. It was identified by Nyerere as the most rational scheme in quickly winding up the war in Zimbabwe. As long as squabbles among the civilian leaders persisted, the prospects of a total military victory, in his view, remained uncertain.

At the same time, in an effort to also lessen the magnitude of the protraction of the war effort, Nyerere in 1976 began to work behind the scenes with Henry Kissinger, then-U.S. secretary of state, to reach a peaceful and just settlement that would be acceptable to all. In the context of the African response to the politics of Zimbabwe, Nyerere's concept of the end-result of a peaceful and just settlement stood in a dialectical opposition to Kaunda's. For the latter, the concept of the end-result of a peaceful and just settlement was connotatively tied to his efforts of "propping up" Nkomo to the leadership summit of an independent Zimbabwe.

**The quest for peace: Stage I**

Like the African response, the American, British and South African response to the crisis must be assessed in two main historical stages. The first, from the declaration of UDI in 1965 to the collapse of the Portuguese colonial empire in Southern Africa — Angola 1976 and Mozambique, 1975. The second, from 1975-1976, the collapse of the Portuguese colonial empire, to 1979.

In contradistinction with both Britain and South Africa, which were directly concerned and immediately involved, the United States responded to the crisis cautiously, confining itself to the deliberations at the United Nations. In close association with its "non-policy" stance in which the U.S. tended to identify its interests in Africa through the eyes of the colonial powers, America attempted to alienate neither the Black Africans nor the white Rhodesians.

In an article in the U.S. Department of State Bulletin in 1967, the U.S. Bureau of International Organization Affairs argued that the United States' support for the UN sanctions against Southern Rhodesia was dictated by deep moral and legal imperatives, in addition to practical considerations such as the need to maintain friendly ties with the newly independent African states which "have sought to achieve multiracial societies and to protect the rights of the minorities." 47

On January 5, 1967, President Lyndon Johnson signed an Executive Order (No. 11322), officially implementing mandatory economic sanctions. Violation of the Executive Order was made a criminal offense.48 Moreover, in 1973, U.S. Ambassador to the United Nations John Scali called for stronger enforcement of UN sanctions against Southern Rhodesia in the UN Security Council while at the same time Rhodesian chrome had been pouring into the United States, following the passage of the Byrd Amendment in Congress in 1971. By way of defending this import, which was being carried out in blatant violation of the then existing stiff UN sanctions, Scali noted that the importation of certain strategic materials in 1972 had amounted to less than five percent of the projected total of the Rhodesian exports for that year.49 Britain, on the other hand, which very early had displayed conspicuously her unwillingness to let the UN debate the Rhodesian issue (1961-1962) on the ground that Rhodesia was the sole responsibility of Britain, had sought to solve the crisis on her own terms. However, as E. Windrich observed, "the British had tried over a decade to settle the conflict, but the dilemma they faced was that in Rhodesia they had responsibility without power. They had either to accept the situation prevailing in their self-governing colony, which meant condoning a racially segregated society as a basis for independence, or intervene to alter it.

Unable, or unwilling to do either, they opted instead for a compromise that would paper over the more apparent differences between the two sides, but leave the fundamental ones unchanged. The quest for such a solution was evident from the various schemes put forward by the British (the pre-UDI offers, the Tiger and Fearless proposals, the Home-Smith Agreement of 1971), all of which conceded independence on the basis of white minority rule, but provided a facade of respectability for token African participation.50

In addition, first, to proposing voluntary sanctions (1965) and then to agreeing to mandatory sanctions (1966), Britain engaged in bilateral talks with the Smith government (Tiger Talks, 1966), (Fearless Talks, 1968) (Home-Smith Agreement 1971). The insinuation and shrewdness of Smith, who knew the politico-racial and military intentions as well as the economic weaknesses of Britain, led to stalemates in these talks, further compounded by the exclusion of the African nationalist leaders and the sporadic squabblings within the nationalist ranks.

Finally, South Africa, which was in dire need of a buffer zone against the waves of "Black peril" from the independent African states, provided both psychological support (white civilization and Christianity versus African barbarism and communism) and material support (non-adherence to the UN economic sanctions, and military assistance.)

