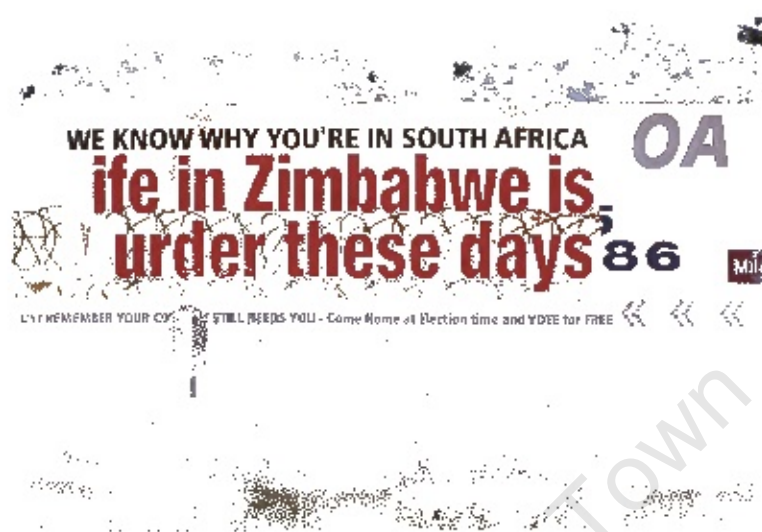


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Seeking Solidarity: Categorisation and the Politics of Alienism in the migration of Zimbabweans to South Africa



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COMPULSORY DECLARATION

This work has not been previously submitted in whole, or in part, for the award of any degree. It is my own work. Each significant contribution to, and quotation in, this dissertation from the work, or works, of other people has been attributed, and has been cited and referenced.

Signature:

Signed by candidate

Date:

03-02-2009

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University of Cape Town

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ABSTRACT

This ethnographic study is concerned with the process of movement of Zimbabwean nationals to Cape Town, South Africa, that results in their categorisation by the South African state as “illegal immigrants.” Based on fieldwork carried out in Harare and Cape Town in 2006 and 2007, it explores the effects of state-based categorisation of people within Zimbabwe on migration. The study argues that migrants had often been multiply displaced in Zimbabwe as a result of the political situation before crossing the border to South Africa. It explores the factors, both political and economic, that affected migrants’ decisions to move over great distances, and to move multiple times. Drawing on informants’ experiences both in Zimbabwe and South Africa, the study is further concerned with informants’ expectations of South Africa and the differing realities they encountered upon arrival. It considers informants’ experiences of crossing the border, exploring the anthropology of the borderlands to investigate the political economy of movement from Zimbabwe to South Africa. The study further argues that Zimbabwean migrants to South Africa draw upon localised discourses of human rights, based upon ideas of morality, in their expectations of welcome by the South African state. These expectations are found to be erroneous in that undocumented migrants’ notions of violation differ to those employed by the South African state. Whilst migrants assert that conditions of structural violence in Zimbabwe are serious enough to warrant asylum, the South African state considers these reasons to be less valid than those of physical political violence. Within the South African discourses around the Zimbabwean crisis, there are thus forms of suffering that are considered more valid than others.

Figure 1: Map of Southern Africa showing Zimbabwe and South Africa

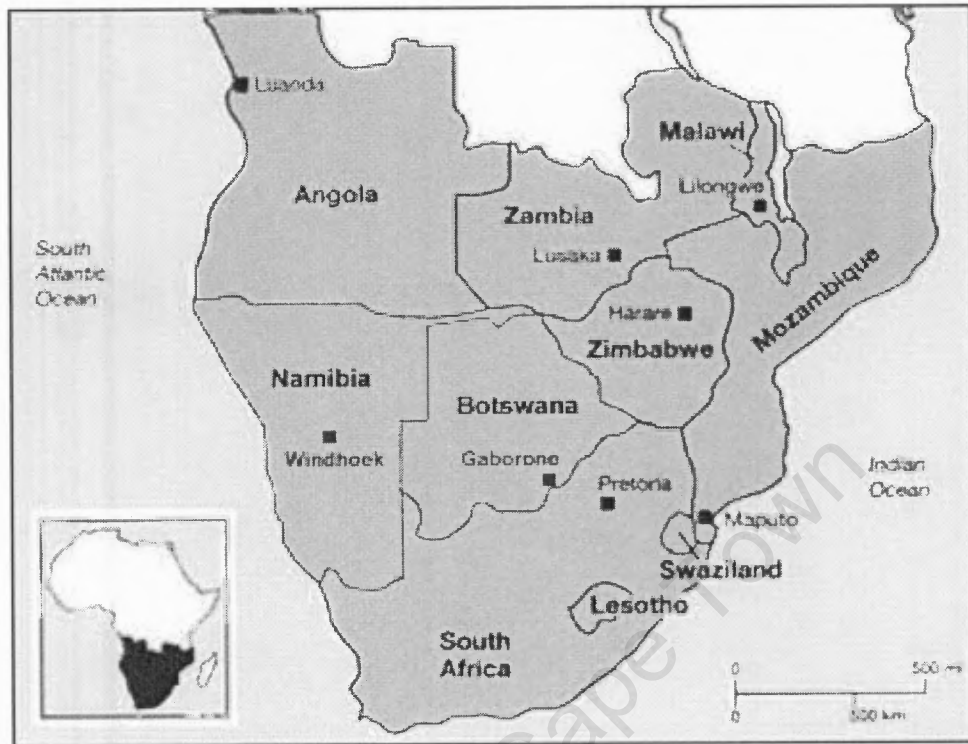


Figure 2: Map of Zimbabwe Showing Major Towns



1.

Introduction: History and heritage in Zimbabwe

On a windy night in Cape Town at the tail end of winter, 2007, I stood on a pavement beneath a highway overpass, surrounded by an incongruous mix of journalists, activists and illegal immigrants. The branch of Home Affairs that deals with applications for asylum is tucked away at the very bottom of Adderley Street, one of central Cape Town's major roads, beneath the highway that runs towards The Waterfront and the Cape Town Convention Centre, two symbols of the economic success of the so-called New South Africa. Things were very different beneath the highway, however. To my right there was a car park that stretched to the harbour fence: no congestion of new cars here as at the Waterfront; the people who come here do not drive, but walk, or catch local taxis. To my left lay a road upon which trucks delivering goods to the harbour constantly drove, noisily, and belching diesel fumes. Directly in front of me was a narrow strip of sand between a wire fence following the roadside, and the building that houses the Home Affairs refugee centre. This strip, wide enough for a person to lie down, head to the wall and feet at the fence, had been the home of a semi-transient group of Zimbabwean asylum seekers, who sleep outside Home Affairs in the hope of being the first in the queue in the morning, and thus acquiring a solid date for the appointment that is the first step in the process of seeking asylum in South Africa. On this night in early October, a group of activists had come to sleep with the asylum seekers, in order to "show solidarity" and bring to public attention the inefficiency and corruption of Home Affairs. The media had been alerted to this plan, and had come along to see whether this might be a story worth re-telling.

A journalist standing in front of me asked of an asylum seeker, "Why are you in South Africa? Are things so bad in Zimbabwe?"

When the man nodded, she went on to ask, "Were you beaten by the police?"

"Sometimes," replied the man, "but I am here because my family were hungry."

I know this man, and I am thus aware that the ‘sometimes’ with which he covered incidences of violence in Zimbabwe encapsulates a wide range of experiences: from “small” beatings for being assumed to be a supporter of the opposition party, the Movement for Democratic Change (MDC), to “bad” beatings at the hands of the Youth Militia when he refused to take a stick to a woman he had grown up with, and who was, according to the militia, needing “punishment.” Yet these experiences were not the only, or perhaps even the main, motivating force behind leaving Zimbabwe, for him and for many others. As another informant put it to me, “An economic refugee is still a refugee. It’s much easier to die of hunger in Zimbabwe than it is to die by the police. One will happen: the other might.” Yet the journalist outside Home Affairs that night in October was not interested in the man’s main response. “Sometimes?” she queried, “When? What happened to you?”

“Yes, I have been beaten,” the man said. “So have many others. But everyday we are suffering.”

“Yes, you have suffered,” the journalist replied. She thanked him and walked away.

This study, based on fieldwork carried out in Zimbabwe and in South Africa in 2006 and 2007 (see Chapter 2), is concerned with the process of movement of Zimbabweans to South Africa that results in their categorisation by the South African state as “illegal immigrants.” Though categorised as illegal by the state, I use the term ‘undocumented migrant’ rather than ‘illegal immigrant’ in keeping with De Genova (2002), who has emphasised that the category ‘illegal’ derives from a state-based point of view, in that it emphasises a transgression of state laws. In contrast to this, from the perspective of “the free movement of people, the problem is the state rather than those who are mobile” (Harris, 1995:85, in De Genova, 2002:421). Further, De Genova has argued that the category of ‘undocumented migrant’ is not useful in isolation from socio-political context, in that “there are no hermetically sealed communities of undocumented migrants,” and that “to conduct research on undocumented migrants as such – conceptualised in isolation – is therefore to perpetrate a rather egregious kind of epistemic violence on the social reality of everyday life for those migrants”(ibid:422-423). Thus, while undocumented migrants constitute the individuals with whom I worked

in South Africa, the aim here is not to ‘study’ this category per se, but to explore the socio-political processes of categorisation within the contexts of South Africa *and* Zimbabwe, in order to examine the ways in which these processes, which stretch over vast geographical regions, eventuate in migrants becoming categorised as ‘illegal’ by the South African state. Migrants are not passive observers in this process, but are active in embracing certain categories and resisting others, and I thus am also concerned with exploring the ways in which undocumented migrants draw upon discourses of suffering, rights and regionalism in attempts to avoid becoming categorised as ‘illegal’.

The conversation between journalist and asylum seeker with which I opened seems to me to be representative of the juxtaposition of different modes of thinking about suffering that occur in interactions between undocumented migrants and journalists, undocumented migrants and ordinary South African citizens, journalists and activists, activists and undocumented migrants, and activists and government representatives in the many discourses within South Africa around the current situation in Zimbabwe. “You have suffered,” said the journalist, while the man had in fact been speaking of both the past and the present: we are *still* suffering on the South African side of the border. The activists present that night at Home Affairs, and the activists and undocumented migrants present again the next day to protest, were there because of what they consider to be ongoing violations: they were protesting occurrences in South Africa, *and* occurrences in Zimbabwe that were considered inadequate in terms of seeking asylum. Within South African discourse around the Zimbabwean crisis, there are thus forms of suffering that are considered more valid than others. Two questions central to this research, and to the process of categorisation as ‘illegal immigrant’, then, are how is suffering socially constructed, and where is the line drawn between suffering and a direct violation against human rights? Throughout this dissertation I intend to show that the answer to these questions is situational: suffering and violation hold different meanings within the popular imaginations of Zimbabweans and South Africans, and within the legal discourse of asylum seeking and human rights. In a sense, then, I am interested here in how a political economy of suffering plays into processes of categorisation.

This study is also concerned with the reality of life in Zimbabwe, and the difference between South African stereotypes of 'Zimbabwean suffering', which focus on incidences of direct physical violence, and Zimbabweans' notions of suffering, which draw on a much wider conceptualization of violence, a conceptualization that is closer to anthropological ideas of structural violence (see below) than it is to popular definitions of violation and suffering. To argue that violations in terms of poverty, hunger and ill health are important, however, is not to belittle the effects of direct physical violence, torture and intimidation. Political violence is a reality in Zimbabwe, and well documented (see Human Rights Watch 2006a; 2006b, Solidarity Peace Trust 2004). An acknowledgement of the subjective experience of more insidious forms of violence, and the sorts of categorisation that go along with this, however, show the need for these to be considered equally valid. This is particularly pertinent as movement beyond the Zimbabwean border, which often resulted from economic conditions, was found to be essential to the continuation of households in Zimbabwe (see Chapter 3). Migrants thus face the double edged sword of *having* to move to maintain households, but being categorised in South Africa as economically mobile, and thus illegal (see Chapter 5), rather than as displaced.

Let us, then, explore the conditions within Zimbabwe that have influenced movement across borders, beginning with a brief account of the events that lead to independence and of Zimbabwe in the 1980s and 1990s. Like all countries, Zimbabwe has a complex history that cannot be done justice in a few pages, but I feel it necessary to provide this historical background in order to contextualise the ethnographic discussions that follow in this study.

Becoming Independent: 1964 to 1980

Like almost all post colonial states, the history of the shift from colonial to majority rule in Zimbabwe is ridden with conflict. Zimbabwe (formerly Southern Rhodesia, then Rhodesia) came late to independence, compared to other African countries, on the 18th of April 1980. The Zimbabwe Liberation War, or second Chimurenga¹, is held to have

¹ The first Chimurenga having been the war against Britain in the 1890s

officially begun in 1967 when the first white-owned farm was attacked (Musengezi and McCartney, 2000). This largely guerrilla war was fought by two nationalist armies, ZANLA (Zimbabwe African Liberation Army, the military wing of Mugabe's ZANU) and ZIPRA (Zimbabwe People's Revolutionary Army, the military wing of Joshua Nkomo's ZAPU) against the Rhodesian government under Prime Minister Ian Smith².

The relationship between South Africa and Rhodesia was central to the continuation of Smith's regime. Smith stated that "South Africa is among our best friends in the world" (in Geldenhuys, 2004:104), and H F Verwoerd's³ post-UDI policy of non-interference in Rhodesian affairs, and non-participation in sanctions, was central in allowing the economy of Rhodesia to function. South African solidarity with Rhodesia was largely motivated by fear of the black nationalist threat to white minority rule in their own country. What is significant to current Zimbabweans' notions of the historical relationship between the two countries (see chapter 4) is the idea of black nationalist solidarity as a response to white minority solidarity: in the eyes of Zimbabweans today, black South Africans and Zimbabweans have shared a common history of struggle against oppression for many years.

By 1976, however, South African governmental attitudes towards Rhodesia began to shift. Following the Soweto uprising in 1976, South Africa found itself under increasing pressure both internally and externally to change its own policies, and was wary of involving itself in a further area of contention with the world community (Geldenhuys, 2004). In 1976, South African Prime Minister John Vorster and US Secretary of State, Henry Kissinger, succeeded in getting Smith to agree to majority rule within two years. It was, however, only in 1979 that the Lancaster House agreement was reached between all major parties, and a cease fire called. Following elections in 1980, Zimbabwe was born and ZANU-PF, the current ruling party (though the legitimacy of this has become increasingly questionable, particularly following the 2008 elections) came to power.

² In November 1965, the Rhodesian cabinet, under Smith, announced a unilateral declaration of independence (UDI) from Britain.

³ HF Verwoerd was then Prime Minister of South Africa under the National Party (NP)

It would be misleading, however, to see the advent of ZANU-PF as Zimbabwe's major political party as inevitable and as supported by the entire black population. Zimbabwean nationalist politics began in 1960 with the formation of the National Democratic Party (NDP), with Robert Mugabe and Joshua Nkomo both high in the party rankings. The NDP re-formed under Nkomo as ZAPU after its banning in 1960 and in 1962 ZANU, headed by Robert Mugabe, split away from the party. By UDI, Nkomo and Mugabe were both imprisoned, and "ZAPU and ZANU were in open conflict in the townships, with party thugs carrying out nightly raids, burning the homes of opponents and killing members of the rival party" (Hill, 2003:61). Mugabe and other political prisoners, held in a camp in Que Que (later Kwekwe), used their time in prison to formulate plans of armed struggle, and ZANLA was born, operating from Mozambique while ZIPRA (ZAPU's military wing) was set up in Zambia. Though sharing a common enemy, the two armies were not aligned. Peace brokering negotiations seldom saw Mugabe and Nkomo present at the same time, though all black leaders were present at the Lancaster House agreement.

In the elections in 1980, Mugabe won 57 seats, Nkomo 20, and Bishop Abel Muzorewa only 3, despite being supported by the white Rhodesians, and expected by both the Rhodesian Front and South Africa's NP government to win, hence South African support for a democratic election. The vote, to Nkomo's surprise as he had seen himself as a national leader, was split along ethnic lines, with Nkomo winning support in Matabeleland, with a primarily Ndebele population, and Mugabe winning support among Shona voters. This ethnic discontinuity is still present to some degree today⁴, and is often utilised in ZANU(PF) rhetoric. Both Hill (2003) and Quintana (2004), however, argue that ZANU made use of heavy intimidation techniques in the rural areas before elections in 1980, utilising both physical violence and threats that if Mugabe did not win, the country would revert to war. It is thus possible that Zimbabwe, hailed as an African success story in the 1980s and 1990s, has in fact never had an election that was free of some level of intimidation.

⁴ In Chapter 4, I explore the effects of being categorised as Ndebele in the current crisis.

Early years of independence

Nation building and the power of rhetoric

Raftopoulos has referred to the 1980s as “the years of restoration and hope” (Raftopoulos, 2004: 2), and in many respects they were. Mugabe initially advocated reconciliation between white and black, placating the white minority who had fought against majority rule⁵, and thanking Smith for the strong economy in the country (Hill, 2003). The main focus of the domestic economy at this point was concerned with “a policy of high economic growth rates, increased incomes and social expenditures and the promotion of rural development” (Raftopoulos, 2004:4). Social services expanded in the 1980s, particularly with regard to access to education, resulting in the high level of education among the Zimbabwean undocumented migrant population in South Africa today.

The question of land ownership had been central to the liberation struggle and at the time of independence, most arable commercial land was in the hands of the white minority. The 1979 Lancaster House Agreement placed restrictions on the acquisition of land by the new government (Kagoro, 2004), tying the government to a willing seller-willing buyer procedure for ten years, though in reality this continued until 1997 (Raftopoulos, 2004). This process resulted in around 3 million hectares of land being acquired for resettlement (Raftopolous, 2004:4), a very small amount compared to arable commercial farms as a whole. The land issue was to emerge as central to ZANU politics in the late 1990s.

During the 1980s, the government engaged in a strategy of consolidation which involved strong government control of most sectors of society. In terms of labour, while implementing policies to protect workers, the government nevertheless retained a strong measure of control, similar to that of the Smith regime, with the Zimbabwe Congress of Trade Unions (ZCTU) being an arm of government, not a civic organisation. Utilising

⁵ Like many white South Africans under apartheid, many white Zimbabweans had agreed with the need for majority rule, and were pleased by the outcome of years of struggle.

nation building rhetoric that made questioning government authority seem unpatriotic ZANU consolidated its power and assumed control of most aspects of reform, leading Raftopolous (2004:6) to remark that,

The dominance of ZANU PF could also be seen in its influence over women's organisations, the student movement, and other civic groups. Non-governmental organisations adopted a low profile and complementary approach to the state...The authority of the ruling party went largely unquestioned.

Print, radio and television media all came under state control, with Robert Mandevu, chairman of the Mass Media Trust which oversaw all media in the country, also drawing on a rhetoric of patriotism when he released the following statement to the press in the early 1980s:

We will not interfere with the right of the press to tell the truth, but journalists will also have to remember that they are citizens of the country and should be wary of issues that will discredit or embarrass the government. The press will now be controlled by the people.