**The quest for peace: Stage II**

In contrast with the first stage during which it was less pronounced — morally behind the aspirations of the Black Rhodesians and economically in support of the white Rhodesians — the United States' response to the Rhodesian crisis in the second stage became more and more pronounced insofar as it became physically involved in the peaceful settlement talks.

In 1976, Kissinger sought to bolster his successes in shuttle diplomacy by embarking on a policy of "unrelenting opposition to the white minority regime in Rhodesia, and strong diplomatic as well as economic support for its nationalist opponents." 51 During his diplomatic mission to Lusaka, Zambia, for instance, Kissinger pledged American support for "self-determination, majority rule, equal rights and human dignity for all the people of Southern Africa." Further, he backed the British proposals for majority rule in Rhodesia within two years of the "expeditious conclusion of negotiations and outlined ten ways in which he hoped to oblige Mr. Smith's regime to follow this course." Far more important, "he promised to urge Congress to repeal the Byrd Amendment." 52

However, as K. Mufuka noted in regard to Kissinger's Lusaka speech, the notion that this new departure in U.S. policy toward Black Africa in general, and Zimbabwe in particular, was dictated by an "imperative of our moral heritage" hardly exercised Kissinger from charges of hypocrisy. (In 1969, the U.S. had devised a policy toward Southern Africa, the mission of which was the enhancement of cooperation with the European majority governments. However immoral, this policy was based on the National Security Memorandum (NNSM 39) written by Kissinger. In it, he had advised U.S. officials at the levels of the White House, State Department and Congress in...
favor of a relaxation of the U.S. attitude towards whites while at the same time taking steps to convince the black states of the area that their liberation and majority rule aspirations in the South were not attainable by violence and that their only hope for a peaceful and prosperous future (lay in closer ties with white dominated states). 59

Thus, Kissinger, by way of keeping up the momentum he had gathered in Lusaka, and particularly by way of maximizing his credibility, arranged a meeting in Pretoria (South Africa) in 1976 among the leaders of the Rhodesian, Zambian and South African governments. During this meeting, Smith agreed—for the first time—to the concept of majority rule. Kissinger who was, indeed, very concerned about the possibility of the Rhodesian guerrillas setting up another Marxist state in Southern Africa—on top of Angola and Mozambique—had decided to put the screws on white Rhodesia by exploiting South Africa's reliance on American economic and diplomatic support so as to make its government even harder than before and force it into a promise of majority. 54

In an interview with Newsweek on December 11, 1978, Kissinger retrospectively insinuated that the reason the 1976 agreement with Smith was not implemented was that one of the nationalists, Joshua Nkomo, would not participate in the new Rhodesian government. 55 However, he failed to point out that nationalist leaders, including Nkomo, had rejected the agreement due largely to the fact that it sought to preserve and entrench white minority rule. It, indeed, left key ministerial positions—Defense, Law and Order and Finance—in the hands of whites. 56

Finally, and perhaps more fundamentally, the Zimbabwean Development Fund which he had proposed as an integral part of the agreement was conceived as a strategic tool for advancing opportunities to push these proposals on Smith by arm-twisting the Southern African government, not only for the sake of the privileges of the Rhodesian white settler society, but also for the sake of those very interests dictated by geopolitical considerations: the threat posed by the Cuban presence and Soviet involvement in Angola.

During this second stage, Britain's role in ultimately recognizing the need for, and furthering the cause of majority rule, must be gauged on the basis of her strong fears of South Africa militarily getting drawn heavily into the conflict, endangering, in the process, her huge investments in the Southern tip of Africa and also of the Commonwealth Conference breaking down altogether. In 1977, for instance, David Owen, then-British foreign secretary, attended the Luanda Summit, conferring and consulting with the Southern African prime minister about how best to bring Smith and his Front Rhodesian government to agree to the idea of majority rule, based on "one man, one vote."

Furthermore, in 1979, the newly elected British Prime Minister, Margaret Thatcher, proclaimed during the Lusaka Commonwealth Conference, that her government was committed to "genuine black majority rule in Rhodesia and independence for the colony on a basis acceptable to the international community as a whole." Through this declaration she mollified potentially strident critics who sought to challenge her as a result of an earlier statement in which she entertained the possibility of Britain extending recognition to the Muzorewa/Smith internal settlement government. But in Lusaka "she conceded that the Zimbabwe/Rhodesian constitution was defective in certain respects, accepted as valid criticisms of the power and composition of the white-dominated service commission and acknowledged the need to involve the Patriotic Front in the search of a solution to the Rhodesian crisis." 61

Finally, within the framework of the concept of detente in Southern Africa, the politics of unconditional or genuine majority rule must not be conceived only in terms of contributions made by the South African government. It must be viewed, also, in terms of gains accruing to it.

The need to effect a new buffer zone, no matter how politically tenuous, accounted for more than anything else for the South African diplomatic tango with the front-line states. In fact, well before the United States started to arm-twist it, the South African government had decided to enter into negotiations with the Zambian government and the Smith regime in 1975. The Pretoria Agreement, which emerged as a result of these bilateral discussions, ultimately led to the Victoria Falls Conference between the Rhodesian Front government and the African National Council (ANC). The conference ended in a deadlock, however, largely because Smith stuck on "no majority rule" while the African nationalists stuck to their demand of "majority rule now." 62

In allowing Kissinger, Smith and Kaunda to meet in Pretoria for follow-up talks in 1976, South Africa was sending signals to the world community that its white minority regime was not opposed to socio-racial and socio-political changes in Southern Africa. But the Kissinger agreement which emerged from these talks was rejected because it was silent on the democratic principle of majority rule based on one man, one vote. In this vein, all the other moves of South Africa, namely its participatory roles in the Geneva Conference (1976) and in the discussions leading to the Anglo-American Proposals (1977), acquire a greater explanatory force.

In this complex diplomatic chessboard, the role and place of Ian Smith and his Rhodesian Front government must necessarily be reckoned with. Failure to do so is to stray away from the central fact that the terrors of the United States, Britain and South Africa, on the one hand, and the dissensions and rifts within the nationalist movement are closely knit to the moves, responses and stands of Smith and the Rhodesian Front government.
Smith and the Rhodesian Front government, at the first stage, stood intransigent when it came to the issue of the preservation of the privileges of the white minority society. They capitalized on the unwillingness of Britain to use force, the ambivalence of the United States government, the declared support by South Africa, and the undefined nature of the response of the African nationalists.

On the other hand, during the second stage, they sought to still preserve and salvage the interests of the white settler society by making concessions in the various talks involving the United States, Britain, South Africa and the nationalist leaders. The rejection of these concessions, in all instances, by the nationalist leaders gave Smith and the Front Rhodesian government the necessary ammunition for defying the arm-twisting tactics from the “big brothers”. In this way, in March 1978, Smith and the Front Rhodesian government came up with their own internal settlement plan, as part of an effort to circumvent the impact of the Anglo-American proposals.

As it was, they hoped to secure a settlement more favorable to their white constituents than the Anglo-American proposals put forward in September 1977 by David Owen, then-British foreign secretary, and Andrew Young, then-U.S. Ambassador to the United Nations.64 Paradoxically, their inability to secure international recognition for the Black-led government of Bishop Abel Muzorewa, on the one hand, and their ultimate recognition of the fact that African majority rule was unavoidable, on the other hand, led them to the Lancaster House Agreement in 1979. By means of this agreement, they came to terms with the idea of a peaceful settlement based on majority rule: ONE MAN, ONE VOTE. Through the elections of February 28, 1980, the peace process was finally consummated.

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edges were downright ludicrous and unwarranted. For instance:

Ntozake Shange’s “Nappy Edges” is too long a book; there are far too many poems that borrow from and reflect upon popular culture without dramatizing the inner conflicts of many of Miss Shange’s characters.4

Too long a book! One is puzzled that Harper would be disturbed at the length of a collection. Especially when Robert Hayden’s Angle of Ascent is only 17 pages shorter than nappy edges and his own book, Images of Kin, surpasses Shange’s by 65 pages.

I am afraid it’s Shange’s subject matter and use of popular culture that Harper is against. Harper’s dissatisfaction with Shange’s contribution and his demand that she give us more is the equivalent of asking for better programs on television. Her work reflects [successfully] our culture; it does not attempt to transcend or penetrate any further than the commentary offered on the evening news. It is a massage, a new way of feeling and looking at things.