(Mandevu, in Hill, 2003:74)

The government thus assumed control of many aspects of economic and civic life. Politically, ZANU also began the process of implementing a one party state. The rift between ZAPU and ZANU had not been healed by the tactical unity required to end the liberation war. Following independence, members of ZIPRA and ZANLA had both been incorporated into the new Zimbabwe National Army (ZNA), but tensions remained between both war veterans and party heads. From 1980 to 1988, this tension played out in the appalling violence of Gukurahundi⁶ in Matabeleland and the Midlands of Zimbabwe, perpetrated by the North Korean trained 5th Brigade. Ostensibly, the 5th Brigade was tasked to deal with around 400 dissidents who had broken away from the ZNA. In reality, the campaign was one of terror and mass murder of innocent civilians,

⁶ "The Shona expression "Gukurahundi", meaning "the first rain that washes away the chaff of the last harvest before the spring rains", used to have pleasant connotations...In the 1980s the term Gukurahundi assumed an entirely new meaning... since then, the word invokes nothing but negative emotions among Zimbabweans, ranging from indifference, shame, denial, terror, bitter anger and deep trauma, depending on whether one is a victim, perpetrator or one of the millions of citizens who remained silent" Eleanor Sisulu, 2007:xiii.

designed “to crush the people of Matabeleland so that they would conform to the ZANU-PF government and give up their tribal identity and their attachment to ZAPU” (Archbishop Pius Ncube, 2006:xi). Over 20 000 Ndebele people were killed during the campaign, and buried in mass graves, in one of the most silenced occasions of genocide in Africa. In 1988 ZAPU was incorporated into ZANU to form ZANU (PF), and the country effectively became a one party state. It was only in 1997 when the Catholic Commission for Justice and Peace and the Legal Resources Foundation released *Breaking the Silence: A Report on the Disturbances in Matabeleland and the Midlands* that the extent of the atrocity of the early 1980s became clear to the rest of the country. Eleanor Sisulu, who was working in Zimbabwe as a civil servant in the 1980s, has written in the foreword to the 2007 re-publication of *Breaking the Silence*: “The report points out that one of the most painful aspects of the Gukurahundi massacres was that the plight of the victims and survivors was and continues to be unacknowledged. They are still suffering from the wounds of silence.”

During the 1980s, economic growth and land reform were slower than had been expected, and by the end of the decade the government, like much of the postcolonial world, was under increasing pressure to implement structural adjustment programs. As Ferguson (2006:11) notes,

“Structural–adjustment” policies, imposed on African states by international lenders in the 1980s and 1990s, were supposed to achieve “stabilisation” and economic growth through the devaluation of currencies, the deregulation of markets, the reduction of state bureaucracies, and the privatisation of state and parastatal industries.

The actual effects of structural adjustment, however, have been to usher in the lowest ever rates of economic growth in the region, to reduce central state capacity, and to increase corruption and patrimonialism (Ferguson, 2006). In Zimbabwe, the World Bank directed Economic Structural Adjustment Program, or ESAP, as it is locally known, was implemented in 1991. One aspect of this reform was a cut back in social spending, thus diminishing the improvements that were fostered in the early 1980s. ESAP, like many other structural adjustment programs in Africa, was unsuccessful, and Saunders (1995)

has argued that the increased difficulty of life under structural adjustment contributed to early disaffection with the ruling party.

'ZANU/PF Mbava!'⁷ The current crisis in Zimbabwe

Dissatisfaction with the situation in Zimbabwe was seen as early as 1995 with food riots occurring across the country (Holland, 2008). In 1997, veterans from the liberation war demanded pensions for their role in the Second Chimurenga, thus presenting a challenge to the party from within its own ranks. President Mugabe agreed to pay each war veteran Z\$ 50 000, which led to the first major crash in the Zimbabwe dollar. The impact of this, in conjunction with structural adjustment programs, was a deterioration of economic conditions within the country. Economic difficulties thus predate the point which is often considered (for example, by Hill, 2003) as the beginning of the current "crisis" (Hammar and Raftopoulos, 2003:1): namely, a referendum carried out in February 2000, where the populace voted against changes to the constitution which would further empower ZANU(PF). It seems likely, however, that the trade unions' 'Vote No' campaign in that referendum would have been less successful were the effects of structural adjustment and the declining value in the Zimbabwe dollar not being felt.

The opposition party, the Movement for Democratic Change (MDC), headed by former trade unionist Morgan Tsvangirai, had gained prominence from 1999, and the vote against the referendum was considered by many to be a win for the MDC. Shortly after the referendum, the land issue came to the fore of Zimbabwean politics. A series of violent land occupations began, described by Raftopoulos (2004:13) as a means "to justify the denigration of civic and political rights as minority concerns, in the name of a selective manipulation around the land distribution question." In April 2000, ZANU(PF) amended the constitution so as to free themselves of the obligations set out in the willing seller-willing buyer strategy, effectively enabling land to be acquired without compensation (Harold-Barry, 2004). It was predicted that the elections in 2000 would ensure an MDC majority (Hill, 2003) and the government thus stepped up intimidatory

⁷ 'ZANU PF thieves': Graffiti on a wall in Harare, Zimbabwe. See appendix B for photograph.

tactics. The 2000 elections were accompanied by severe violence against opposition supporters, with 35 people killed and numerous human rights abuses perpetrated (Raftopoulos, 2004). The cases of political violence and torture from 2000 to the present have been well documented (see Reeler, 2001, 2003; Human Rights Watch, 2006; Solidarity Peace Trust, 2006), and have caused Hill (2003) to comment that “Since 1999 Zimbabwe has been in an undeclared state of civil war”(Hill, 2003:3).

On the 25th of June 2000, the results of the parliamentary election showed ZANU(PF) to have won 62 seats, while the newcomer, the MDC, had won 57. By the 29th of June, the Commercial Farmers Union (CFU) reported that 1,525 farms had been invaded, 28 percent of farms owned by its members. By June 2001, 95 percent of CFU members had been placed under expropriation orders (L’Ange, 2005). The farm invasions, which had been declared illegal by the Supreme Court in November 2000, were accompanied by violence and intimidation, directed both towards white farmers and towards black labourers.

The delays in land reform from 1980, with the majority of commercial farms still in white hands by 1999, thus enabled the use of the land issue as an important political tool. Bond (2002:2) has noted Mugabe’s propensity to “talk left, act right”, noting that in terms of land reform, “Mugabe gave the impression to some observers that his project was genuinely anti-imperialist and capable of empowering the millions of landless rural Zimbabweans for whom he claimed to act.” The Zimbabwean government funded war veterans to invade farms, allocating Z\$20 million (at the time US\$500 000) to the invasions in what, in later years, came to be seen as an attempt not to empower the landless but to both satisfy the outspoken leader of the war veterans, Chenjerai Hunzvi, thus securing war veteran votes, and to establish strongholds in rural areas where intimidation would be less obvious to the media (Hill, 2003). As the Zimbabwean economy was largely based upon agriculture, and as the people to whom land was

initially re-allocated⁸ were given no support or training in commercial farming, the economy deteriorated further from that point (see below).

Decline of the Rule of Law

By 2003, it was apparent to most Zimbabweans that the police, judiciary and military were biased in favour of the ruling party. During the 2000 elections, the police force turned a blind eye to violence against MDC supporters and violence perpetrated during farm invasions. In 2001, the Head of Police, Commissioner Chihuri, publically announced that he supported ZANU(PF). Police officers suspected of sympathising with the opposition were forced to resign or physically threatened (Feltoe, 2003.) These officers were replaced with war veterans or youth militia. While violence was originally perpetrated by war veterans, youth militia and ZANU(PF) supporters, in recent years it has fallen more closely under state control and is now mainly perpetrated by the army and the police (Ibid.).

The judiciary, too, came under attack: in March 2002 Zimbabwe's Chief Justice, Anthony Gubbay was forced into early retirement and replaced by Judge Godfrey Chidyausiku, a former ZANU(PF) minister. By 2004 all previously incumbent Supreme Court Judges had been replaced with judges sympathetic to the ruling party. The declaration of farm invasions as illegal by the Supreme Court was reversed by the restructured Supreme Court. Court orders that ruled against the ruling party's interests have been increasingly ignored since 2000⁹. In 2002, the Public Law and Security Act (POSA) was passed, replacing the colonial Law and Order Maintenance Act (LOMA), designed to allow the Smith regime "extraordinary" (Harold-Barry, 2004: 270) powers to counter African nationalist movements. POSA re-introduced and extended the powers of

⁸ Though land invasions were framed as redistribution of land to the people, in reality most land has since passed into the hands of the ZANU(PF) elite.

⁹ The most recent publicised case being that of human rights campaigner Jestina Mukoko, who was kidnapped from her home on December 3, 2008. Mukoko, who was held in Chikurubi, a maximum security prison in Harare, had testified that she was tortured. Chidyausiku ordered that she "receive medical attention as a matter of urgency" – however, it was only in late January 2008 that she was taken to a hospital, and even then was only allowed to be put onto a drip before being escorted back to Chikurubi. Doctors refused to sign her discharge papers.

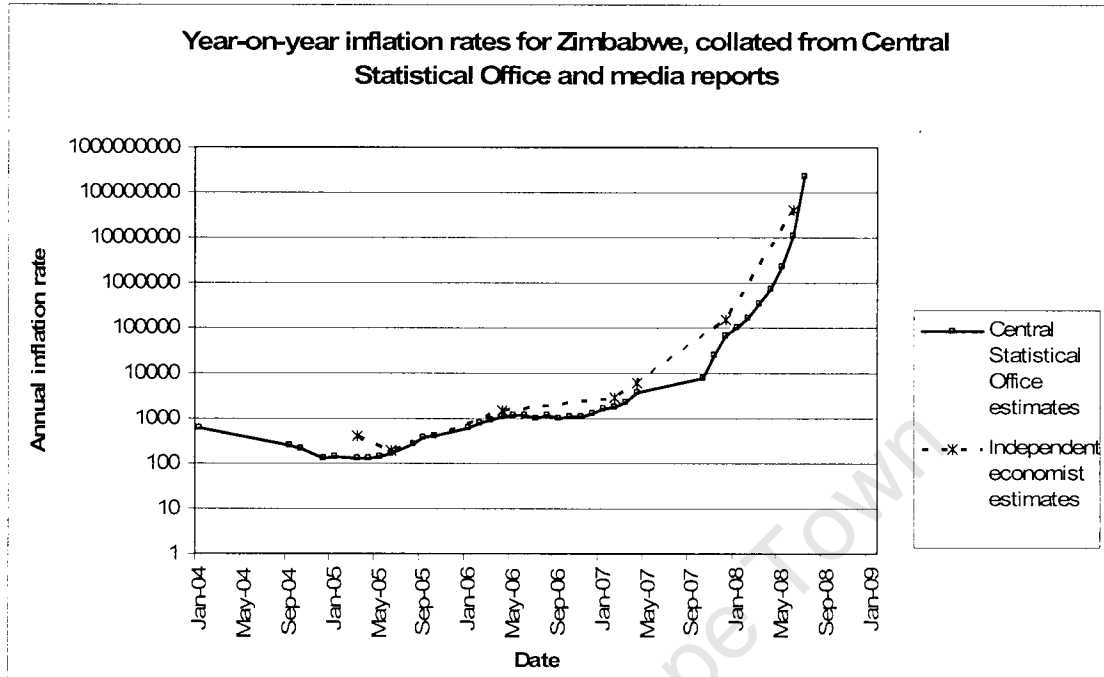
LOMA. The General Laws Amendment Act was also passed in 2002, which introduced stringent controls over independent and foreign electoral observers for the 2002 Presidential Elections, in which Mugabe won 56 percent of the vote and Tsvangirai 42 percent. These elections were declared neither free nor fair by impartial observers, and Zimbabwe was suspended from the Commonwealth. South Africa declared the elections legitimate, but not free and fair (Harold-Barry, 2004). Human Rights Watch (2005b:4) described the 2002 elections as “characterised by wide-spread state sponsored violence, repression of political opposition and electoral irregularities”.

During the 2005 parliamentary elections, the government did not conform to the Southern African Development Community (SADC) Principles and Guidelines Governing Democratic Elections, which were passed in 2005 and to which Zimbabwe was signatory. In these elections ZANU(PF) won 78 seats and the MDC only 41. Reeler and Chitsike (2005:15), in an IDASA report covering the 2005 election, commented that “this result led to immediate speculation...governments that fail their people sometimes retain their power, but few, if any, have been returned to power with an increased majority.”¹⁰

Decline in the Economy

A key outcome of the farm invasions was a decline in the economy. Tobacco, which had formed a large portion of Zimbabwe’s GDP, was (and is) no longer being produced. The country has also consistently failed to produce enough food for its citizens. From 2000 onwards, inflation rates began to rise, leading to a drop in internal production. Government fixed exchange rates (see Appendix D) ensured that mines could not operate at a profit, leading to their closure and a further decline in the economy.

¹⁰ The 2008 Presidential and Parliamentary Elections fall beyond the scope of this study as fieldwork was undertaken prior to this. These elections, however, are viewed as the most flawed to have taken place thus far.



By December 2007, the annualised inflation rate as released by Zimbabwe’s Central Statistic Office (CSO) stood at 66 212,3%, an increase that salaries cannot keep up with: for example, in December 2007, a nurse from a government hospital with whom I spoke was earning 26 million dollars a month, while 2 kg of potatoes cost just over 7 million dollars on the 7th of January 2008, and 11 million three hundred thousand dollars on the 12th of January. Zimbabwe today has become a land of starving ‘millionaires’. The exponential inflation rates shown in the table above have very real effects on life within Zimbabwe. The rapidity of changes in prices has worked to ensure that planning for the future – be it in terms of something as small as buying bread (were it available) tomorrow, or planning something longer term like a child’s education – has become impossible. In combination with frequent unavailability of goods, inflation ensures that today and tomorrow can be very different, and change is rapid, requiring a constant re-learning of how the economy is working at a particular point in time.

The decline in the economy has corresponded with a decline in access to health services and access to education. In 2004 the Civic Monitoring Program reported that half the population lived further than 5 kilometres away from a clinic (the most basic level of

healthcare in Zimbabwe) as clinics had had to close due to funding and staff shortages. Even where clinics were open, drugs were often unavailable or unaffordable for most of the population (Civic Monitoring Program, 2004). Access to anti-retrovirals (ARVs) is particularly difficult for large portions of the population, as by 2004 they were only available in some hospitals in large towns. In August 2004, the United Nations estimated that while 25 percent of the country's population of 11 million people were HIV positive, only 5000 were on ARVs. This same report showed people to have been turned away from hospitals as the hospitals were unable to provide even pain killers. The Institute for War and Peace Reporting claimed in 2007 that Matabeleland South, a province of Zimbabwe, had only one doctor for 4 million people (Cheda, 2009). This situation has subsequently worsened, with public hospitals closing indefinitely in late 2008. In 2007, Tapuwa, a female undocumented migrant with whom I worked, had decided to settle in South Africa after years of circular migration as she was pregnant, and feared she would not be able to access healthcare during the birth of her child (see Appendix A). She also feared for her child's chances of living. By 2006, child (under 5) mortality had risen to 129 per 1000, as compared with 67/1000 for South Africa (World Health Organisation, 2006).

Lack of access to water has exacerbated the health problems the country faces – in 2005, prior to Operation Murambatsvina as described below, it was estimated that some 2.5 million urban residents lived without access to clean water or adequate sanitation (Chidyausiku, 2005).¹¹ A 2006 World Health Organisation Report placed the life expectancy of Zimbabwean women at 34 years, and average life expectancy at 36.9 years - this in a country where a recent headline read “Loved ones dumped in the night as burial now a luxury”(zimbabwejournalists.com, 22 May 2006).

State sponsored campaigns against citizens

¹¹ In late 2008, which falls outside the period studied here, lack of access to clean water resulted in a cholera outbreak which had reached 58, 820 cases, and 3095 deaths, by December 2008. The usual death rate for cholera is under 1%; the death rate in Zimbabwe in December 2008 stood at 5.3% (WHO, 2008)

At a most fundamental level, then, the economic situation can be said to constitute violence against the entire population¹². The government, however, has done little to alleviate the problem. In addition to exponential inflation rates and frequent shortages of basic food and goods, international food aid has been rejected by the government on a number of occasions (Human Rights Watch 2004), and the allocation of food to the hungry is reliant in some cases upon access to a ZANU(PF) party card (Ibid). In 2006, Operation Taguta/Sisuthi ('eat well') was implemented, with the army seizing food from some communities in order to feed others, frequently leaving the original communities without enough to feed themselves (Lindow, 2006).

Reports by Amnesty International (2005) and Human Rights Watch (2006) have noted violations against the rights to shelter, food, freedom of movement and freedom of assembly. In 2005, Operation Murambatsvina ('clean out the rubbish') destroyed thousands of homes in high density areas, under the pretence that homes were illegal dwellings and that better housing would be provided. This has yet to materialise, and Murambatsvina is widely understood locally and by international rights organisations as a way of punishing urban people for voting against ZANU (see Human Rights Watch, 2005; Solidarity Peace Trust, 2006). As shown in Chapters 3 and 4, Operation Murambatsvina had a decided effect on individuals' decisions to come to South Africa, though often only as a result of initial internal displacement which, over time, led to movement across the border. It is important to note, however, that even where individuals were not affected by government driven initiatives such as Operation Murambatsvina, rights were still considered, by migrants and by those still in Zimbabwe, to have been violated on a daily basis. In light of the above, it is unsurprising that experiences of structural violence are central to life as lived in Zimbabwe; and that the United Nations Human Rights development report of 2004 cited Zimbabwe as the country with the highest number of labour emigrants in the Southern African Development Community (SADC) (in *Zim Daily*, February 2006).

¹² As shown in Chapter 4, particular categories of people have been affected in different ways (the rural versus the urban, for example), but there is no category, apart perhaps from the ZANU elite, that has not been negatively affected in some way.

South African involvement in the Zimbabwean Crisis¹³

Since the beginning of the crisis, South Africa under the ANC has been very lenient towards Mugabe's government. At the time of fieldwork, the President of South Africa was Thabo Mbeki, who spearheaded negotiations with the Zimbabwean government under the banner of 'quiet diplomacy'. Though Mbeki is no longer President of South Africa or the ANC, he has continued to 'mediate' the Zimbabwean crisis, brokering an ostensible power sharing deal between ZANU(PF) and the MDC, following the failed 2008 election¹⁴. The literature on Mbeki's stance of quiet diplomacy is extensive (see Bond 2002; 2004; 2005; Graham, 2007; Hough and du Plessis, 2002; Maroleng, 2007). Geldenhuys (2004:104) argues that South Africa's response to the Zimbabwean situation "has to be seen in the context of an ongoing special relationship between the two states." Bond (2002) has pointed out the similarities between Mbeki's position with regard to Zimbabwe now, and the situation between South African premier John Vorster and Ian Smith in 1976. In both cases, the economic and political relationship, both present and historical, between the two states, meant that South Africa was in the most influential position with regard to Rhodesia/Zimbabwe. This relationship gave (and today gives) South Africa leverage in terms of the economic relationship, but also constrains it in terms of historical ties and racial solidarity (Geldenhuys, 2004). Vorster held off from forcing¹⁵ Smith to accept majority rule until it was no longer feasible for South Africa to support Rhodesia (see above); this meeting between Vorster and Smith in 1976 is held by Bond to be analogous to meetings between Mbeki and Mugabe now, with the essential difference that South Africa today continues to "misread Zimbabwe's situation so blatantly and self-servingly"(Bond, 2002:5), whereas, as history shows us, Vorster was eventually obliged to stop supporting Smith's regime.

¹³ Whilst the Southern African Development Community (SADC) has also responded to the crisis, the focus of this study is on migration between Zimbabwe and South Africa, and South Africa's response is most pertinent here. To a large extent SADC's response has been guided by the response of South Africa, as it is one of the most powerful players in the region.

¹⁴ As this occurred after I had left the field, it is beyond the scope of this study.

¹⁵ In that "the power South Africa held over imports and exports was decisive"(Bond, 2002:3)

Many explanations of quiet diplomacy thus tend to fall under the umbrella of racial, African or liberatory solidarity. Like Vorster's fear that majority rule in Zimbabwe would reduce the apartheid government's control over South Africa, Geldenhuys has argued that it is possible that the MDC, as a trade union based, non-liberationary party, is disliked by the ANC in that, "Mugabe's ejection from power by the electorate might inspire voters in other countries ruled by former liberation movements to face down their rulers too"(Geldenhuys, 2004:131). The notion of liberatory solidarity is interesting, in that informants initially saw this solidarity as a key reason for coming to South Africa: the relationship of shared struggle and support between black Zimbabweans and black South Africans was seen as a reason for solidarity across the two states which then, upon arrival and in light of ANC attitudes to Zimbabwe, shifts to become seen as a relationship of solidarity between *leaders*, regardless of people (see chapter 5).