Critics often have difficulty accepting literature that uses popular culture as a base. We still expect poetry to sound like something we can’t understand, or something that should appeal to the intellect and not the emotions. Shange seldom offers insight as literate as those expressed in the epigraphs scattered through Nappy Edges.5

The writer’s ability to draw upon popular culture for subject material and technique has resulted in contemporary literature being as exciting as many of the other arts. If I prefer Bob Marley to Robert Lowell it is simply a question of which one is more a part of my life, not who is the better poet. But let me stop here and put several things into perspective.

First, although Huey Newton and Eldridge Cleaver are still battling with the American judiciary system, the ‘60s are over and the ‘70s have ended. It is 1980 and a point of demarcation must be drawn. Second, it should be acknowledged that our more “signifiant” Black writers are not only Robert Hayden or Michael Harper, but instead, Toni Morrison, Alice Walker, Jayne Cortez, June Jordan and Ntozake Shange. [This review was written before Hayden’s recent death]. Third, our failure to acknowledge the influence of various social movements upon our literature has resulted in a misunderstanding of what is actually being written. Need I say more?

this is for ntozake
of the painted sacred monkeys
on the beaches of the caribbean
the chinese ladies weep
into their ivory fans
as she dances the bomba

For quite a number of us, Ntozake Shange has been as fascinating as the bomba. Her play, “For Colored Girls,” continues to reverberate throughout the Black community. John Storm Roberts describes the bomba as consisting of “melodies of short phrases repeated a great deal, varied, complicated rhythms.”

“For Colored Girls” was an outgrowth of seven poems which Shange developed in 1974 while living in the Bay Area. The multi-ethnic climate gave rise to a flowering of women writers — Janice Mirikitani, Carol Lee Sanchez, Thulani and Alta. Alta, poet and publisher, at one time saw Shange as being one of the more neglected writers in the Bay Area.

To best understand Shange’s work, one must first place her inside the Women’s Movement. Her involvement with activists in California places her closer to advocates of women consciousness than to the Black Panthers who emerged out of Oakland. Shange taught in the Women’s Studies Program at Sonoma State College, where she began to broaden her perspectives as an artist and a woman.

More stable as a source of inspiration and historical continuity was the Women’s Studies Program at Sonoma State College, where I worked with J. J. Wilson, Joanna Griffin, Wopo Holup over a three year span. Courses designed to make women’s lives dynamics familiar to us, such as: Women As Artist, Women As Poet, Androgynous Myths in Literature, Women’s Bibliography I & II; Third World Women Writers, were inextricably bound to the development of my sense of the world, myself, women’s language.6

Her poems, “For Colored Girls,” were modeled after Judy Grahn’s “The Common Woman.” The first performance was at the Bacchanal, a bar for women in the Bay Area.

The beginning of “For Colored Girls” is somewhat like the film “Cooley High” (especially the party scene) in which Shange gives us what “American Graffiti” could not... an insight into...
Black adolescence from a female viewpoint.

I got drunk and couldn't figure out whose hand was on my thigh but it didn't matter cause these cousins martin eddie sammy jerome and bobby were my sweethearts alternately since the seventh grade.

Similar expressions can be found in Sonia Sanchez's Blue Book For Blue Black Magical Women. Remember parties where we'd grind, and grind, but not too close cause if you gave it up everybody would know and tell and grinding was enough. The closeness of bodies in project basements.

It is not only Shange's ability to capture these moments of our lives but it is her tendency to restore the humor and the joys of that experience that makes one applaud "For Colored Girls." At the same time, the material is painful and filled with emotional disappointments and fear. Our lives are filled with the violence of knives and guns and the scarifications of rape.

Beverly was my size that started it. In the slums. Even we called them that, but all my later friends lived there. Behind those metal fences for the playground. I never went there too much, or only at night to dance walk that fat girl home. They were all hip and beautiful. Even now, coming to strange things. Like this mist pushing off the day. Strange. These strangers are beautiful. Be wary of them.

Shange's voice is one of a Black girl growing up during the '50s. A time of segregation. Emmett Till, a 14-year-old, was murdered in 1955. Shange introduces to us the frustrated dreams of Black girls growing into women. "1955 was not a good year for lil blk girls", she cries through the voice of the lady in brown.

In her choreopoem, "For Colored Girls," Shange has two selections on identity. The first is "somebody almost walked off with us. It was a spirit in me that made me walk."

The second selection on identity is more straightforward. She defines what her stuff is but alludes to "all my stuff." Nowhere does Shange define her identity with such lines as:

- it wasnt a spirit took my stuff/\n  a man whose ego walked round like Rodan's shadow/\n  a man faster than my innocence was a lover/\n  made up. That to me is very, very, painful.

As Julianne Malveaux correctly perceived in her recent article in Black Scholar, Shange's play is a poem and not a polemic. It offers "a slice of Black life, not a series of generalizations and statements about Black men and women." In her self-interview that appeared first in Ms. Magazine, Shange is aware of how artists lose control of their work; its purpose and meaning. She is aware of how the media manipulates what she produces.

So the next time an interviewer said all he wanted was for me to say something controversial abt blk men. I said I love them. That was no press at all.

Following the success of "For Colored Girls," Shange wrote another poenplay, a photograph: a still life with shadows, a photograph: a study of cruelty. It was a production with a male protagonist but it did not last long on the stage.

I think the reason why we didn't last any longer is because white people don't want to hear about brilliant black men and Sean David was brilliant. Not only that, he had great ambition and he also had no references that had anything to do with them. So they closed us.

Few of us are duplicates of our grandfathers, in either thought, feeling, speech, or appearance. Very often we even differ from our fathers, too, in most of these respects. We are, to a large extent, new people—as everything in America, and in many other parts of the world, tends, for better or worse, to be new.

During the latter part of the '70s, an interesting occurrence began to take place in world politics. Cuba, a small socialist island in the Caribbean, began to have a major role in determining the spheres of influence of other countries. Through an aggressive foreign policy, Cuba began to support an international anti-imperialist movement. In Angola, Cuban soldiers were able to assist in the defeat of the Southern Africa military machine. One direct result of Cuba's activities in Africa was an immediate redefining of geo-political boundaries. No longer was Cuba confined to the Caribbean and Latin America; instead it had begun to penetrate as far as the horn of Africa.

We live in what Marshall McLuhan defined as a global village. We are subject to the same problems and concerns as
those of our neighbors. Race, class, and sex are boundaries that can be crossed anytime.

The Women's Movement of the '70s was a direct outgrowth of the Black liberation movement of the '60s. It seems strange, therefore, for politically conscious Black people to resent the influence of this movement upon their own. Perhaps it was the absence of a Black woman in the forefront of the Women's Movement that separated it from the Black community. This absence of Black participation in the leadership resulted in the movement being considered a "white thing"—when actually it was a movement that deeply affected the living conditions of all women.

The poems and prose of Ntozake Shange, like other ideas and concepts, move beyond the Black community, especially the Black literary community. Her work is broad and should not be confined. Her women characters would be at home in New York, Paris, or Port-au-Prince. In this sense, her creations are similar to that of the jazz musicians she so readily admires. For decades, Black jazz musicians have been like today's Cubans moving throughout the world, instrumenting change.

Shange's poetry hints at the coming birth of a new woman—one capable of defining her own space, and at the same time demanding that a new man step forward. It is ironic that Shange's poetry occurs at the exact moment progressive jazz musicians are moving to the forefront. Underneath much of Shange's work is a love for the Chicago Art Ensemble, as well as the music of Oliver Lake, David Murray and other members of the World Saxophone Quartet.

Unfortunately, some of us are critical of Shange while praising David Murray. We place demands on our poets.

we want a poet to talk like an arena/ like a fire station/to be everywhere/all at once/even if we never been there/ but especially if we've never been there/ we expect a poet to clear a space/not a secret/ not a closed room/ not the town. we assume the poet to be the voice of everywhere we are not/ opposed to being 'everything we are'.

We never complain about how musicians live. Yet our scholars point at Ntozake Shange and babble nonsense. Robert Staples, discussing the work of Michelle Wallace and Shange in Black Scholar wrote: While the personal background of an author is no defensible basis for judging their work, I find it difficult to overlook it in the case of these two women. Both came from very middle-class backgrounds, had some involvements with street brothers, and are now urging Black women to go it alone. That may not be all that is important about them; it is all I know.

Is Staples familiar with the poetry of Judy Grahn? Has he spoken to C. L. R. James recently? The personal background of an author is no defensible basis for judging the work.

A few months ago I wrote a poem for Shange. It was composed as encouragement for this woman to continue. So much depends on the freedom of our poets. In Chile, Neruda still lives. Let us not kill our own comrades in this land north of south.