The key issue when it comes to quiet diplomacy is the way in which it is framed by the ANC as one of only two options: carry on as South Africa is doing, or intervene by military means. For example, South African Finance Minister, Trevor Manuel, when asked about the lack of success of quiet diplomacy replied, "What should we do on Zimbabwe? Act like Ariel Sharon? Kick butt, blow them up, drive over their car; should we send in the tanks?" (Manuel, 2002, in Geldenhuys: 133). Diplomacy and intervention, however, are not limited to these two extremes. The next most extreme intervention by South Africa alone, and one which was supported by many of the Zimbabweans with whom I spoke, would be the imposition of economic sanctions by South Africa, related to fuel, electricity and credit. When, in January 2008, the entire country experienced a two day power cut due to a fault at Hwange's power station, the initial response in Harare was elation. In supermarkets and on street corners, Zimbabweans discussed the fact that "South Africa finally cut us off" and, crucially, the fact that this meant "they believe in our situation." From within Zimbabwe, sanctions of this sort would be perceived as an acknowledgment of the illegitimacy of the situation; and this, perhaps, is what South Africa fears. Intervention need not be even this extreme, however: a public assertion on the part of South Africa that the Mugabe government respect freedom of speech, association and movement, and the Rule of Law, and a reaction on the part of South

Africa should these be disregarded, has been suggested by Geldenhuys (2004), and would go far both for South Africa's moral standing on the continent and globally, and in terms of allowing Zimbabweans to know that rights are not just issues that arise on paper, but that neighbouring countries respect their implementation. As Geldenhuys (2004: 133) argues, "By limiting South Africa's options to only two, the South African government is deliberately foreclosing serious debate about alternatives."

Violence and Violation

Migration from Zimbabwe to South Africa takes place within this context of considerable economic and democratic decline in Zimbabwe, and South African leniency towards these issues. This leads us then, to question what constitutes violence against a population. Hastrup (2003:310) has argued that violence is a "social fact that we are bound to take seriously and to study anthropologically, however much (it) defies simple referential signs." Violence, for many, is a part of everyday life, and as such constitutes a category of experience that is impossible to ignore, particularly because of "the extraordinary power of violence in making social categories visible and marking them in everyday practice" (Ross, 2005:101). Violence in Zimbabwe, despite popular definitions, cannot be said to be limited to physical, politically motivated acts such as beatings, torture and detention. Farmer's (1996) notion of structural violence, which refers to the social and economic forces that constrain individuals and contribute to an insidious everyday suffering, is useful in this regard. Whereas physical violence is traceable to one, or a series of, separable incidences, structural violence constitutes a continual experience, a situation of violation that is ongoing and that is central to life as lived. Thus, although there have been innumerable incidents of physical violence in Zimbabwe in recent years, I use 'violence' more broadly in keeping with Farmer's (1996) notion of structural violence, and Kleinman's "violences of everyday life" (Kleinman, 1997:226).

The difficulties of speaking against violence within Zimbabwe

One effect of increased state control within Zimbabwe, has been the closing of avenues of protest against both structural and political violations. Within Zimbabwe there is little

to no public acknowledgement of experiences of violation, and little space for dialogue or allowance of narratives around these experiences to be formulated except within very personal worlds and, as such, international discourses have become a means of addressing violation and terror. Even within the realm of intimate relationships, speech around violation may be difficult: Parsons (2008) has shown the difficulties Zimbabwean children have in maintaining intimate social worlds in the aftermath of the deaths of close family members. The Zimbabweans with whom I worked thus emphasised the need for *international* spaces of acknowledgment of violation, and envisioned South Africa as a space where this would be possible (see Chapter 4). Ross' (2001; 2003) analysis of the South African Truth and Reconciliation Commission is useful in this regard. She argues that the TRC enabled "a means to identify the self in relation to the public" (Ross, 2003:332), and, although Ross is critical of gender dynamics which worked to silence women's narratives, and of the ways in which these testimonies were disseminated, the TRC did at least allow a space for public acknowledgement of (largely male) people's experiences, and the role of individuals in the violent history of South Africa¹⁶. Zimbabwean migrants drew upon the TRC as an example of the openness of which South Africa was capable, and thus entertained hopes that movement to South Africa would provide spaces for acknowledgment of a violated past.

Violence works, then, to silence, while at the same time creating a desire for speech and acknowledgment, an acknowledgment of violent experiences as 'wrong'. On a more pragmatic level, violence in Zimbabwe has also influenced behaviour and movement, be it through actual physical displacement at the hands of perpetrators of violence, or displacement in attempts to avoid structural or physical violence (see Chapters 3 and 4). For the informants with whom I worked in South Africa, such violence resulted in a move across an international border. Hopes that South Africa would provide space for the acknowledgment of experiences in Zimbabwe were erroneous, however, as spaces for speech were constrained by processes of categorisation that drew upon discourses of legitimate and illegitimate suffering. The distinction between physical violence and

¹⁶ Das and Kleinman (2001, in Das, 2003:302) note that "public acknowledgement of hurt can allow for new opportunities to be created for resumption of everyday life."

structural violence is important in that migrants view the economic situation in Zimbabwe as adequate for seeking asylum, considering it to be an act of violence against them, whilst the South African state does not. It is therefore in light of the above economic and political situation in Zimbabwe that questions around where the line is drawn between 'suffering' and a violation against human rights become imperative. In South Africa at present, structural conditions within Zimbabwe do not constitute a valid reason for seeking asylum, and are not seen as violations against human rights. Poverty within Zimbabwe is seen to cause less suffering than political violence, and is not viewed as violation.

University of Cape Town

2.

Methodology: The Ethnography of Flux and Shifting Terrains

Introduction and Research Questions

When I first began research my questions and interests were broad but centered on the experience of movement of Zimbabweans to South Africa as a result of varying types of violence. I intended to conduct fieldwork among immigrants in Cape Town. I was interested in narrative and silencing, in gendered experiences, and in the ways in which people begin anew in a country that is at once perceived as foreign, in that it is across a border, and as familiar, in that the histories of Zimbabwe and South Africa are seen as intertwined. It seemed at the beginning of research that taking a loose approach would allow for the emergence of relevant themes and fields of inquiry: like Stoller, I felt that “rather than plunging into the field with a barrage of demographic surveys or plans for intensive participant observation” (Stoller, 1997:90) I should simply hang out for a while, until I gained the trust of informants who were situated within precarious positions, and until the questions I should really be asking could be identified.

Even before settling into this loose-styled fieldwork that was due to begin in February 2007, however, I found that circumstances shifted my plans. As a Zimbabwean, I have maintained an interest in the situation there since I moved away seven years ago. I returned to Zimbabwe in November 2006 to visit friends and family and, apart from a brief foray to Zambia, remained in Harare for three months. Returning to the town I had grown up in was a strange and difficult process as I felt both a sense of familiarity and of distance. Geographically, I always knew exactly where I was placed, but in conversations and attempts to deal with currency and inflation I frequently found myself lost. It was unsettling, to say the least, to hear a report of the fire bombing of an activist’s home while seated around the breakfast table where the view out the window looked the same as it always had, and to receive reports of that kind via illicit text message networks, not the mainstream media. It was disconcerting and distressing to realise that political conversations which, when I was a teenager, would take place in public places, were now

only conducted behind closed doors, and never with strangers. I slowly learnt where it was possible to speak and where not, and what sorts of information could be shared with strangers, and what was reserved for the realm of intimate relationships. Living in times of political uncertainty, I learned, has profound effects on ways of speaking and moving, as I explore in Chapters 3, 4 and 5. The logic of a silenced populace thus became apparent to me over time, and I realised that in trying to come to terms with the changes I was seeing, I had turned my holiday into an exercise in anthropological fieldwork.

My field site thus shifted from the various geographies and social relationships which migrants inhabit and create in Cape Town to include a site approximately two and a half thousand kilometres away; and my questions shifted to incorporate the massively increased poverty levels I had seen in Zimbabwe and the ways in which poverty, violence and silencing affected movement to South Africa. What sorts of forces influenced decisions to migrate, and to do so legally or illegally? How did experiences along the way influence the ways in which actors conceptualised their own positions within South Africa, and within imagined regionalised communities? How were migrants able to speak within South Africa? What sorts of discourses were mobilised? How did their lives differ to life in Zimbabwe? In what ways did movement generate changes both for the better and for the worse?

As fieldwork in Zimbabwe and South Africa continued, the issue of categorisation emerged as central to experiences in both countries, and I thus began to frame my work around this. How had migrants been categorised when in Zimbabwe and how did this influence movement? How did categorisation shift in South Africa, and how did this influence the possibilities offered by migration? As fieldwork in South Africa continued, the two questions I identified in Chapter 1 also emerged as central: in the context of Zimbabweans in South Africa in 2007, what did it mean to suffer, and where, and by whom, was the line between suffering and a direct violation against human rights drawn? In this chapter I wish to illustrate the methods I used both to generate and to begin to answer the above questions, and to draw on theory to explore what research in transnational spaces, and in shifting ideological and physical terrains, might mean for the project of ethnography.

Methods: Research in Transnational Spaces

a) Fieldwork based methods

i) Fieldwork in South Africa

The South African component of fieldwork took place in Cape Town from February to the end of November 2007. Initially, my sampling method involved snowballing from a few refugees and asylum seekers whom I already knew, but a few weeks into this I became aware of an activist organization set up with the primary aim of speaking out for Zimbabwean illegal immigrants. I went to meet the man who had started this organization, and became involved both administratively and practically in the activist work they were doing. This stage of my fieldwork thus took place both within the office of the organization and in communities across Cape Town, on street corners where immigrants sell goods, and outside Home Affairs where almost all informants had spent at least some time¹⁷ attempting to gain access. In terms of the activist organization, I was a participant observer, and at times grew exasperated with the amount of administrative work I had to do when wanting instead to be on the ground with migrants in communities. I helped to organize fundraisers, organized talks by visiting Zimbabweans and immigrants, organized and attended protests, and delivered food and blankets to immigrant communities. I have worked with the heads of the organization, who are both in South Africa legally, and with undocumented migrants who play a prominent role in the workings of the organization, but who, of course, cannot be seen to be involved on a public level.

Though it may be argued that my role as activist placed too much emphasis on the 'participant' in participant observation, it both provided access to numerous undocumented migrants whom I have now come to know well and worked closely with, and provided insight into the workings of an activist group. It was largely through these interactions that I have been able to formulate my ideas around different ways of speaking and doing with regard to human rights and Zimbabwean undocumented

¹⁷ By this I mean sleeping outside for a week, before giving up and returning to communities, as opposed to sleeping outside for months or, in the case of one informant, up to a year.

migrants, though discourses of rights were also drawn upon by informants who were not involved in activism.

In addition, working with an activist organization allowed me the space to feel that something was actually being achieved: listening daily to stories of poverty and of brutality left me with a very strong sense that an impartial role was not only inadequate but unethical. As a Zimbabwean who has had the privilege of escaping most of the negative effects of the last eight years of economic and political decline, it was emotionally difficult for me to listen to the stories of undocumented migrants, to spend time in houses discussing where the money would be found to send the body of a loved one home to Zimbabwe, to wait with immigrants outside Home Affairs in the hope of finally being granted an appointment – in other words, to partake in the multitude of daily indignities that constitute life as lived in South Africa - without feeling that I was obliged to do everything within my power to assist in some way. Thus, like Nancy Scheper – Hughes, I have come to question

What makes anthropology and anthropologists exempt from the human responsibility to take an ethical (and even a political) stand on the working out of historical events as we are privileged to witness them. (Scheper-Hughes, 1995: 411)

As anthropology has moved away from its scientific roots, spaces for scholarship from politicised positions have opened up. Hale and Gordon (in Angel-Ajani, 2004:135) write that

we need not choose between first rate scholarship, on the one hand, and carefully considered political engagement on the other. To the contrary, we contend that activist research can enhance the empirical breadth and theoretical sophistication – as well as the practical usefulness- of the knowledge that we produce as anthropologists (also see Graham, 2006).

Though this ethnography may be read as activist anthropology, I wish to emphasise that any political motivation does not lie in the realm of ZANU(PF) versus MDC, but rather is concerned with a refusal to allow fractured voices and histories, regardless of affiliation, to remain publicly silenced. Veena Das, in an article on testimony, writes

I try to defend a picture of anthropological knowledge in relation to suffering as that which is wakeful to violence wherever it occurs in the weave of life and the body of the anthropological text as that which *refuses complicity with violence by opening itself to the pain of the other.* (Das, 2003:297. Emphasis mine.)

Aside from allowing active participation in an issue that is personally deeply relevant, participating in activism enabled me to meet many of the undocumented migrants with whom I worked and, from this participant base, many other migrants who were not involved in activism. The activist organization with which I worked, though only started at the beginning of 2007, is held in high esteem by illegal Zimbabwean immigrants from numerous communities across Cape Town. Immigrants have extensive social networks, and word has spread about the activist organization. The organization has around 200 members in Phillipi, Khayelitsha, Fishhoek Site 5/ Masimpumelele and Du Noon, and pushes both to change things on a regional level with regard to access to Home Affairs, and to assist on local levels with food, blankets and other necessities.

Though I largely entered the field through activism, I did not remain solely in that role once I had come to know informants and been granted access to migrants' social networks. Through snowballing from the initial activists I had come to know, I met many other undocumented migrants who were not involved in activism. Activism was thus only one element of research in South Africa, and does not constitute the focus of this study.

Throughout the process of working in townships, at Home Affairs, in the office of the organisation and on street corners, I engaged in informal conversations with migrants, activists and, at times, journalists. Though the roles of activist and anthropologist often merged, activist informants were aware that I was also conducting anthropological research of my own; and to informants I met outside of my role in the activist organisation I was solely anthropologist. To this end, I conducted formal open ended interviews with 50 migrants (33 men and 17 women) and collected 50 migration histories from the same informants. As there seems to be a greater proportion of men than women in the Western Cape, this was reflected in interview ratios. The ages of informants ranged from 19 to 59, though most were in their mid twenties. Informants came from both rural and urban areas in Zimbabwe, and from Shona and Ndebele speaking areas, though the

proportion of first language Shona speakers was higher. All also spoke English. My sample consisted of black Zimbabweans who had been living in conditions of poverty in Zimbabwe and continued to do so in South Africa – this is not to deny the heterogeneity of the Zimbabwean immigrant population in terms of race and class, but rather resulted from the time constraints of a Masters study. Informants had been in South Africa for periods from one month to five years, and in Cape Town from one month to three years. The majority were undocumented migrants, though some had managed to secure asylum seeker papers and one had been granted refugee status (also see Appendix A).

Table 1: Basic Demographics of Informants in Western Cape

	Average Age	Shona speakers	Ndebele speakers	Legal status ¹⁸		
				UD	AS	R
Men (n= 33)	31	22	11	28	5	0
Women(n = 17)	34	11	6	14	2	1
Both (n = 50)	32.5	33	17	42	7	1

Tables 6 and 7 in Appendix A present extended demographic data for each informant. Informants have been listed alphabetically (according to pseudonym) for ease of access.

It was only after engaging in participant observation for some time that I began the process of formal interviews, and then only with informants I had come to know quite well. Initial interviews with informants consisted of a series of open ended questions that were concerned with both the past and the present. I would begin by asking questions about the present, exploring informants' circumstances within South Africa; issues of categorisation and informants' views on being Zimbabwean in South Africa; the role of kinship and other social networks; and experiences with the South African state and with South Africans. The rationale behind these interviews was to collect basic data on informants' circumstances in South Africa. It soon became clear that issues of categorization were central, be it the state based category of illegality, or the local South African category of *makwerekwere* (a derogatory term for 'foreigner'), and that these 'basic' interviews were all that was needed to elicit extremely complex narratives of displacement and marginality. Follow up interviews, therefore, which had been intended to explore issues in more depth, were often simply continuations of previous conversations for which there had not been enough time. My position throughout the interview process was

¹⁸ UD = Undocumented migrant; AS = has asylum seeker papers; R= has refugee status.

thus often that of the witness (see below), and as such required a sensitivity of listening and speaking. Interviews were conducted mainly in English as informants' fluent command of English was better than my partial command of Shona or Ndebele. It is worth noting, however, that even where interviews were conducted in mixtures of English and informants' mother tongues, terms such as 'suffering' and 'rights' were usually spoken in English, perhaps reflecting the ubiquity of such terms in international humanitarian discourse, and the power of English as a global language.

The experience of marginality was central to most narratives, and informants traced this marginality back to experiences in Zimbabwe prior to movement to South Africa. They posited a direct correlation between movement to South Africa and marginality in Zimbabwe. Thus, though I had prepared questions on the personal histories of informants, particularly in terms of experiences of physical and/or structural violence in Zimbabwe, I usually found that people's past experiences were inserted into interviews without prompting, and were deeply relevant to experiences of the present. To this end, migration histories became extremely important to this study, and people's narratives of displacement prior to movement to South Africa have come to constitute the majority of Chapter 4.

Finally, I worked for a short while with an international human rights organisation which had sent a representative to South Africa specifically to collect data around Zimbabwean migration, with the hope of procuring evidence to pressurise the South African government to allow a greater number of Zimbabweans refugee status. I conducted interviews in Worcester, a farming town 2 hours outside Cape Town, where many Zimbabweans have found seasonal work on surrounding farms. This aspect of fieldwork was particularly useful with regard to the sorts of questions the human rights organisation was concerned with: namely, searching for ways in which to insert socioeconomic violations into the legal framework of human rights.

My position as partly Zimbabwean, partly South African deeply influenced fieldwork with Zimbabwean migrants in South Africa. Similarities in modes of speech between myself and informants, and my awareness from working in Zimbabwe of what could be

spoken of publicly and what must be private, were very useful in gaining access to informants, and gaining their trust. Not being fully 'at home' either when with informants or when conducting my daily life as a South African citizen allowed for dual insights into narratives and discourses of 'Zimbabwean-ness', displacement and rights. As a quasi-insider vis-a-vis Zimbabwean migrants, I was able to access modes of speaking - narratives of displacement, home, and violence – and listening that would not otherwise easily have been possible. As a member of the South African public, it was possible to see that the stories that circulated inside only made it to public attention in certain forms. I was thus positioned in a space that allowed access to both the private and the public, and allowed a view into the power relations that separate the two. This duality allowed for exploration of the polyvalence and fluidity of the meanings attached to such key constructs as 'human rights'.

ii) Fieldwork in Zimbabwe

The main aim of fieldwork in Zimbabwe was to provide ethnographic contextualisation of undocumented migrants' country of origin, particularly with regard to the economic situation. My predominant method for this aspect of fieldwork was watching and listening: this focus on observation was largely dictated by the political context, in which it has become difficult and dangerous to speak to strangers, though not, of course, impossible. Observation allowed for access to non-solicited events: as Falk Moore notes,

Unlike many forms of dialogic interview material, the most significant events are not generated by, nor elicited by the inquiries of the anthropologist. They frequently have a kind of purity as spontaneous local information. The action or reaction is locally constituted and locally produced (Falk Moore, 1994:365).

Due to the emergence of such 'spontaneous local information' (ranging from occurrences as simple as seeing an increase in urban vegetable gardens to more complex interactions around bartering and exchange, as described in Chapter 3) observation was able to provide a useful tool for gathering data.

I travelled to Harare, the capital city of Zimbabwe, three times during the course of fieldwork: from November 2006 to January 2007; for two weeks in April/May 2007; and then finally for one month in January 2008. In total I spent four and a half months in Zimbabwe. The majority of this was spent in urban Harare, though I twice travelled to Harare from Cape Town by road, and was thus able to observe dynamics at Beit Bridge border post, and to observe the conditions of rural homesteads close to the roads between Beit Bridge and Harare, and smaller urban areas between the two. The fact that I had grown up in Zimbabwe was helpful here, as I was able to see the changes wrought on countryside and towns since the beginning of the current crisis. In addition, I travelled by public transport to Zambia, passing through the Chirundu border post, which allowed for conversations with Zimbabweans and Zambians travelling between the two countries. This was extremely useful in terms of data on economic strategies of survival. Finally, I travelled by road through what used to be the prime areas of commercial farming in Zimbabwe, and was able to observe the in/activity on farms, and count commercial crops¹⁹.

On my first trip to Zimbabwe, I had not yet begun fieldwork in Cape Town, and my methods of data collection centred on observation of the daily lives of friends and informants. My second trip to Zimbabwe occurred after fieldwork in Cape Town had begun, and I thus had a clearer idea of what sorts of data I needed from Zimbabwe: namely, data that showed the lived effects of a profoundly failing economy, and the effects of structural violence on the population. I conducted no formal interviews in Zimbabwe, as the political situation has worked to create a deeply wary population, but was able to access additional data to the observational through informal meetings with people in the course of daily life and the informal conversations that followed. I therefore do not have the sorts of detailed demographic data for all informants from Zimbabwe as I do for those in South Africa, but do have data that allows for the sort of ethnographic contextualisation I provide in Chapter 3.

¹⁹ Sadly, this was an easy task: on the road between Harare and the beginning of the Zambesi Escarpment, which covers a vast tract of former commercial farms, I saw one crop of potatoes, 2 fields of tobacco, and one field of maize. The availability of food in Zimbabwe has dropped significantly since 2000.

Table 2 : Basic Demographics of Informants in Harare, Zimbabwe

	Average Age	Employment			No. with access to remittances
		Unemployed	Formal sector	Informal sector	
Men (n=9)	39	2	1	6	7
Women (n=11)	41	2	3	6	8
Both (n= 20)	40	4	4	12	15

As the population with which I worked in Cape Town had come from conditions of poverty in Zimbabwe, I focused on a similar population when doing fieldwork in Harare. The one man employed in the formal sector was a government nurse: in the current economic climate this ensured that he was placed in a low income bracket. Two of the three women who worked in the formal sector were domestic workers, and the third was a waitress. All earned less than enough to cover monthly food costs.

Collection of data on the lived effects of economic decline was thus complicated by the political situation: asking questions of strangers was a difficult task, particularly questions regarding household economies, as many of the strategies of survival that people were engaged in were not legal. It was possible, however, to spend time in shops and informal vending places documenting daily shifts in prices, and became possible to collect salary information from a few informants whom I came to know relatively well. One of these informants was Mai Tawodzera: in Chapter 3, I present an extended case study of the socio-economic circumstances of her particular household as it is one which I was able to closely observe, and which echoed the strategies of survival I observed in other households in Harare. Further, the economy of this household echoed descriptions given by Zimbabwean informants in Cape Town of how people managed to 'get by' in Zimbabwe.

The methods I have described were helpful in mapping strategies of survival in the face of poverty, the reliance of all urban households upon access to some means of growing their own food, the reliance of households on remittances from outside the country, and

the rapidity of changes in worth of currency and hence value of income. I also gathered information on access to both Zimbabwean and foreign physical currency/ cash: this was important in that the extent of inflation meant that banks frequently ran out of cash, so having a salary might not be enough to ensure survival. Again, access to remittances, which occurred mainly by the movement of cash across borders, and could then be exchanged on the black market, was integral to side stepping this difficulty.

My position as both Zimbabwean and as ethnographer had an obvious impact upon the ways in which fieldwork was conducted. My connections with the country, and with people resident there, allowed for much quicker access to discourses of the intimate than would have otherwise been possible, and residence in households allowed for observation of techniques of survival in a constantly shifting economy where access to resources changes daily. My position, however, was not simply that of insider: I had been out of the country for six years before I returned in 2006, and in that time much had changed, particularly in terms of the phenomena that I explore in this thesis: economic difficulties and strategies, and ways of speaking and acting in the political climate of 2006 and 2007. My position thus allowed for both familiarity and distance.

The Ethics of Witnessing

In addition to the roles of insider and outsider, I was also frequently positioned as witness to stories of trauma. As Laub (1992) notes, the process of witnessing brings traumatic events into being, and the very act of speaking those events to a witness allows for their creation anew: “The emergence of the narrative which is being listened to - and heard - is, therefore, the process and the place wherein the cognizance, the “knowing” of the event is given birth to”(Laub, 1992:57).

As anthropologist and as ‘person’, therefore, I found myself with the personal and professional obligations of witness: in Malkki’s (1997:94) words, “being a witness implies both a specific positioning and a responsibility of testimony, a ‘caring form of vigilance’.” The ethical obligations of this are obvious, and it was with some trepidation, both personal and ethical, that I initially considered undertaking research of this sort. The

primary reason behind the unease was a sense that I was mining the very personal experiences of others for what could be considered to be my own academic aim. Angel-Ajani (2004: 135) has argued that “the figure of witness becomes a powerful means through which to authorize and legitimize the painful and often devastating histories which we as anthropologists are allowed to hear”, but this seems to me to be a double edged sword. On the one hand, witnessing of this sort allows stories to be told, but on the other there lies the danger of speaking over and for the people for whom one is witness. I am aware of this danger, yet my ethical qualms were considerably lessened when, in conversation with a woman activist in Zimbabwe in 2007, I was told, “We don’t need more people to fight for Zimbabwe, there are enough. What we need is for people to be witnesses. We need the stories to be told.” It thus seems that the very act of opening spaces for “records that had yet to be made” (Laub, 1992:57) is important in and of itself in the Zimbabwean context. The relationships between the domains of speech and silence, and private and public (as explored in Chapter 6) ensure that it is only possible for Zimbabwean undocumented migrants to be heard publicly in very particular ways: witnessing, however, allows for the formulation of another kind of narrative that can be both spoken *and* heard.

My responsibilities as witness/ ethnographer and, to some degree, disseminator of testimony, thus range from the broad issue of ethnographic authority to keeping informants’ identities concealed. As regards the latter, no fieldwork took place without informed consent. Participants were informed that the research would be used in this dissertation, and that I may also use it to publish in research journals²⁰. The research I conducted was at times extremely personal, and the information I gained is potentially politically volatile, particularly within Zimbabwe. To this end, no informants are named, either in my field notes or in this dissertation, but have been given pseudonyms for the entire process. Where informants’ employment history or experiences of violence meant that they could be identifiable, data collected have not been used, and field notes encrypted.

²⁰ This raises, of course, the issue that the sites for witness in this instance are in fact small, in that they only constitute academic circles.

b) Literature based methods

Literature based methods have involved the use of anthropological and other literature on the fields of violence, categorisation, suffering, narrative, human rights, displacement, migration and mobility, social networks and gender. I have also collected newspaper articles concerned with Zimbabwean migration in order to explore the ways in which Zimbabweans have been represented. My primary concern here, however, is a discussion of the use of literature as one element of a means of integrating the effects of time into written ethnography, in order to avoid the illusion of a present that is uninfluenced by the past.

The present as a product of the past: Methods of incorporating temporality

Writing as late as 1983, Fabian maintained that the atemporality of anthropology was “a scandal” (Fabian, 1983, in Falk Moore, 1994:362). The diverse theoretical shifts within anthropology since the 1970s (frameworks that drew on political economy, and the varied critiques which are often subsumed under the umbrella term of post-modernism) moved away from many of the notions contained within functionalism, including the implicit timelessness and stasis of the ethnographic present. There has thus been a move to include within anthropology an awareness of processes of history and to proceed instead on the assumption that “fieldwork is a witnessing of current history, history in the process of being produced” (Falk Moore, 1994: 362).

This raises, of course, theoretical and methodological problems, in that it is harder to study and to write of a world in motion than one that has been frozen in time for the purposes of analysis. My fieldwork trips to Zimbabwe, which took place at different times as described above, however, showed the rapidity of change within the country, particularly with regard to the economic (see Chapter 1). It was necessary, therefore, to both trace the past and to give credence to the power of imagined futures. In the context of research around the ongoing Zimbabwean crisis, the past takes on a deep relevance, as I have begun to show in the preceding chapter, both in light of the relationship (imagined and real) between Zimbabwe and South Africa, and in terms of conceptualisations of

democracy and rights. Additionally, the speed at which changes are occurring means that the past, as decidedly different to the present, may be as recent as last week, or yesterday. Imagined futures, too, are affected by this: the uncertainty of daily life in Zimbabwe and South Africa ensures that on the one hand the imagined future may seem very close, as personal circumstances can shift rapidly for the negative, and on the other that futures are very far away, in that political change seems never to come.

There was thus a need in this project to explore the ways in which a world in flux impacts upon processes of meaning-making. In terms of one level of methodology this meant an awareness of the historical, political, economic and anthropological literature on Zimbabwe, and on the relationship between Zimbabwe and South Africa, in order to lay the foundations for understanding current circumstances. It also ensured that the focus of this study shifted from an exploration of positioning within South Africa to include the ways in which people had been positioned within Zimbabwe and how this influenced movement (see Chapter 4). Stoller (1997:91) emphasizes the importance of a “suppleness of imagination” in researching fleeting phenomena, and the importance of being aware of the economic, political and social factors that have influenced the spaces in which people find themselves. Additionally, it meant asking questions about the past, and about imagined futures, and paying attention when these themes emerged in conversations without prompting.

The difficulties of research in shifting terrains of time and space

Malkki (1995:86) has commented that “we as scholars must not only allow for, but expect, and take very seriously, the transitory, unfixed, processual character of much of what we study.” Consideration of the processual is integral to research on migration, and the task thus becomes one of creating, in Falk Moore’s (1994:362) title phrase, an “ethnography of the present” that is aware of the transitory nature of that present. In the case of Zimbabweans in South Africa this is particularly clear: this ethnographic study documents a period of time prior to the xenophobic attacks that occurred across South Africa in May 2008; yet the very occurrence of the violence against foreigners ensures that, for informants, the present is different to the future that had been conceptualized

whilst I undertook fieldwork, while for readers, this dissertation will be read differently than it would have been had such widespread acts of violence not occurred. Additionally, the outcome of the 2008 Zimbabwean election, and the massive increase of violence in Zimbabwe during this period, has worked to rearrange presents and potential futures for Zimbabweans in South Africa. Both the period of xenophobic violence and the 2008 elections fall beyond the scope of this study: my point here, however, is to emphasise the situation of flux in which informants live out their daily lives, and the impact this has upon ways of writing ethnography which calls for “the paradoxical task of describing a social scene as both being and becoming” (Falk Moore, 1994:362). An awareness of history, and an awareness of the field as transitory, have thus been central to this project.

In addition to change, another issue central to the methodology of this piece is of course that of transnational movement. Marcus (1995), an early theorist of the multi-sited, traced the methodological shifts that occurred with the advent of postmodernism’s influence on anthropology, which moved the emphasis from single site ethnography to examining the circulation of meanings, objects and identities among multiple sites.²¹ Marcus identified the various ways in which ethnographers had tackled the multi-sited, noting that theoretical frameworks for understanding spaces, such as Appadurai’s (1990) varied “scapes”, “do not also function as guides for designing the research that would exemplify such visions.”(Marcus, 1995:105). With this in mind, Marcus outlines a series of “modes of construction” (ibid) as a means of defining and following a mobile and multiply situated unit of study: follow the people, the thing, the metaphor, the plot/story, the life/biography, and the conflict. Shifting the unit of study from a bounded geographical region to the sorts of categories listed above allows for ethnography to trace movement.

I have undertaken a number of the modes of construction Marcus describes: I have followed the people across borders, followed the thing in terms of movement of money and goods between Zimbabwe and South Africa, followed the metaphor in light of discourses of human rights, followed the life when collecting life histories, and followed the plot/story in light of narratives/representations of violence on both sides of the border.

²¹ A task, ironically, given the amount of time between the two studies, also undertaken by Malinowski in his work on the kula ring in 1920.

In ways such as this it becomes possible to study Appadurai's (1997:115) shifting world of "moving populations, multilocal social worlds, displaced allegiances, and circulated meanings." Following these modes of construction has allowed an examination of the processes of categorisation that migrants undergo in Zimbabwe and South Africa, and the points at which these categories transform. In turn, processes of categorisation provide an entry point into the relationship between power and praxis. As Sylvain (2005:405) notes, "although interrogating particularly powerful ideas is important, so, too, is examining the dynamics that make these ideas powerful." Let me turn, then, to the first category I examine: that of the urban Zimbabwean.

University of Cape Town

3.

Living With Uncertainty: A Contextualisation of Urban Zimbabwe, 2006 -2007

Things in Zimbabwe now have gone beyond the limits: how am I to feed my children from there? Forget about education, I can't even give them *sadza*²².

David, 30, undocumented Zimbabwean migrant to Cape Town.

It didn't used to be like this...but to be a doctor here now is to have a broken heart. There is no medicine, and the morgues are full. You go to work and see bodies in the corridors.

When even the doctors can't pay for food, what must the unemployed do?

Farai, 27, medical student at the University of Zimbabwe.

After Murambatsvina, I went to the rural areas, but there wasn't enough food. I tried to go back to Harare, but my sister lost her place because we couldn't trade anymore, so there was no money for rent. My mother got sick, and some days we didn't even have water. Those times were too hard; someone had to go away so the others could stay.

Alice, 34, undocumented Zimbabwean migrant.

During fieldwork in South Africa, undocumented migrants frequently indicated that economic life in Zimbabwe had become difficult to the point of impossibility, and that mobility was the only option left if families were to survive. It was not viable to evaluate this claim – which drew heavily upon words such as “unliveable”, “intolerable” and, in the language of rights, “violation”- without access to data from Zimbabwe itself, and I thus included urban Zimbabwe within my field sites. Essentially, then, this chapter seeks to evaluate migrants' claims through an exploration and contextualization of daily life in urban Zimbabwe in 2007²³, drawing on my own data and on recent ethnographic studies from Zimbabwe. Further, I seek here to give an extended case study of one particular category of Zimbabwean: that of urban dwellers. I do this not only to show the constraints of living within this category, which is in itself positioned within a deeply failing economy and a restrictive political regime, but also to show the ways in which life continues under these serious economic and social constraints. Although continuity may

²² *Sadza*, or maize meal, is a staple food in Zimbabwe.

²³ As mentioned in the previous chapter, a clear indication of time is necessary given the rapidity of change in Zimbabwe. This chapter draws on data gathered in late 2006, and 2007; doubtless some elements of the situation are different as I write in 2008.

seem obvious, I have lost count of the number of times that I have been asked by colleagues and friends who have some awareness of the Zimbabwean situation, “but *how* are people still alive? How is that possible?” Centrally, survival is contingent upon a number of factors, the most essential of which is help of some kind from outside the country, thus giving credence to migrants’ insistence that mobility is a necessity. ‘Life’, however, does not only consist of biological survival: social life is ongoing throughout situations of crisis, and in this, too, migration is important. Though movement obviously disrupts social life, it also opens spaces for more ordinary social experience for those left behind than would be possible had some people not moved and, as I will show, for an assertion of personhood that urban Zimbabweans feel the state has challenged. A central element of this chapter is thus to consider the ways in which regional or international mobility allows for survival and impacts upon social experience for those still ‘at home’.

This chapter is also concerned with the ways in which socio-economic difficulties work to ensure that daily life is comprised of a host of uncertainties, and the ways in which the uncertainty of *mazuva ano* (‘these days’²⁴) has altered urban landscapes and socioscaples, bringing Zimbabweans to question modernity, and what it means to be urban (cf. Ferguson, 1999); and to question ideas of rights and violation in light of a decline in economic possibilities, and in light of the ways in which people perceive of themselves in relation to the state.

Writing suffering: anthropology in the context of disruption

The political situation in Zimbabwe, intertwined as it is with the economic situation, has had a marked effect upon experiences of daily life. Political violence aside, the informalization of the economy; the after effects of Murambatsvina; the massive decline in service delivery and the frequent scarcity of food have all contributed to substantial adjustments to the rhythm of daily life, and all impact upon the meta-narrative of suffering that Zimbabweans in Harare use to describe their lives. Davis (1992) has argued for a need to incorporate suffering within conventional anthropological writings and

²⁴ ‘These days’ are held as decidedly different to the past: see Jones, 2008.

theories, such that suffering is not held to be discontinuous from normal experience, but is rather seen as co-terminous with it, albeit to differing degrees in differing contexts. To “unite two kinds of anthropology: the comfortable anthropology of social organization, and the painful anthropology of disruption and despair” (Davis, 1992:149) allows for an acknowledgement that pain is a normal part of being human. Davis goes on to contend that where suffering moves from the routine to the exceptional, the social forms of dealing with it remain similar, and thus

However people categorise it, the *experience* of war, famine, and plague is continuous with ordinary social experience; people place it in social memory and incorporate it with their accumulated culture. (ibid:152)

My greatest difficulty in thinking through and beginning to write about urban Zimbabwe in 2007 was centered on the ways in which life *goes on* in times of phenomenal change, uncertainty and suffering. Though Zimbabwe can be said to be in crisis, suffering forms part of the everyday, and upheaval and pain take place within ordinary life, unremoved from social experience.

Popular perceptions within South Africa of Zimbabweans, however, do not draw upon that which remains (or becomes) ordinary within crisis, but rather see the severe economic and political situation in Zimbabwe as leading to a definite break with ordinary sociality. Notions of life in Zimbabwe, as framed from within South Africa, are based upon ideas of otherness (or, at times, radical otherness) that are influenced by a conflation of *economic* crisis with *social* breakdown²⁵. Thus, a construction worker in Philippi, who resided in a neighbourhood where many Zimbabwean migrants were present, said to me, “but they are like animals over there [in Zimbabwe]. Even their money is crazy. They should just use leaves.” This statement, with its emphasis on animalism rather than personhood, represents only one end of a scale of alterity within South Africa with regard to Zimbabweans: at the other end lies the well meaning liberal white employer of a Zimbabwean migrant, who said to me, “What I don’t understand is how they can leave

²⁵ These perceptions obviously impact upon Zimbabweans resident in South Africa, and as such are explored further in Chapter 5. The aim here is to differentiate these perceptions from life as lived in urban Harare.

their families. I guess when things are that bad you have to lose your attachments to those sorts of things.” Both of these statements emphasise the idea of crisis as fully disrupting social life. In the context of Zimbabwe, however, as an informant in Harare commented, “Things may be bad, but life carries on.” One aim of this ethnographic contextualisation of contemporary Zimbabwe is therefore to illustrate the social continuity present within times of uncertainty, in order to move away from ideas of alterity.

“How low can we sink?” Deepening Crisis and the Curtailment of Socio-economic Rights

When I returned to Harare for my second fieldwork trip, only a few months after my first, I was startled by how quickly things had changed: prices were different, different goods were available or not available, and strategies for accessing resources had shifted along with shifts in the availability of goods or cash. On each consecutive visit economic decline became more visible – roads had deteriorated, municipal water and electricity were cut off more often and, most poignantly, people were visibly thinner than the last time I had seen them, or had the red hair that signifies kwashiorkor, a disease caused by vitamin deficiency that results from malnutrition.. Returning to Zimbabwe after having been away, therefore, brought with it a feeling of dislocation caused by the rate of change for the worse. On meeting up again with informants and acquaintances, the question asked of me most frequently was, “Do you see how bad it is now? And last time you were here we were complaining.”²⁶

In 2004, a report released by the Solidarity Peace Trust, a South African based non-governmental organization concerned with human rights in Zimbabwe, stated that “Social indicators have fallen dramatically over the last four years. There is 70% unemployment, 80% below the poverty datum line, 27% of adults HIV positive” (Solidarity Peace Trust, 2004:8). More recent estimates of unemployment place it at around 80%. The informal sector, which provided an income for the vast majority of urban Zimbabweans, was

²⁶ Issues of time are thus relevant to crisis, and tie into the notions of ‘eroding’ modernity that I discuss further in this chapter.

targeted by government in Operation Murambatsvina in 2005, which, in addition to destroying homes, tore down market places and destroyed goods, with police threatening to arrest people found selling goods without licences.