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Night Watchmen

Don't you know the enemy will attack you in your sleep. While you're layin' easy in the night.

In the darkness he will hide his deep and sinister plot but now the darkness lies within your mind.

He throws you a lollipop from the candy store you own and you sit there grinning with delight.

But you will be the sucker that is wore that is worn down to the stick when he comes attacking in the night.

Don't you know the enemy will attack you in your sleep. While you're pacified and unaware.

When you think that things have changed and everything is fine and yet all the while they are the same.

When you were carrying the banner that Harriet once held you were out there fighting for your rights.

Now is the time for us to be about the work at hand. We've been too long a sittin' in the night.

Christopher S. Prince
Washington D. C.
Suspended Animation:

suspended
animation
floating on
a thin line
of sanity
abstraction
& reality
hanging by a
thread of
laughter
fear
anger
loneliness
tears—
hang glides soar
caricatures
galore
i will be your cartoon
as in
woody wood peck
because
he had
nothing better to
do
than to glide
with the
mainstream of life
flowing with the current
productively
producing
programmed to
project
a caricature
of tangible dreams
making it real
only because
more than one can see...
but what if this
is all an abstraction
of a cartoon
or painted
illusions in His being?
then that makes us
all a fantasy
perhaps living in the
line of a t.v. show
hanging by a thread
and due to faulty
Programming
Ratings
Boredom
Dillusions
Distortions of
what should be—
the producer cuts
the string
away we all go
in suspended
animation
to live no more ...
Marsha Romaine Harden
Rialto, Ca.

Say Hello to Your Mind

Say hello to your mind
From the inner sanctum of your
thoughts
Through your own psychic images
To improve the quality of your life
To conquer what you believe to be true
To dance to your creative self
To revel in your own innocence.

Say hello to your mind
From the realm of your own private
screening chamber
Through the power of self-consciousness
Deliberately choosing where you want
go
Deliberately selecting happiness over
unhappiness
Deliberately holding on to what you
need at any particular moment.

Say hello to your mind
From the curiosity of your higher self
Through the fantasy which makes you
believe in God
To feel the inspirations of life
To deepen your feelings of love
To experience other dimensions of self
To soar beyond the bonds of your
present limitations.

Say hello to your mind
From the drifting channels outside your
body
Through the space in front of your closed
eyes
To an exciting new adventure in
freedom
To expand your intellect into intuition
To believe you govern yourself
To believe your images are
self-fulfilling prophecies.

Say hello to your mind
From the private confirmation of your
own universe
Through the maze of confusion which
govern your life
To know where you are is limited by
where you
think you are
To know how to release your own
blocked energy
To capture your own natural flow and
unleash your
own self
To know what you perceive in life is
what you are.
Janet R. Griffin
Columbia, Md.

Pay attention to me...

Pay attention to me, black man!
Please hear what I say.
Touch me gently black man;
See me, hear me, talk to me today.
Give me your anger, fears and
frustration;
Give me your hatreds, give me your love.
Then, there is nothing down here or
above
To prevent our true communication.

Pay attention to me, black man!
Open up your heart to me, your very
soul—
With me, you don’t have to assume a
role.
Please, don’t be afraid, confide in me;
Come, stand right here beside me.
Please, black man, trust me
For I am your loving mate.
Pay attention to me, black man
Please, before it is too late!
Juanita Norman
Howard University

Analytical Respect
I enjoyed fraternizing with
the intellectuals.
They produced my show.
debating
arguing
learning
laughing
Socializing with them.
They were inspiring, plausible
and disgusting
Declaring what they know.
Larry E. Cody
Washington, D.C.

Rastaman Rock
Rasta man rock freedom song
’Bout ways we ought to be
Rasta man’s pulse is comin’ strong
Flyin’ ‘cross the sea
Touchin’ my heart with rebel roll
Openin’ my mind shakin’ my soul
Shine with your risin’ reggae light
Paint us a future, map out a fight
Rasta man rock lifeline tune
Speakin’ of bein’ free
Rasta man say sunshine soon
Be reachin’ out for me
Callin’ on powers held within
Waitin’ to spring, needin’ to win
We’ll brew ancient potions
For plantin’ the notions
Leadin’ to victory.
Marlene Graham
Jamaica, N.Y.