In addition to targeted violence of this kind, the impacts of structural violence have deepened as service delivery declines, and access to healthcare and education have become unaffordable for most of the population. In schools and hospitals, basic essentials such as textbooks and medicine are unavailable even for those who can afford to go.²⁷ Consumer basket measures of inflation, which assess the costs of a shopping basket for a family of six, reported a 17% month on month rise from May to June 2006; the Consumer Price Index (CPI), which is based on the same measurement, showed a yearly inflation rate of 359.85 percent in September 2005; in September 2006 this rose to 294 583.7 percent (Choruma, 2006). Gideon Gono, the Governor of the Reserve Bank of Zimbabwe, placed inflation at over two million percent in August 2008 (*The Citizen*, 2008).²⁸ I cannot access consumer basket measures for 2008, as it is no longer possible to find the goods to fill the baskets: lack of money is compounded in the present climate by unavailability, or intermittent availability, of basic goods such as maize meal and cooking oil. Food aid, which is mainly directed at rural areas, has been refused by the government on a number of occasions, and access to food aid when it is available is often dependant upon a ZANU-PF party card, or at least a known connection to the party (see Human Rights Watch 2003; 2004).

Access to food, healthcare, education, and even to legally condoned ways to make a living have therefore become restricted in the present crisis. Political restrictions, and violations against human rights in terms of political violence and detention have also increased massively since 2000, particularly around election times. However, as discussed in Chapter 1, the main emphasis in this thesis, following the lead of informants

²⁷ As Jason Moyo noted in the *Mail and Guardian* (July 2008), even when textbooks are available, they may not bear any relation to the reality Zimbabwean children know: "There's absolutely nothing new about the *New Syllabus Mathematics* textbook for Zimbabwean Grade fours. It still has weird equations in it. Strange things like Z\$1, and 20c, and so forth. Many Zimbabwean children have never seen that kind of money...My niece carries Z\$ 200 billion to school." (Moyo, 2008:15).

²⁸ See Table 1 in Chapter 1 for official inflation rates as compared to independent assessments.

in Cape Town, is on social and economic difficulties, which informants conceptualise as violation. Historically, political and civil rights have been better protected than social and economic (see Messer, 1993), as violations of these rights are more easily identifiable, and as they are easier to bring to trial because victim, perpetrator and action are easily identified. A conversation with a rights activist in Zimbabwe showed that this distinction is recognized and manipulated. Although when living in Zimbabwe and working as a human rights activist it is nearly impossible to miss that a central issue is one of economic insecurity and the very real threat of starvation, he stated that most research undertaken and reports written are concerned with political violations such as detention, torture and rape as these are the reports that will get international attention, and that may allow for Zimbabweans in other countries to be recognized as refugees. In this chapter, then, whilst not denying the reality and effects of political violence, I am more concerned with the effects of political disorder on the social and the economic, and with illustrating the difficulty of daily life for this category of Zimbabweans, in order to show why this form of marginalisation came to be perceived by informants, through the lens of human rights discourse, as violation. The following section, drawing on case studies and examples, serves to illustrate the effects a severely and rapidly declining economy has on daily life, and the strategies of survival that are undertaken in urban Zimbabwe to deal with it.

Getting By: Daily Life in Urban Zimbabwe

Driving across the border post at Beit Bridge between South Africa and Zimbabwe provides insight into the varied movements of people and goods that are imperative to allow life in urban areas in Zimbabwe to continue. As the road from Johannesburg to Messina gets closer to the border post, a distinct change in traffic becomes noticeable: there are far more cars and open trucks loaded to the limit with goods here than there are on other South African roads. The open trucks are loaded with containers of cooking oil, rice, sugar, maize meal, canned foods, peanut butter, blankets, clothing, and washing soap. It may seem strange to begin a section on urban Zimbabwe with a border post, but this is the starting point of survival for many urban households. At the border post itself,

and on the Zimbabwean side, the patterns of movement can be seen to diversify: goods are going one way, and people trying to go another. The queues of people crossing the border into South Africa represent only the tip of the iceberg, in that these are people who have managed to access passports and visas, and are entering South Africa legally. As I explore in Chapter Four, much more movement takes place further away from border posts, out in the bush where it is possible to cross unseen. As one informant commented, “Bob Marley’s *Exodus* should be our new national anthem.” The movement of people out of Zimbabwe facilitates the movement of goods back into the country: it is Zimbabwean migrants who have paid for the goods loaded onto lorries, and who also send money to kin networks at home. In 2004, the Solidarity Peace Trust reported that “around US\$ 300 million is returned monthly to Zimbabwe from nationals in the diaspora, 98% of this via black market channels” (Solidarity Peace Trust, 2004:7).

Now let us visit a space further down the commodity chain. Mai Tawodzera is 42 years old. She grew up in a rural area of Zimbabwe, but moved to Harare with her husband in 1986. Her husband had a job as a factory worker, and she supplemented their income by trading in vegetables. In 2005 they were resident in Hatcliffe Extension, a high density suburb in Harare that began as an informal settlement but had subsequently been recognised by Parliament. In 2004, her husband had lost his job as the factory in which he worked had closed. Between 2001 and 2004, industry in Zimbabwe contracted by around 40% (Solidarity Peace Trust, 2004), and unemployment rose massively. They were managing to get by, however: her husband was working with a friend selling goods in a nearby market, while Mai Tawodzera continued to sell vegetables. On the 3rd of June, 2005, during Operation Murambatsvina, all residents in Hatcliffe Extension were given orders by the police to demolish all buildings in the neighbourhood, which had only recently been provided with water and sewerage services funded by the World Bank. The Tawodzeras thus found themselves without a home, and without a livelihood. They were luckier than some, however: Mai Tawodzera had a sister who was employed as a domestic worker in Avondale, a low density suburb in Harare, and they were able to move in with her.

I first met Mai Tawodzera in a parking lot behind a shopping centre in Harare. She was seated under a tree, and I was standing in the parking lot, just looking around. Something about the way I was standing, however, alerted Mai Tawodzera, and she gestured to me, calling me over. When I had walked across the potholed car park, she whispered to me, “So what do you need?” I was puzzled, and wary that I had somehow involved myself in an illicit situation: the place I was in, after all, was known for *dagga*²⁹ sellers. Mai Tawodzera, however, didn’t look the type: she was dressed in a long skirt and buttoned shirt, and looked the epitome of a respectable middle aged Shona woman. She looked, to me, like a vegetable vendor, similar to the women who used to supply my family with vegetables when I was a child, which we would buy in parking lots like this one. But the tone of this transaction, if that is what it was, was entirely different. Mai Tawodzera was wary, looking around, and clearly impatient with the time it was taking me to respond. “What do you have?” I ventured, and she reached behind her and brought out a bag of tomatoes. “Only tomatoes today.” I realised that the last time I was in Harare, Operation Murambatsvina had not yet occurred. Now, two years later, I was seeing the after-effects: hidden vegetables and illicit deals in suburban Harare.

Mai Tawodzera was somewhat behind the times, as most vendors had been selling publicly for quite some time. I discovered in conversation, however, that the week before she had been ‘fined’ for not having a licence, handing over her day’s takings to a policeman, “who just put it straight into his pocket.” She had thus reverted to the wariness with which she had sold vegetables just after Murambatsvina. I came to know Mai Tawodzera quite well, and feel a case study of the economics of her household is a useful way to explore survival in Harare in 2007. This household is only one example of many others that operate similarly in principle, varying only in the detail.

In 2007, Mai Tawodzera’s household consisted of herself and her youngest child; her sister, Fadzai, and two of her children; and Fadzai’s brother-in-law Petrus. In terms of the contract Fadzai had with her employers, Petrus, Mai Tawodzera and her daughter were not supposed to reside on the property. But as Fadzai explained,

²⁹ Marijuana

Things are bad for everyone now, even my boss. They know that we all have to get by. At Murambatsvina, Petrus was already here, and my husband was already away. I went to them [her employers] and said, 'Have you heard what is happening in the high density suburbs? My sister is there.' Jackie gave me her phone to try to find them. For ages we couldn't get through; we were very worried. But then I spoke to them, and they had lost their house. I said, 'Come here'. Then I had to go to Jackie...but she understood. We are all suffering together these days.

Mai Tawodzera, her husband and their youngest child were thus able, through kinship and social networks, to relocate. For "some weeks" her husband looked for work, while Mai Tawodzera, through a loan from her sister, began to sell vegetables again. Things were very difficult, however: there was little space, and money was scarce. Mai Tawodzera's oldest son had been in Johannesburg since 2001. He was able to send money intermittently, but was also supporting his own wife and child, and some of his wife's kin. "We said to him one day when he phoned, you must save some money now, so your father can come to you." In 2006, Mai Tawodzera's husband left for the South African border. "We tried for a while for the passport, but it was impossible. No passport, no visa...so he thought he would just cross." Her husband was lucky, and successfully entered South Africa illegally. He found work "of some kind" and now sends money, though also intermittently.

Meals in the household consist mainly of *sadza* (maize meal) for breakfast, if some is available from the night before, and *sadza* with a vegetable relish in the evenings. The house in which they live has electricity, and they have a small stove, but most cooking takes place on wood fires due to frequent power failures. Municipal water, too, is often unavailable: fortunately the property on which they reside has a borehole. Vegetables are grown on a section of land in the garden that has been set aside for food, for use by both households. "Sometimes we manage to get bread, and we are lucky that Fadzai has a good job, because at the beginning of the month we get food³⁰: it used to be the same every month, but now it depends what is in the shop when Jackie goes there." Mai Tawodzera's husband sends either money, or, if it can be arranged, food. Money is

³⁰ It is common practice in Zimbabwe to supplement domestic workers wages with a food parcel once a month.

carried illegally across the border, by agents who charge a 20% fee. Occasionally, Fadzai's employers are in Johannesburg for business, and to buy food of their own, and when this happens they meet up with Mai Tawodzera's husband and bring food from him. The final source of income for the household comes from Petrus, who has begun to sell vegetables with Mai Tawodzera. Ten years ago, this was seen as women's work (see Jones, 2007) but in the current economic climate any work is acceptable.

The money Mai Tawodzera's husband sends arrives as South African Rand bank notes. It is not earmarked for food unless the situation is dire, but kept for major expenses, such as illness, or, more commonly, school fees and uniforms for the children. "Sometimes when we've had to pay fees or a top up³¹ we can't all eat. So one day the children eat, the next day the adults." Food sharing of this sort has become common practice in Zimbabwe.

Methods of survival

1. The Importance of Social Networks

Mai Tawodzera's story is illustrative of common household dynamics in several ways. Firstly, kinship networks are essential to survival, and these networks are important both within the country and, centrally, because they stretch across borders. Access to food and money was centred on these networks at most points in Mai Tawodzera's narrative of household economics, and the existence of a network to South Africa was an integral part of survival. The importance of social networks in situations of poverty has been well documented in anthropological and sociological literature (Stack, 1974; Ross, 1995). Migration, and the existence of social networks that stretch across borders allows access to money that can be protected from inflation, in that foreign currency can be kept aside and changed to Zimbabwe dollars only when needed. Links outside Zimbabwe also allowed for the continued existence of important social events. For example, in April 2007, I attended a wedding in Harare which was made possible by networks both within

³¹ 'Top ups' occur frequently throughout the school year and are an effect of inflation: fees paid at the beginning of the term become meaningless a few weeks later, and a top up, which is frequently far more than the original fee, is asked for. Access to foreign currency allows for top ups to be paid as cash can be converted at the current black market rate.

the country and across borders. This network included myself, and my 20 kilogram quota of airplane luggage consisted mainly of the 15 kilograms of rice I brought for the celebration. It would not have been possible to hold a wedding had the family not had access to foreign currency, and had migrants not returned for the celebration, bearing food. The wedding itself affirmed social relationships, and opened a space for ordinary social celebration in times of hardship.

Mai Tawodzera was also able to access shelter through her kinship network, and Fadzai drew on her social relationship with her employer to ensure Mai Tawodzera was able to stay. As Fadzai commented, “we are all suffering together”: the constraints of economic crisis, whilst not affecting everyone equally, have worked to solidify relationships across class lines. There is thus an affirmation of kin-based and social relationships in times of crisis, and the views voiced in South Africa, which emphasise social breakdown, can thus be seen to be erroneous.

Strategies for strangers: creating social relationships in times of crisis

As the above example demonstrates, previously held relationships can be strengthened in times of crisis. What happens, however, where new relationships are formed with strangers under a restrictive political regime, where saying the wrong thing may have profound implications? When I first met Mai Tawodzera selling tomatoes in a car park at, our interaction was one between strangers and, as such, involved wariness on both sides, particularly because of her recent brush with the police. One of the effects of a restrictive political regime is an impact upon ways of speaking to strangers, and physical cues become important in this: by standing in the car park looking around, I indicated to Mai Tawodzera that I was looking for goods being sold in the informal sector, albeit without my actually knowing it. In Mai Tawodzera’s case, in order to sell vegetables she had to trust that customers were, in fact, customers. In other instances, however, ways of speaking allowed for a testing of the waters with strangers. For example, one of my visits to Harare coincided with the execution of Saddam Hussein in Iraq. I was startled when a pensioner in a supermarket aisle, whom I had never met before, whispered to me as she

bent over and placed two potatoes into a bag to be weighed, “Did you hear they killed Saddam? Live on television?” and moved off when I, unsure of the meaning of this, did not reply. When later that day a garage attendant mentioned the same incident, and then a man selling newspapers at a stop street, I realised that the execution of Saddam Hussein had become a public code through which it was possible to speak about Mugabe and dictatorship. Words that could not be overtly spoken to strangers had found an outlet: this was a way of telling your fellow citizens that dictators can fall. I thus learnt to continue a discussion around Saddam Hussein, which opened spaces of trust between strangers and allowed for more overt political discussions to take place. Through actions and speech acts such as these, new relationships can be formed, which allow for a widening of the social networks that are imperative for survival.

2. Foraging and the Circulation of goods

A second element of Mai Tawodzera’s tale that was common to all with whom I worked in Zimbabwe was the scarcity of food. Strategies such as eating on alternate days have developed to deal with this³², and further strategies of bartering or swapping goods were also common in all the households I spent time in. Bartering is often centred around food, and food buying takes this and inflation into account. In terms of inflation, it is essential to spend money as soon as it becomes available, as the next day it will doubtless have lost considerable value. This becomes complicated in terms of perishable goods, however, and this is where bartering becomes essential. For example, one day I was on a shopping trip with an informant with whom I was staying, and we found milk and *Lacto*, a dairy product similar to South African *amasi*. Around 50 people were queueing for the tills, and all were holding either milk or *Lacto*. One man turned to the woman behind him and joked, “Today we have found meat!” The informant whom I was accompanying carefully counted her cash, and decided to spend half of it on milk, meaning a harried ten minutes with the two of us attempting to multiply hundreds of thousands of dollars in order to establish how many packets half the money could buy.

³² As Parsons (2007) has noted, this has dire implications for the few HIV positive people who have access, through non-governmental donors, to ARVs. A side effect of ARVs is hunger, but people are seen as greedy if they need to eat on a day that is not set aside for them.

If a freezer is available in a household, it is possible to freeze perishable goods, but this is a risky way of stockpiling against inflation, as frequent power cuts that can last for days at a time mean the investment may easily be lost. Bartering protects against this: of the ten packets we bought, two were held aside for household consumption, two frozen on the off chance that the electricity would stay on long enough, and the other six swapped for other food or given away in the knowledge that, some time later, a similar good would be returned: in this case, two packets were swapped immediately for a dozen eggs with the informant's mother-in-law; and the remaining four packets were given to friends. Over the next two weeks, four packets of milk found their way back to the household, thus sidestepping problems of storage.

Shopping is thus a strategic enterprise, and is commonly spoken of as “foraging”, in that one has no idea what one will find in the formal shops or informal markets that day. If it is essential that a particular good is found, ‘foraging’ trips can take an entire day. Even where selection of goods is based upon what is available, shopping is a lengthy process, as counting money at tills takes a long time when dealing with tens, or hundreds, or millions of dollars, particularly if the highest note is 750 000 (not a number that is easy to multiply.)³³ Tills have facilities for swiping electronic cards, but as the phone lines are often unreliable, this can take a very long time. Shopping is also a means of working around the cash crisis: in 2007, the high rate of inflation meant that the country had begun to run out of bank notes, and banks thus placed restrictions on how much could be withdrawn in a day. It was difficult to access even the restricted amount, which at the time equated to less than one US dollar a day, as it required queueing for up to six hours. People with electronic bank cards, therefore, would wait in the queue until someone pulled out cash to pay with, in order that they might pay electronically for their goods and thus acquire the cash. As I was unfamiliar with the currency, I would often take my money out to count that I really did have the 20 million I thought I did when still quite far from the front of the queue. This ensured that I was immediately swooped down upon by someone offering to pay for my shopping with their card. The managers of shops, unsure

³³ This note no longer exists: the government dropped ten noughts from the currency in mid-2008. It is a mark of the rate of inflation that even after having done this, but December 2008 the ten million dollar note was re-released.

whether this constituted an illegal action, had warned tellers to tell people to be subtle about this practice. I would thus chat casually to the person who wished to pay for the shopping, pretending we were acquaintances, and after the lengthy process of swiping and re-swiping the card until the transaction finally went through, we would leave the shop together and, in the car park or behind a wall, I would hand over cash. This, though not a common anthropological method of finding informants, proved to be very useful, and was also another example of the ways of forming trusting relationships with strangers. Surreptitiously exchanging piles of cash became an almost political act, in that it constituted a means of working around problems that were attributed to government.

3. Access to foreign currency

Migrant labour is, of course, not new to Southern Africa, and nor is it new to Zimbabwe. In terms of magnitude, however, a definite shift has taken place since 2000, and the money migrants send in remittances is an essential part of the survival of individuals and households. Matongo (2008) has studied roadside foreign currency dealers (spoken of as the “World Bank” of Zimbabwe, as opposed to the Reserve Bank) in Bulawayo, the second largest city in Zimbabwe. He estimated that around half the foreign currency came from cross border traders, a third from remittances from migrants, around a sixth from employees paid in foreign currency by non-governmental organisations, and the final sixth from what he terms “civil servants” (Matongo, 2008:13): members of government who have access to foreign currency, and are thus much further up the hierarchy than the average civil servant. Foreign currency trading, by anyone other than the Reserve Bank of Zimbabwe (RBZ), is illegal; but the government fixed rate of exchange bears little relation to actual value³⁴, and most Zimbabweans regard the black market rate as most valid. Having access to foreign currency, via remittances from migrants in mainly South Africa, Zambia, Botswana, or Britain, allows for Zimbabweans to keep money against inflation, and change it only when necessary. A conversation with a Zimbabwean friend in 2008 serves as an example of the losses that can occur if money

³⁴ Keeping the official exchange rate low allows members of the ZANU(PF) elite to buy foreign currency at a low rate, and then sell it on the black market for an enormous profit.

has to go through the official banks. He was paid, in Zimbabwe dollars, the equivalent of US \$ 1500 for work he had done for a mining firm. By the time the banks had processed it the Zimbabwe dollars he received were worth US \$ 150. It thus makes sense for migrants to try to send money home as cash, so that notes can be changed at places like Matongo's "World Bank".

It was difficult to ask questions within Zimbabwe concerned with how much money was being received in remittances, as foreign currency was usually received illegally and the political climate has worked to create a wary population. Of the 20 people I spoke to, however, 15 said they received remittances of some kind. Quantitative data from research with Zimbabwean migrants in Cape Town is also useful in that it shows the frequency of remittances: of the 50 migrants I interviewed, only three were not sending money to Zimbabwe on a regular basis, and two of these were due to lack of resources. The 47 migrants who were sending money to Zimbabwe sent an average of R 162 per month. Between two and six family members resident in Zimbabwe were reliant to some extent upon these remittances (see Appendix A). In interviews, all except one informant indicated that the need to support family members via remittances had been a key factor in movement to South Africa.

4.. Rural Lifestyles in Urban Areas

Finally, Mai Tawodzera's narrative is representative of many others as urban agriculture provides a major source of food. Every household I visited in Harare was growing food of some sort: mainly vegetables and maize. Urban agriculture has always been common in Zimbabwe, with empty lots and vleis (marshy areas prone to flooding in the rainy season) sprouting maize, pumpkins and rape in the growing season. At the time of Murambatsvina, this too was banned, but soon people began growing food again. Though a common practice in the past, urban agriculture had become imperative by 2007, and even the upper middle class was to a large degree reliant upon food they could grow, which was previously not the case. Growing food may require some expenditure on

seeds, but also makes use of social networks in that seeds from the previous year's harvest are bartered between households.

Cooking on wood fires has also become more common in urban Zimbabwe. In previous years, paraffin stoves were often used in households without electricity, but it has now become difficult to access paraffin, and when available it is often too expensive for frequent use. In the current crisis, even households with electricity are frequently cut off. Lack of electricity is an element of life in urban Zimbabwe that largely cuts across class lines: though some members of the upper-middle class may have generators, it is often difficult to access the fuel to run them, and thus, when the power is off, cooking on wood fires becomes a logical alternative. In low density areas with large gardens, if a tree is cut down the wood is stored and used as sparingly as possible. Wood is also gathered from open spaces, which, in addition to the rise in urban agriculture, has led to a denuding of the various pockets of indigenous vegetation present in urban Harare.

Access to municipal water, too, is often not possible. Upper middle class households often had access via boreholes on their property; and where they did not, members of their social network did. Water, too, thus became an exchangeable commodity amongst this sector of the population. Where boreholes do not exist, water is stored when possible, but there are times when water is simply not available for a while. Rivers that run through urban areas, though polluted, may be used in times of scarcity³⁵.

The combination of all of these factors has meant that urban spaces have become reminiscent of the rural. In Mai Tawodzera's words,

When I was a girl, we would go to fetch the water, we would grow our food, we cooked outside. Now sometimes I joke with Fadzai when we take the bucket to the tap³⁶, we are going to the river just like we used to. And when I'm not selling vegetables I'm looking after the garden, then we're cooking on the fire. That man³⁷ has made Harare just like N_____³⁸.

³⁵ The cholera outbreak that occurred in late 2008 was a result of lack of access to clean water, and the closing down of sewage plants due to lack of chemicals.

³⁶ Borehole water comes from a single tap on the property.

³⁷ Robert Mugabe

Linked to this is the sense that Zimbabwe has become excluded from modernity. “While the rest of the world moves on,” commented one informant, “we’re moving backwards all the time.” Metaphors of life in Zimbabwe drew on words such as “stagnant”, “paused” and “at a standstill” at best or, as in the previous quote, not just standing still but moving backwards, or “eroding”. “Even during the Chimurenga,” said the same informant, “things were not this bad. Mugabe doesn’t want us to know it’s the new millennium. We must live like our grandparents, except we have no land.” Though informants frequently asserted that Zimbabwe was a unique example of economic collapse, references to an “eroded” modernity bring to mind James Ferguson’s (1990) work on the copperbelt of Zambia after the downturn in the copper market, where ideas of progress and development waned in light of economic realities.

A world that moves backwards, where ideals of progress have failed, creates a great degree of uncertainty. Jones (2007) has argued that the situation in Zimbabwe is similar to that of Cameroon in the 1990s, as described by Mbembe and Roitman (1992):

The “pause” marks a temporal hiatus, a shift off the historical track that Mbembe and Roitman associate with the endless “now” in Cameroon...The result is a feeling that “the country is no longer part of the evolution of history. (Jones, 2008:9)

It is my contention that, as progress is no longer a metaphor that one can live by, the meta-narrative of suffering comes to the fore, as a way of surrendering the loss of progress as a possibility, and as a way of trying to find words for a situation that has come to defy the logic which used to operate in the past.

The strategies outlined above thus show ways in which social and economic life continue in Zimbabwe, and, importantly, show how migration is essential to this continuity. The migration of members of kinship and social networks also guards against the uncertainty of a world that moves backwards, as it allows for access to “real money” from places where the dream of progress has not died, and allows for a continuation of social life in a

³⁸ A rural area: name excluded for anonymity.

way that is more familiar. There is thus also an idea that, although “Zimbabwe has gone mad”, the ‘real’ world still operates beyond its borders. The economic situation in Zimbabwe has affected the ways in which rights are conceptualised and carried to South Africa, a place that is imagined as more logical and certain than Zimbabwe, and thus one that will recognise the “absurd horror” of what Zimbabwe has become.

Notions of Rights and Violation in the Context of “Economic Meltdown”

The downturn in the economy, which largely began in 1999³⁹, is locally held to be related to ZANU-PF policies, and the economic situation is perceived as deeply intertwined with the political situation. Thus, a wall in urban Harare has graffitied onto it, “Because of ZANU, no ZESA⁴⁰, no water, no food.” (see picture in appendix B). On numerous occasions, informants spoke to me of the ways in which ZANU has made economic life near impossible: “we are hungry today because Mugabe is hungry for power”; “I have no job because ZANU wants the people in the towns to give up and die because we disagree with them”; “This party, they have caused us to suffer every day. There is no water, no jobs, no food. *Hapana mari* [no money] except for fat politicians. *Hapana* everything these days.”

Attributing crisis to ZANU(PF) is also upheld by Zimbabwean academics: Matongo, for example, in his study of roadside currency traders, writes that “The “World Bank” of Bulawayo and numerous other roadside markets for foreign currency that have mushroomed all over Zimbabwe are offspring of government policy, government decisions, and possibly government shenanigans.” (Matongo, 2008:7). The economic crisis is thus attributed to ZANU-PF, and as such ties into conceptualisations of rights. If the economic crisis is a political issue, the logic of actors’ models runs, then to be hungry or unemployed is a violation of rights in the same way as being physically beaten or detained. In local conceptualisations, both are caused by politics, and both are thus political crimes. This is problematic upon the arrival of migrants to South Africa, where

³⁹ Though structural adjustment policies had had some impact prior to the current political and economic crisis (see Chapter 1).

⁴⁰ ZESA is the Zimbabwe Electricity Supply Authority.

this conceptualisation of rights and violation does not fit into the categories accepted by Home Affairs officials as valid for asylum. Zimbabweans in both urban Zimbabwe and in South Africa, however, present the difficulties of daily life as violation. “Life carries on”, but, in the words of a 40 year old male informant, “It shouldn’t be this way. It is wrong that we suffer this way.”

Within local models of suffering and violation, therefore, there is a conflation of two understandings of rights. Poverty, and the suffering that accompanies it, is perceived as *morally* wrong, and the ‘rights’ referred to here constitute rights versus wrongs, rather than inalienable human rights as understood by the law (see Robertson, 2006). Actors models thus draw upon an understanding of legal rights that has morality as its basis, rather than legal categories. Bhaktin (1981:293) notes,

There are no “neutral” words and forms- words and forms that belong to “no one”; language [is] shot through with intentions and accents...All words have the “taste” of a profession, a genre, a tendency, a party, a particular work, a particular person, a generation, an age group, the day and hour. Each word tastes of the context and contexts in which it has lived its socially charged life; all words and forms are populated by intentions.

Such was the situation in Zimbabwe with the phrase ‘human rights’ and the many ways in which this phrase became, in different contexts, an ideology, a discourse, a means of strategically shifting power relations, or simply a blanket term that served as a diametrical opposition to that which is ‘wrong’ in everyday life. In the mouths of my informants, ‘human rights’ came to take on a tangible force, a life of its own, in ways that both essentialised and reified it, and, paradoxically, at other times allowed for great diversity of meaning. Human rights as a discourse, far from representing a fixed set of laws that outline the basic rights of individuals, was an extremely malleable concept and one that shifted according to circumstance and the speaker (see Chapter 6).

Goodale (2006) has noted that the way for anthropology to make use of the notion of human rights is to consider the ways in which it “captures the constellation of philosophical, practical, and phenomenological dimensions through which universal

rights, believed to be entailed by a common human nature, are enacted, debated, practiced, violated, envisioned and experienced” (Goodale, 2006:490). Rights discourses, though stemming from international categories that are legally fixed, become localised, and there is thus, as Merry has argued, a need to “focus...on the social processes of human rights implementation and resistance” (2006:39) rather than to debate human rights on an abstract level. The following section on the politicisation of the category of urbanite provides background to the Zimbabwean construction of poverty as a rights violation.

Urbanite as political category

For the urban population, the difficulties caused by structural violence are compounded by the attitude of the state towards urbanites. The initial power base of the opposition party, the MDC, was drawn largely from urban populations and, as such, has led to a symbolic dismissal of their positions as citizens/ ‘Zimbabweans’ by the ruling party. Thus Didymus Mutasa, ZANU(PF) organising secretary, commented in 2002, “We would be better off with only six million people, with our own people who support the liberation struggle. We don’t want all these extra people” (cited in Solidarity Peace Trust, 2002: 2).

In addition, the meaning of Murambatsvina (‘Drive out the filth’) has made it clear to lower class urban populations precisely how they are conceptualised by the government. Being ‘*tsvina*’ has implications of pollution and, it has been suggested by Jones (private communication), menstrual blood. This (large) sector of the urban population thus consider themselves to have been discarded by the ruling party, and to be openly despised: to be ‘*tsvina*’ is to have had your personhood questioned. The decline of the rule of law in Zimbabwe (as discussed in Chapter 1) meant that individuals who were affected by Murambatsvina had no recourse to local ‘justice’: the police, after all, were often present as homes were torn down. Informants thus utilised their own models of morality, which perceived events as morally wrong (and hence constituting ‘violation’) even if they were not recognised as illegal by the state. As informants could not lay claim to the legal rights of the citizen from within Zimbabwe, they looked further afield,

and local ideas of violation were carried to South Africa. As Clement, a 31 year old male migrant to Cape Town commented, “We are not wanted at home, they are trying to starve us at home. So we come here, because we think that this is a fair place, a place where the government governs, where they recognise right and wrong. What is happening at home is wrong.” Localised discourses of human rights thus conflate rights with that which is right (versus wrong). Migrants are asserting their own personhood through movement to South Africa, and are allowing, through providing economic safeguards, for the personhood of those at home to be affirmed. “They may think I am filthy,” said one informant, “but this is my country. My husband has gone so that we can stay. And one day he will come back, and we will have kept a place here for him.”

The government’s attitude towards lower class urban populations has also influenced a reconceptualisation of relationships to the rural on the part of informants. Throughout the 1980s and 1990s, the Zimbabwean government, unlike many other Southern African states, had been fairly successful in minimising informal housing and settlements in urban areas (Potts, 2008); and the formalization of some areas that had begun as informal was common. Although resettlement of urban dwellers from illegal residences had occurred in Zimbabwe before Murambatsvina (see Potts, 2008; Potts and Mutambirwa, 1991), nothing on the scale of Murambatsvina had ever occurred, which, according to the United Nations fact finding mission, directly affected 700 000 people, with knock-on effects impacting 2.4 million people, a fifth of the total (not just urban) population of Zimbabwe (Tibaijuka, 2005). As Potts (2008:2) notes, “a major objective of Operation Murambatsvina was to displace, forcibly, to rural areas those urban people whose houses were demolished.” This was predicated, however, upon the assumption that all urban dwellers originated from rural areas and, as Potts notes, assumed more implicitly that the rural areas could support such an influx⁴¹.

The assumption that all people had a rural home has been shown to be erroneous. Potts (2008) has shown that about 60% of Harare’s urban population at the time of

⁴¹ Further, this assumed that all those affected were Zimbabwean nationals, which was not the case (see Solidarity Peace Trust, 2005).

Murambatsvina was urban born and, as such, had little more than a symbolic connection to a rural “home”. As Potts (2008:13) argues, “the urban-born are much less likely to have viable *economic* links to a rural area, even if many retain a socio-cultural link of affection to the place of birth of their parents or grandparents.” Interviews I have done with migrants in South Africa also show the ways in which the idea of being able to return to rural areas for those with a rural connection were incorrect. Victims of Murambatsvina who did have connections to rural homes and attempted to return to them often found that they were no longer welcome there. To some extent this was due to food shortages, but was also due to assumed affiliation with the MDC, purely by having spent time in urban areas. Thus Sekai, a 59 year old Shona woman whom I will return to in more depth in Chapter 4, and her husband found that relocating to the rural areas was not easy “as they thought since we had been evicted we must be MDC. We were a danger to them.” They had little access to food, and upon the arrival of food aid to the area, food was denied to them as “they said we were MDC”. They stayed in the rural areas for six months, relying on food sent from their daughter in South Africa. During this time Sekai’s husband died after being beaten by ZANU(PF) youths. Having been urban residents, therefore, meant that Sekai and her husband were dangerous and not accepted: though they followed government policy and relocated, they found themselves to still be ‘*tsvina*’ in the rural areas. Urbanity, therefore, is at times a form of pollution which can follow people great distances.

Liminality, the State, and Rights

The economic uncertainties discussed above, which have lead to a sense of being excluded from history / out of step with the rest of the world, and the moral uncertainty of being *tsvina* have contributed to a rising sense of liminality in urban Zimbabwe. Zimbabweans are placed at the interstices of moral and economic uncertainties, and within unpredictable political and economic geographies. Conceptualisations of rights and violation thus play out in this context of liminality which is juxtaposed against the imagined ‘reality’ of the rest of the world, which is perceived as a place of logic. Ideas of rights and violation also unfold in terms of imagined and real relationships to the state, where poor urban Zimbabweans, particularly those affected by Operation

Murambatsvina, have seen the collapse of the rule of law and realise that citizenship does not carry with it any legal certainty, and that to be *tsvina* is to be within a position of deep marginality. This marginality is viewed as violation. This violation is seen to play out mainly in the economic realm: though acts of political violence do occur, it is the daily indignities of constantly increasing poverty that have the greatest impact, and that are linked to the state's attitude to urban populations who have voted against them in the past. It is thus unsurprising that migrants in Cape Town constantly reiterate the economic situation in Zimbabwe as one of violation, and argue that it should be recognised as such by the South African state.

Conclusion: Migration as a necessary practical and symbolic act

At the beginning of this chapter, I included a quote from a migrant to South Africa who had said that “someone had to go so that the others could stay.” The dynamics of household economics show this to be the case. Claims that migration was essential to the survival of households can be seen to be substantive, as economic strategies rely to a large extent upon remittances of some kind from those who are ‘away’. The economic situation in Zimbabwe, however, can also be seen to have had effects beyond the practical, in that it has affected understandings of the self in relation to the state, understandings of urban-rural relationships, and ideas of modernity. These in turn have affected people's notions of suffering and violation, and tie into the meta-narrative of suffering that Zimbabweans in South Africa use to describe their lives at home, and to justify their movement and claims for asylum. ‘Going away so that others can stay’ has a meaning beyond the practical, therefore. It also represents a symbolic assertion – through allowing the survival of families at home, urban migrants are asserting both their own personhood, and the personhood of those who have remained behind.

4.

Imagining the Future: Expectations of South Africa and Categorisation within Zimbabwe

In this chapter, I wish to move on to consider how categorization affects the act of movement from Zimbabwe to South Africa, an act that, at the time of fieldwork, frequently constituted a movement from the legal to the illegal. While conditions in Zimbabwe are deeply uncertain, residence in Zimbabwe is at least legal. The act of moving across the border without the correct paperwork, however, moves people out of this terrain into a place of a different type of uncertainty, the uncertainty of marginality that is reflected even in legal status. People's expectations of South Africa, however, as a place of justice whose people recognise the ways in which Zimbabweans have been wronged, initially serves as a safeguard against this uncertainty. Fungai⁴², a 25 year old undocumented migrant who had been in Cape Town for six months, said to me, "I thought if I can make it as far as Home Affairs, if I can say why I was here, then they will understand, they will give me asylum. These brothers of ours have felt oppression, they know its taste. I thought they would understand, would allow me to be safe here for a while." Expectations of South African solidarity, in addition to expectations of a better life, thus provide an impetus to the long walk across the border into very uncertain territory⁴³.

In this chapter I thus look in greater depth at the ideas people had of South Africa before arrival that prompted the choice of South Africa as destination, and, using specific examples, examine the events or series of events that lead to migration, focusing on internal displacement in Zimbabwe that often precipitated a move to South Africa. I then explore people's initial experiences of movement. In doing so, I also explore the etymology of the words 'displacement' and 'mobility', as they are applied to

⁴² All informants' demographics details are available in tabular form in Appendix A, listed alphabetically according to pseudonym.

⁴³ It seems likely that incidences of xenophobic violence in South Africa have influenced this viewpoint, a topic I hope to explore in my doctoral research.

Zimbabweans both academically and within South Africa, in order to show how Zimbabwean undocumented migrants cannot be said to easily fit into either category, and sit uneasily at the interstices of economic mobility and forced displacement. At the start of this thesis I posed two central questions: what does it mean to suffer, and where is the line between suffering and a direct violation against human rights drawn? Ideas of structural violence as constituting a less legitimate form of suffering than physical violence relate directly to whether one can be categorised as displaced, or whether one is 'merely' economically mobile. Such ideas have very real effects upon what legal possibilities life in South Africa can offer migrants.

Expectations of South Africa

Statistics on the extent of migration of Zimbabweans to South Africa are fairly hard to come by as there is extensive illegal entry into the country. A 2007 newspaper report, however, stated that 2750 Zimbabweans have arrived in Cape Town that year, and that a Home Affairs parliamentary committee had been told that there were around 111 000 Zimbabwean 'refugees'⁴⁴ in South Africa last year. DA spokesperson Sandy Kalyan's comment, however, that "The department does not have the systems in place to accurately monitor numbers" (Cape Argus, April 4, 2007) indicates the inadequacy of this sort of statistic. As informants with whom I worked had been queueing outside Home Affairs in Cape Town for up to six months before getting an appointment, it is highly unlikely that Home Affairs statistics reflect reliable numbers, and estimates from other sources range as high as 3 million Zimbabweans in the country (Zimbabwe Exiles Forum, 2007).

No matter the exact number, why have so many people come to South Africa? In the previous chapter I have shown why people leave Zimbabwe: here, I wish to discuss why South Africa, in particular, is such a popular place to move to. In the eyes of the South Africans who resided close to Zimbabweans migrants in areas of Cape Town that, after I

⁴⁴ Though the report used the term 'refugee' it was unclear whether this was in fact a legal distinction or a general term for migrant.

had left the field, erupted in scenes of xenophobic violence, Zimbabweans were here for one thing only: money. “They are here for our jobs,” was a constant refrain in discussions I had with South Africans, a theme that is common in the literature on xenophobia (see McDonald, 2000; Sichone, 2002) “They have nothing there in their place, so they have come here.” Whilst not denying that economic motivations were central to movement to South Africa, I wish to look a little deeper at other factors that, whilst tying to economic motivations, also go beyond them, in that they call upon notions of a shared solidarity between South Africans and Zimbabweans, and thus link to the affirmation of personhood through migration with which I ended the previous chapter.

“Things are right in South Africa”: intertwined expectations of economic success, and expectations of legitimisation

That economic motivations were central to movement is made clear by the fact that the majority of my informants had, at some point in their time in Zimbabwe, experienced physical violence at the hands of the army, the police, the youth militia or ZANU supporters, but *all* emphasised that the primary motivation behind movement across the border was the economic situation in Zimbabwe. With an unemployment rate of over 80%, scarce access to food (and at times water), healthcare and education, migrants considered conditions within Zimbabwe to be unliveable, and emphasised that the majority of those still at home “are only able to stay alive because we send them food and money.” South Africa’s economic strength was thus a motivating factor: as seen in the previous chapter, the South African Rand is an extremely useful commodity in Zimbabwe, ranking only below the British pound and US dollar, both of which were beyond the reach of the migrants with whom I spent time. Expectations of work in South Africa, enabling families in Zimbabwe to access the Rand, were therefore influential in movement. The categories of health, food and water to which I referred above, however, are of course categories that are recognised by international human rights law as second generation rights (see Messer, 1993; Robertson, 2006), and in theory violations of this kind are seen to be human rights abuses. South Africa was seen by migrants as a place of safety where this would be recognised: as Farai said to me, “It’s not crazy here like it is at

home these days. I thought for sure they would see that we cannot stay there, that things are not right there. I didn't even see it as a question." Movement to improve economic circumstances was therefore incorporated within a framework of poverty and hunger as legitimate suffering, and suffering that would be recognised as such by South Africans. The situation, in the eyes of Zimbabwean informants, was thus more complicated than that of merely "coming to work", but carried with it ideas of the acknowledgment, by South Africans, of the difficulties of life in Zimbabwe. During the course of research within Zimbabwe and Cape Town, it thus became clear that Zimbabweans held a definite model of what South Africa as a state represented, and this was highly influential in the decision to move there rather than elsewhere in the region.

It is one thing to decide to move to a place that has a strong economy, but it is another to be able to work there. In order to legally work you need access to a work permit, asylum seeking paper or refugee status, and it is in this regard that South Africa held the most appeal as all wanted to work, but none wanted to be illegal. To the Zimbabweans with whom I worked, the South African state represented a model of democracy, justice, and adherence to, in the words of an informant, "that which is right" which, as I have just shown, was held in contrast to all that has "gone wrong" in Zimbabwe. The "wrong" here encapsulates more than just economic disaster, but refers also to the corruption and "power lust" of Zimbabwean politicians, and thus to the deep seated sense that political issues have caused wider violations than the physical. South Africa's recent history obviously plays a role in informants' conceptualisations of it as a place of justice: the transition from the Apartheid government to majority rule is considered with pride both within South Africa and across the continent, and, regardless of the experiences of post-Apartheid South Africa, the country still carries with it a powerful aura of democratic freedom, much as Zimbabwe did in the 1980s. "In the land of Mandela," said one informant still resident in Zimbabwe, "things are right."

The Truth and Reconciliation Commission played a large role in informants' ideas of South Africa as a place that acknowledged violation, and was thus incorporated into this powerful myth of South Africa as a place of right (versus the wrong of Zimbabwe). "I

saw how openly they spoke about their difficulties there,” noted one informant, “it seemed South Africa was a place that you could speak of your suffering and people would listen.” The expectation of most of my informants had been that upon telling their stories to representatives of the South African state, they would access refugee status “as they would see that if we stay at home we die.” Narratives of suffering, therefore, were perceived as a resource that would enable legal access to South Africa⁴⁵.

‘Speaking of suffering and having people listen’, however, is not confined to expectations from the South African state. Beyond access to legal status, migrants expected that South Africa would provide a space in which their experiences of suffering would be legitimised in a way that was not possible in Zimbabwe. Migrants were expecting South Africans themselves to be more welcoming they actually were (see below), and to be understanding of the pressures that had prompted movement. The expectation was thus that South Africa would provide a space for speech around violation, and thus a space for the legitimisation of people’s experiences. Again, this was explained in terms of the history of South Africa: “They [South Africans] know what it is to suffer under a bad government. I was sure that people would recognise why we came here, and would make a space for us so that we could survive”, said Susan, a 29 year old informant who first came to South Africa as a cross-border trader. Ideas of South Africans’ relationship to Zimbabweans were also framed through ideas of brotherhood and an imagined history of shared struggle. Migrants emphasised that they expected to find themselves welcomed in South Africa “as these are also our people, we were all together fighting so that black people do not have to live in this way”, in the words of Steven, a 41 year old respondent. Ideas of migrancy as exile were also apparent, and were linked again to a shared history between South Africans and Zimbabweans: “they came to us when they had to run away from Apartheid, now today we are coming to them” (Silus, 36 years old).

⁴⁵ Auerbach (2008) has written on the currency of suffering amongst refugees resident in a camp in Mozambique, showing that even second or third generation suffering is called upon, in that case, as a means of accessing the resources of the UNHCR. It seems that a by-product of the human rights conventions that oblige states that receive refugees to care for them has been the creation of suffering as a resource, accessed via the telling of stories to people in power.

As shown in the previous chapter, migration from Zimbabwe can be read as constituting a space in which it becomes possible to affirm relationships. On the one hand, access to South African currency allows this, as the movement of Rands to Zimbabwe enables people there to safeguard against uncertainty, and enables the maintenance of social connections over large distances. Informants' expectations of the role of their narratives of suffering constituted more than an appeal to the South African state for asylum, but were also concerned with opening a space for engagement with issues that it is hard to speak of in Zimbabwe, thus enabling space for an affirmation of self. "Going there, we can talk of these things that happen here without being afraid of who is listening," said an informant resident in Zimbabwe. "It would be good to talk of these things so that in South Africa they can know how we suffer here." Jackson (2002:2) argues that "stories, like memories and dreams, are *nowhere* articulated as personal revelations, but authored and authorised dialogically and collaboratively in the course of sharing one's recollections with others." The process of speaking in relation to one who *listens*, in order that they may 'know how we are suffering' opens a space for a restoration of self, in that individual, subjective experiences become social (Ross, 2003). As Ross (2003:330) has argued in light of communities which have experienced trauma or violence

In such contexts, where relationships between people are sundered and their sense of time and place fractured, where the possibilities of exercising the kinds of effort that go into forging and maintaining social relationships over time are limited and the grounds on which sociality is built are yet unstable, the possibility of sustaining the ordinary through convention and routine are circumscribed. Narrative takes on an important role in restoring a sense of self in time and place.

As acts of speaking or of not speaking have taken on a new relevance within Zimbabwe today (see Chapter 3), the possibility of speaking openly in South Africa carries with it great weight, and thus tied into migrants' expectations of what South African solidarity might mean. As Hastrup (1993:736) has argued, "Solidarity is not achieved by enquiry but by the imagination, the imaginative ability to see strange people as fellow sufferers; that is, to be able to incorporate others suffering into a shared concern." The literature on the role of speech, or, indeed, speechlessness or silencing, in dealing with issues of violence and dispossession is extensive (see Leydesdorff et al, 1999; Das, 1986; 1991; Scarry, 1985; Malkki, 1997) and contains at its core the idea of narrative as providing a

bridge between the self and the social. Migrants' expectations of South Africa, therefore, incorporated the idea of a movement from the liminal and marginalized space of Zimbabwe to a space where self could be affirmed in relation to others.

The popularity of South Africa as destination, therefore, was not only due to its economic status within the region. Expectations of South Africa were formulated with a (possibly imagined) consciousness of the intertwined history of the two countries, which led informants to expect a space of solidarity. Before coming to South Africa migrants expected to find a refuge, a place of asylum: a place from which it was possible to speak to strangers and thus to become familiar; a place in which, due to the history of the country, stories of suffering would be held as legitimate, both in their own right, and as reasons for movement.

Getting There: Factors that influence movement to South Africa

you asked me, party cadre
for a membership card
of the ruining party.
what an insult
to the flowers and the birds
of my country
in my heart.

Chenjerai Hove⁴⁶, *on being asked for a ruling party membership card*, 1998.

As the previous chapter has shown, movement from Zimbabwe is predicated upon the political situation, and upon the dire economic conditions present there. Structural violence, which at its most extreme took the form of the physical destruction of property and livelihoods by the Zimbabwean police and at its least extreme constituted conditions of dire poverty, was a constant factor in informants' migration histories. At least one episode of physical violence also factored in most people's narratives.

⁴⁶ Chenjerai Hove is a Zimbabwean poet

Table 3: Number of incidents of violence reported in 50 migration histories

STRUCTURAL VIOLENCE			POLITICAL VIOLENCE COMMITTED BY			
Poverty	Hunger	Unemployment	Police	Youth militia	War Veterans	ZANU/PF supporters
50	48	40	10	9	5	12

The total number of instances of violence that arose in informants' migration histories (174) is obviously greater than the number of informants themselves (50), as many spoke of more than one type of violence occurring over the course of the decision to move, and the process of movement to South Africa. As can be seen, poverty was reported by the entire sample, including the ten informants who did not cite unemployment as a factor. Hunger was reported by all but 2 of the sample. Instances of violence at the hands of the police, youth militia, war veterans or ZANU/PF supporters arose 36 times, while structural violence was mentioned 138 times in the 50 histories.

For most informants, varying types of violence thus preceded the final decision to cross the border, but this need not have been 'an event' (see Ross, 2003b) based on physical violence, but may have been the continual experience of structural violence. Further analysis of migration narratives, as discussed below, indicates that displacement of some sort within Zimbabwe prior to transnational movement was a common factor in people's decisions to leave Zimbabwe. The ways in which informants were categorised by the state within Zimbabwe affected the nature of these events. I use the term 'category' to refer to the classification of individuals into a division of society based upon a particular criterion – for example, urban or rural, MDC supporter or ZANU/PF supporter. A category differs from a group in that it is an external classification, beyond the control of the individuals who are placed in it. People are thus positioned within a category, rather than positioning themselves, and may fall into more than one category at a time. Whether or not positioning within a category is relevant to experience is, of course, situational, as explored below.

For the undocumented migrants with whom I worked, being categorized as an urban dweller, a rural dweller or a commercial farm worker; a suspected MDC supporter; Shona or Ndebele; or even a youth or an adult, all affected the nature of structured violence that resulted in an eventual move to South Africa. I use structured rather than structural here in order to highlight the deliberate targeting of particular categories of people, as opposed to structural violence through less organized marginalization. The Zimbabwe Human Rights NGO Forum has defined such targeted violence as organized violence: ““organised violence” means the interhuman infliction of significant avoidable pain and suffering by an organised group according to a declared or implied strategy and/or system of ideas and attitudes. It comprises any violent action which is unacceptable by general human standards, and relates to the victims’ mental and physical wellbeing.” (Zimbabwe Human Rights NGO Forum, 2001:2)

What is essential to remember, however, is that although the nature of violence may differ, all categories experienced violence of some description, and individuals, of course, could be in more than one category. Further, political violence usually lead to an increased experience of structural violence, due to the difficulties following displacement. These experiences of violence were integral to an eventual move to South Africa. 46 out of the 50 migration histories gathered showed internal movement within Zimbabwe at least once prior to movement across the border. On average, female informants had moved twice within Zimbabwe and male informants 2.5 times before crossing the border (see Appendix A). Of the 50 migration histories gathered, a total of 118 internal moves had taken place.

The results of being positioned within the category of commercial farmer or MDC politician have been widely disseminated in the international media, through pictures of the results of spectacular violence upon people’s bodies, with accompanying text on the situation in Zimbabwe. In this section I wish to look beyond these two publicised categories, to give ethnographic illustrations from the migration histories of informants who fall within some of the above, less spectacular, categories, which serve to illustrate the importance of positioning in influencing informants’ eventual moves to South Africa.

Having done this, I explore the academic categories of displacement and mobility, which are prevalent within rights discourse and the discourse on what constitutes a 'refugee'.

Being Urban

In Chapter 3, I discussed the effects of being urban on those still resident in Zimbabwe. Here, I aim to show how this influences a move to South Africa, returning to the migration history of Sekai, which I touched upon in the previous chapter. Sekai, a 59 year old Shona woman who originated from a rural area in the Midlands of Zimbabwe, had been living with her husband in a high density suburb of Harare for twenty five years by 2005, the year she left for South Africa. She had moved to Harare upon her marriage to Tendai, a carpenter, and they had three children, the youngest of whom died in 1999. In mid 2005, things were difficult for Sekai and her husband, but he was still working as a carpenter, and she sold chickens and eggs that she raised in her backyard. Sekai's daughter was in South Africa already, having been able to move there legally in 2001.

The first event that precipitated Sekai's movement to South Africa was Operation Murambatsvina. On a winter's day in the middle of the year, she and her husband were woken by the police before dawn and, along with neighbours, forced at gunpoint to demolish their own brick houses. The chickens Sekai raised were confiscated by the police "because they said it was people like me who were destroying our economy. I just sold those chickens and eggs because otherwise we would be starving." Her husband hurt his hand demolishing their home, and, for the few days they slept on the ground in the neighbourhood, surrounded by the few blankets, clothes and belongings they had managed to rescue from their home, was in great pain, but was unwilling to attempt to go to a clinic "because he knew there would be no help anyway, and because he didn't want to leave me there on the side of the road." When Tendai's hand was somewhat healed, they decided to go back to their rural place of origin, where they still had family, "because there was nothing for us in Harare. We had lost everything. The police wanted to send us to Caledonia⁴⁷ but we went to our own place." This, thus, was Sekai and

⁴⁷ Caledonia Farm, just outside Harare, was described by police as "a transit camp before they are routed to appropriate places." (Zimbabwe Human Rights NGO Forum, 2005: 12). One aim of Murambatsvina was to

Tendai's first displacement, and was a direct result of targeted violence against a particular category of the population: the urban poor, who were perceived as MDC supporters.

In the previous chapter I discussed what happened to them upon arrival in the rural areas: acute food shortages, and little welcome from family members "as they thought since we had been evicted we must be MDC. We were a danger to them." They had little access to food, and upon the arrival of food aid to the area food was denied to them as "they said we were MDC". They stayed in the rural areas for six months, relying on food sent from their daughter in South Africa. During this time Sekai's husband was killed, kidnapped one afternoon by ZANU youths and beaten to death for his presumed affiliation with the MDC. As it was his extended family they had been staying with, and as food was so scarce, Sekai was forced to move again. She went back to Harare but could not make a living. Her daughter sent her money and she came to South Africa. "I would never have come before Murambatsvina," she said to me, "But there was no place for me in my country. My husband was dead, my house was gone. I came to South Africa to ask for their help."

Sekai was thus internally displaced twice as a direct result of Operation Murambatsvina, and of structural and political violence in the rural areas, and moved across the border as she felt she now had no other choice. Her story was chosen as it echoes the stories of many other urban informants. Falling within the category of urban, therefore, put Sekai in a position of particular structured violence. The case study also shows the ways in which categories can overlap: to be urban is to be suspected of being MDC, for example. Additionally, Sekai self-identified as Shona, a category that previously may have placed her at an advantage in comparison to the largely marginalised Ndebele population. In the context of the current crisis, however, ethnic identity is less important than assumed political affiliation: to be Shona is not necessarily to be in a position of power, though to be Ndebele is almost certainly to be at a disadvantage. This, too, reflects assumed

relocate urban voters to rural areas which were ZANU strongholds, thus dispersing the largely MDC supportive urban population.

political affiliation: as Ndebele people were assumed to be ZAPU supporters, and thus opposed to ZANU, in the 1980s, so today are they assumed to be MDC.

Being Rural

In 2001, the Zimbabwe Human Rights NGO Forum, an organisation formed in 1998 which brought together nine NGOs working in the field of human rights in Zimbabwe, wrote that, “The rural areas were, and remain, the epicentre for the violence against MDC supporters” (Zimbabwe Human Rights NGO Forum, 2001:7). Political violence in rural areas has been the worst in the country, particularly around election times. Since 2001, the field of targeted violence has widened, and ‘suspected’ MDC supporters form a large category of people. This category is not necessarily a fixed one, in that labelling an individual as MDC can be strategic, and not relevant in some contexts while relevant in others. Beyond this targeted physical violence, rural areas have long been areas of greater poverty than urban. This situation has only been exacerbated by the current crisis, in that access to seeds, water and fertilizers have been curtailed, and industries in rural settlements (or growth points, in the government terminology of the 1980s) have lessened. Various rural regions have also been targeted in through food scarcity, with food aid denied to areas in dire need. An additional effect has been further structural disadvantages as “teachers and medical personnel have been driven out of rural areas, in fear of their lives” (ibid:4). An informant in Harare, who works in the field of human rights, said to me after the 2008 elections that “it’s hard to know what’s happening in the rural areas right now because it’s hard to get in there [due to monitoring by ZANU youths and police]. But one thing we do know is that they are getting more and more empty. Huge portions of the population have gone elsewhere. Or maybe they have died.”

I did not undertake any fieldwork in rural areas, but have interviewed, in Cape Town, numerous informants who came originally from rural areas of Zimbabwe. As the following case study illustrates, their narratives also indicate displacement within Zimbabwe prior to movement to South Africa.

Tafadzwa, a Shona man, was resident in his place of birth, a rural area in Mashonaland Central Province, during the run up to the June 2000 General Elections. At the time he was nineteen years old. He lived with his father, mother, two brothers and sister, who were subsistence farmers, in a village in which numerous members of his kinship network also resided. I feel it appropriate that Tafadzwa's narrative be reproduced here as I transcribed it, rather than in my words.

When it came to that time of elections, it was not campaigning like you think elections should be. What happened was that the war veterans were in our area, they even took over the police station. They were there to make sure we voted ZANU, and the way they did it was to beat people. There were rallies that we had to go to; my uncle didn't go to one and they came that night and beat him in front of his family. He was lucky, though: soon people were taken away, and the things that happened to them I cannot even speak. Some of them came back, but there were also deaths. My family was in trouble because my uncle didn't go to the rally, so we were very afraid. My mother wanted me to go to family in town, but I said to her, "and what will happen to you then? When they see I've gone?" So we made up a story about a sick relative, which we told to everyone as though it was true, even our neighbours. Then we went to Kadoma. My mother came too, and we took the smaller children. My one brother and my father stayed to look after the land.

Tafadzwa stayed with kin in Kadoma for a month, but when it came to time to vote they felt they must return to the area in which they were registered, or their father and brother would be punished for their absence. They returned, and voted in the election. When the results came out, their area had predominantly voted for the MDC.

Then we were in trouble. But you must vote with your heart, you know. I knew they didn't know my vote, but they knew the results for our area. That we didn't think of. We thought if the government changes, this can't happen anymore. But there were many beatings after the result became known. And the government did not change. That was the time of the most fear in my life, but I survived. I went back to Kadoma, and then to Harare where I found some work. It was still a time of suffering, but we were all alive. I next went back to home when my youngest sister died of illness. Things were difficult, there wasn't food. So my father says I must stay in Harare to send money. I stayed there for five years, but then I wasn't working anymore, and things were even worse *kumusha*⁴⁸. That was when I decided to come to South Africa. I had to get money to my family or they would

⁴⁸ *Kumusha* translates as 'at home', and is usually used to describe the rural home.

starve. My brother was with me by this time, we came here together first. But he was deported. So now it is just me till he manages to come back.

Political violence prior to the election prompted an initial displacement to Kadoma, followed by a second displacement after the election results were known. Though the initial displacement can be directly attributed to human rights violations, and Tafadzwa's fear for his life, his move to Harare and subsequent move to South Africa were caused by economic conditions. To Tafadzwa, however, both political violence and economic hardship both carried the same threat of death.

Being Ndebele

The Ndebele people have occupied a marginal position in Zimbabwean politics, and, to some degree, in the Zimbabwean economy since the state's inception in 1980. Ndebele people originally came to the area during the upheavals resulting from Shaka's reign in the Zulu kingdom, and at times Shona informants traced the "quarrel" between the two groups back to the time "they just came and beat us and took a piece of our land." The area of the country where Ndebele is the most prevalent mother tongue is named Matabeleland, and constitutes savannah grassland with a lower annual rainfall than other parts of the country. It is thus very vulnerable to drought. The second largest city in Zimbabwe, Bulawayo, is in Matabeleland, and is the closest city to the Beitbridge border post with South Africa. In the 1980s, Gukurahundi, a ZANU based campaign against ostensible dissidents, claimed the lives of around 20 000 Ndebele people resident in Matabeleland and in the Midlands, a neighbouring province (see chapter 1). Though political violence against the Ndebele halted between the end of Gukurahundi and the beginnings of campaigns of violence across the entire country around the time of the 2000 general election, informants still claimed that Matabeleland had worse infrastructure than Mashonaland, and much higher poverty. Thus, though political violence was (and is) prevalent in the area, (see the appendix to Hill, 2003) the case study I present here illustrates the effects of structural marginalisation on informants' relationship with politics, on the mobilisation of ethnic identity, and, from within this category, on an eventual move to South Africa. This is not to deny the reality of political

violence in Matabeleland, but rather to accentuate the very real effects of structural violence (through political marginalisation) on a sector of the population that has additionally experienced a very high degree of the wrong sort of political attention: violence.

Jonah, a 29 year old man from Gwanda, a small settlement between Bulawayo and Beitbridge, began a group discussion in Cape Town with three Zimbabwean colleagues and myself by stating, without prompting, that “In Matabeleland since independence it’s been hard times. Our forefathers came to Zimbabwe from South Africa, but here no one cares about that, and in Zimbabwe we don’t belong either. We are lost. Zimbabwe is another country, and so is South Africa. We belong to neither.” When his Shona colleague intercepted with, “But even us from Harare are also suffering”, Jonah retorted, “Independence for 27 years! It’s been hard for us *always*. At least the politicians belong to you.” He then moved on to describe a political rally he had attended as a child in Gwanda:

I don’t know the guy who is ruling us: he comes like a bird and then he is gone. When I heard he was coming to Gwanda, I waited till I saw the convoy. Then I got on my bicycle and followed them straight to the field. I went because I wanted to see his face, the man who was now ruling our country, but by the time I reached there he was gone. Gone already. He stayed for 5 minutes, because that’s all the attention he was going to give to our people. I’m not a politician, I don’t hate anyone, but I don’t see him. I speak Shona, I know Shona, but I don’t know the guy who rules us.

Not seeing Mugabe, and thus not being seen, was very important to Jonah’s understanding of the place of the Ndebele within the imaginary of the ruling party, and within the new Zimbabwe as a whole. Being situated on the periphery with regard to government service also had an effect:

My mother had to go from Gwanda to Harare, they made a mistake on her birth certificate and in Gwanda they say it has to be fixed in Harare. She doesn’t speak Shona, how’s she going to go there? We don’t have a car, we just have bicycles, there’s no public transport, and no one in Harare will understand her. So she must just live with the mistake. We must all live with many, many mistakes. Until we just go, like they want us to. But where must we go? I could come here [to South Africa], even if they don’t want me. But my mother? The only place she can go is to the grave.

The disregard of Zimbabwean politicians later hit closer to home than a failed attempt at seeing Mugabe:

They destroyed business areas in Bulawayo, some time between 1994 and 2000. Chiangwa⁴⁹ bought the company my father worked for, and he didn't pay my father's pension. My father worked there for 25 years and he didn't get any pension.

Understandably, this placed a strain on the family's resources, and came at a time when service delivery was declining, and drought relief packages from the government did not appear. Jonah voted in the 2000 general election and 2002 presidential election, hoping for change and an improvement in the family's circumstances, but, following the results and the implementation of political 'punishment', came to see the entire process as flawed, and rife with violence. Responding to a comment from a Shona colleague that, "in the box you are alone, they don't know your vote," Jonah argued that:

Our grandparents don't know computers, they don't know they're alone. What if there's cameras in the walls? Anyway, the old people are very few now, and I can't vote for someone I didn't know for 27 years. People from Mashonaland are to blame. We in Matabeleland are very few – what can we do? People voted for him even after they knew about corruption, so what do you expect? In Matabeleland we're MDC people. But at elections you know they'll send the green bombers⁵⁰. Even if the MDC win in Matabeleland we lose.

The implementation of a political party that was viewed as sympathetic to the Ndebele people provided hope for a time, but the failure of the electoral process as a means of becoming less marginal only worked to heighten Jonah's sense of being positioned as the subaltern. Having lost, Jonah moved to Bulawayo because

I couldn't support myself or my family in Gwanda. Things were hard in Bulawayo also. In Bulawayo now there's no water, the projects failed because it's for Matabeleland, and no one cares. We don't even get any transport, we don't get any health. Then the day came when I didn't have any job. My father said to go to Harare, but what's there for me? Yes, there are more jobs, better health. But there's no place for me there. So I came to South Africa.

⁴⁹ Philip Chiangwa, a prominent Shona businessman with close ties to ZANU-PF, is renowned across the country for corruption.

⁵⁰ A local name for the ZANU youth militia.

Within Jonah's imaginary of the Zimbabwean economy, Harare still existed as a place of far better opportunity than Bulawayo, although, as I have shown, the economic crisis is also deeply felt there. The differences between the core and the periphery have lessened in the current crisis, but that was not the reason Jonah did not move to Harare. Rather, a sense of marginalisation and not belonging prompted a move to South Africa which he had earlier referred to as "the land of my forefathers." Being identified as Ndebele, therefore, placed Jonah within a particular position of marginalisation, which was felt both through the lived reality of "no water, no transport, no health, no jobs", and through a self identification with a group who "have no place." 'Having no place' prompted a move to South Africa rather than elsewhere in the region, which was imagined as more welcoming than Jonah found it to be.

Categories and Internal Displacement

The various categories which I have discussed above therefore show the ways in which both targeted and non-targeted structural and political violence have resulted in multiple displacements within Zimbabwe. Movement has been occurring in multiple directions: violence-based movement⁵¹ from rural areas to urban from as early as 2000; urban to rural movement following Murambatsvina and following the decline in the economy which has made links to rural land more valuable; and movement between urban areas due to economic difficulty. There thus exists a political economy of movement, that is premised upon what is locally described as "suffering" and, while people may suffer for slightly different reasons, or in different ways, all people discussed above viewed themselves as having been placed within a particular category and thus targeted. Informants viewed their own positioning as having influenced their histories, and commonly complained of having been, in one informant's words, "pushed all over Zimbabwe until there was no place left to go." This meant that there was often a considerable period of time between an initial experience of violence (in its broadest sense) which caused the first in a set of displacements, and movement to South Africa, a factor that affected the likelihood of being granted asylum (see Chapter 5). The map below, drawing on informants' migration histories, constitutes my attempt at a visual

⁵¹ As opposed to the usual rural-urban migration patterns prior to this political crisis.

representation of the movements of as few as seven people over the last 8 years. Each coloured line represents the movements of a different individual, and places of origin are indicated by coloured circles. My aim here is not to present a diagram of movement that is simple to follow for each individual, but rather to show the extent of internal movement, and in some instances cross-border movement to Zambia and Mozambique, prior to arrival in South Africa.

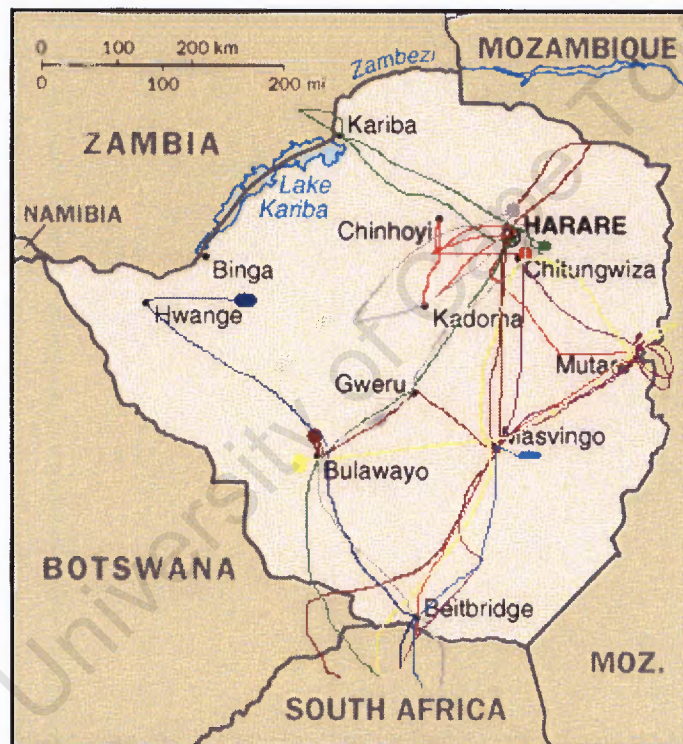


Figure 1: Internal Movement prior to Movement to South Africa

Table 4: Key to Figure 1

Name and colour on map	Age	Gender	Place of origin	Marital status	Location of children	No. of internal moves before crossing border
Betty, yellow	25	F	Bulawayo	M; 2 children	Bulawayo	4
Fadzai, light blue	27	F	Masvingo,	S; no children		1
Nothando, dark blue	32	F	Hwange	M; 3 children	Hwange and Bulawayo	2
Nyarai, purple	32	M	Mutare	M; 2 children	Mutare	2 pre 1 st move; 2 pre 2 nd move
Christopher green	28	M	Harare	M; 2 children	Harare	5
Clement, grey	31	M	Harare	S, no children		1
Bernard, brown	43	M	Bulawayo	M; 3 children	1 Bulawayo; 2 in SA	2

If it were possible to devise such an illustration to cover the movements of the entire population, I suspect the results would be staggering. For most informants who continued to South Africa, strategic moves from one area of the country to the other had failed, often multiple times. That then provided the impetus for 'moving on', and travelling to South Africa, where the process of categorisation continues, whether it is into the wide category that situates all migrants as 'foreigner', or, more specifically, categorisation as asylum seeker or 'illegal'. Categorisation along these more specific lines has very real effects on the possibilities that life in South Africa offers to migrants, and is closely linked to academic distinctions between displacement/forced migration, and mobility/voluntary migration, in which the time spent in Zimbabwe after an initial displacement often plays an important role.

The Difficulties of Placing Zimbabwean Migrants within Academic and Legal Categories

As the above case studies illustrate, in the case of migration of Zimbabweans to South Africa, the usual dichotomy of forced versus voluntary can be seen to be problematic, as can distinctions between displacement and mobility. Within academic and legal categories, there exists a discursive binary between forced migration/displacement, and voluntary migration/ mobility. The Oxford English Dictionary Online defines mobility as

“The ability to move or to be moved; capacity for movement or change of place; movableness, portability” and further, “Ease or freedom of movement; capacity for rapid or comfortable locomotion or travel.” These all imply movement across spaces with comparative freedom. Displacement, on the other hand, is defined as “Removal of a thing from its place; putting out of place; shifting, dislocation” and can also be traced to theories of physics, such as when a stone thrown into a jug displaces some of the water. Here, the movement is caused by something external, and is beyond the control of the ‘thing’ being removed. While the etymology of both these words shows an initial usage with regard to objects (see Oxford English Dictionary Online, 2008), academic discourses of migration and movement have applied them to the movement of people, with the result that mobility, drawing on its roots which emphasised an object’s internal *capacity*, has come to imply agency, while displacement implies coercion of some kind. Beyond this, however, a distinction is made between internally displaced persons and refugees, with the main distinction not being the sort of violence from which one is fleeing, but movement across a national border (see Appendix C). Adeyemi Oyeneri (2007: 306) argues that “Most international and non-governmental organisations... limit their understanding, policy focus and relief assistance mainly to the refugees while the internally displaced persons, who have not crossed an international state border, are left at the mercy of the very government that caused the displacement in the first place.” Further, he draws upon Beyer (1981) to argue that the distinction is one of name only and that “it is incontestable that that there is congruence in their experiences of, among other things, fear, deprivation, loss of limbs and loved ones.”(ibid:307). A major difference does lie, however, in access to shelter, health facilities and food, in that internally displaced people seldom have access to these in the same way as do refugees (see Auerbach 2008 for a discussion on the ‘entitlement’ of refugees).

How, then, are Zimbabwean migrants situated within the discursive binaries of mobility versus displacement, and internal displacement versus refugeehood? The case studies above show that in many cases, initial experiences of internal displacement, which can be categorised as forced, were followed by movement across national borders, which tends, within South Africa, to be categorised as voluntary in that movement occurred a

significant amount of time after an event that would be held as life-threatening. Thus, though migrants move from being internally displaced to being, in their eyes, *displaced* across an international border, and thus eligible to fit into the category of refugee, this is not necessarily held as the case by the South Africa government, which categorises many Zimbabweans as *mobile* economic migrants. Vigneswaran (2008), writing on the informal economies of migration control at the Zimbabwe/South Africa border, has no problem with categorising Zimbabweans as displaced by the crisis in the country: but notes that “the government of South Africa has been particularly pro-active in seeking to prevent the free flow of (these) migrants across its borders. Last year [ie 2007] South Africa deported over a quarter million people, the majority of them Zimbabweans.” (Vigneswaran, 2008: 1).

The situation becomes further complicated, however, when examining the processes that lead to internal displacement in Zimbabwe. Experiences of explicit forced removal within Zimbabwe, be it through Murambatsvina, farm invasions or any other means, are easily recognisable as displacement. Even so, they form an ambiguous territory where status within South Africa rests upon the ways in which stories are told (see Chapter 5). It is a territory, however, where there is a possibility of being granted the right to stay in South Africa until it is safe to return to Zimbabwe, as the story contains an event or series of events that can be held to put the person’s life at risk were they to return. For many migrants, however, experiences that they take to constitute endangering survival are not accepted as such by the South African state. For example, in instances where migration occurred due to sustained unemployment (such as in Jonah’s narrative), which in the context of Zimbabwe is a short step away from potential starvation, movement to South Africa is taken to be voluntary, and continued residence in Zimbabwe is not seen as hazardous enough to legitimate asylum.

There thus exist two stages at which the discursive binaries of forced versus voluntary are relevant within the context of seeking legal status in South Africa. The first occurs with regard to experiences within Zimbabwe: was a person internally *displaced*, or did they move of their own free will? The answer to this depends, in many cases, upon whether

structural violence is considered a legitimate coercive force. The second occurs upon movement to South Africa: was crossing the border a strategic act, or was there little choice? While I hope to have shown through the migration histories/narratives I have collected and described that informants felt they had little choice, this is not necessarily how such movement is viewed officially (see Chapter 6). The formulation of displacement and mobility into two clearly distinct categories is therefore highly problematic in this context, where decisions of movement are both strategic *and* constrained. While such categorisation may be inappropriate and inaccurate, it most certainly occurs, and stands in contrast to migrants' expectations of South Africa as a space less marginal than Zimbabwe. It is through this that migrants come to recognise that they are not eligible for asylum, and thus begin the process of realising that they are, and likely will remain, 'illegals', which, together with case studies of the process of crossing nation-state boundaries, I explore in Chapter 5.

5.

Tracing Mobility: Borderlands, Marginality and Illegality

The first time I crossed was to take cigarettes for these smugglers. They pay you 100 rands and you carry them across the border. They pay you on the other side. At that time I wasn't really thinking of leaving, but 100 rand was 3 month's salary, and I hadn't been paid in Beitbridge for a month. I had no money for food, and I was working construction so the work was very hard in the heat. We went to ----- to cross, spent the night in the bush and then late the next day the *guma gumas*⁵² led us through the bush and across the river. We made it to the other side and jumped the wire onto somebody's farm. We hid in a gully there, and at midday cars arrived and took our cigarettes and gave us the money. It was hard to realise that here, because you'd walked across some bush, you were now a criminal. Yesterday I'm a construction worker, today I'm a smuggler. The next time I went back, I was an illegal immigrant. It's not easy to say, okay, I'm illegal now. But it was that or my children starve. I had had to leave my home for Beitbridge originally because of the youth militia, but I crossed the border because of hunger. My own and that of my wife and children who were still in our place.⁵³

Simba, 24, undocumented migrant.

Simba arrived in Cape Town in March 2007. Prior to arriving in South Africa he had been working as a builder in Beitbridge, but was offered an opportunity to illegally smuggle cigarettes across the border for which he would be paid more than a month's salary. He took the chance, and crossed in the night with ten other smugglers "because I wasn't earning enough at my job to even feed myself, let alone send money to my wife." His wife had remained in another district of Zimbabwe; he had left her there to work in Beitbridge because the youth militia in his area, into which he had been indoctrinated in 2006, were angry with him after he refused to beat up a woman suspected of being an MDC supporter. He left his wife with his mother, and fled to Beitbridge where his uncle was living. He initially saw smuggling cigarettes as an opportunity to get some money to his family, "but once I had crossed the border and seen how hard it (the crossing) was I thought I would stay and send money from South Africa." After handing over the cigarettes, he and a friend left the others and set out into the bush with R100 each. They

⁵² *Guma gumas* are people who act as escorts across the border

⁵³ This narrative has been edited to remove information that would identify the precise place of crossing, and network utilized to cross.

were caught by police that day, and, after a week in a holding cell, repatriated. As soon as he was back in Beitbridge, he left again, and this time made it to Johannesburg.

The actual act of crossing the border is one that is deeply infused with fear. Informants crossed the border in many different ways, and at many different points: on foot through the bush and across the Limpopo; alone, with friends, or with escorts (the *guma gumas* or *malaitshas*, terms that seemed interchangeable and which were translated for me as ‘human traffickers’, a term that never arose when I learned Shona at school as a child); in vehicles with fraudulent passports, or with legitimate passports but fraudulent entrance visas; directly from Zimbabwe to South Africa, or via Botswana; heading initially for South African farms or heading straight to towns. Regardless of the method of crossing, informants utilised networks of some description, frequently drawing upon the informal economies of movement that have sprung up around the border. As Vigneswaran (2007:2) notes, “a variety of cottage – and in some cases quite sophisticated – industries have grown up in response to the increasing demand for means to circumvent South Africa’s immigration laws.” Crossing in this way requires money and trust, and may be more frightening than crossing alone. On Simba’s second entrance into South Africa, for example, he arranged to be taken to Johannesburg by a group of *malaitshas*. As his aunt in South Africa agreed to pay the fee upon arrival, Simba utilised both kinship and illegal networks to cross the second time, “as it was clear if I was by myself I would fail again.” He described his experience:

I met up with these guys who were going to take us across. The *malaitshas* took away our money and cell phones, and whatever papers we had, so that we wouldn’t run away once we were across the border. They took us in a truck to _____ on the Zimbabwe side, and we waited for three days there until they had got enough people. There was very little food, and the waiting was hard. When there were 25 of us, men and women, they took the women in the truck, and walked us across the bush in the night for about 5 kilometres. We had to be silent, and they walked us in single file. You knew if you made a noise not only would it be dangerous because others might hear you, but the *malaitshas* would beat you. When we came to the fence the women were there, and we went under the fence onto a farm. It was still night, and they hid us in the bush. We waited there all day, and they beat some of the guys for talking. We had some bread, but I was very thirsty. Then another truck came and we were all put in the back. There were

no windows. We went on dirt roads for most of the way, and it was slow. I had many cramps. We came to Jo'burg at 2 in the morning, and they separated the men and women. I was very afraid they wouldn't get hold of my aunt...we were all prisoners now. I also knew that they were charging R 1000, and my aunt only had R 800. I thought maybe when they find that out they'd just kill me, or keep me there to work for them. There are stories, particularly about women who can't pay who then belong to these men. I waited there for two days, they didn't tell me what was going on. We couldn't move from the corridor, and there were threats of beatings, killing, shooting. I was very scared at that time. I only found out later they were waiting for the money to transfer to their bank. They took me out one day, and I didn't know where we were going. I was in the back of a truck. When it stopped I saw my aunt looking in the window to check it was me. Only then did I know I was okay.

While crossing the border using such networks may be more likely to be successful, it is a situation over which individuals have no control, and comes with threats of death and violence. The experience of liminal spaces is also extended: the 'border zone' where Simba was a prisoner of the *malaitshas* extended from within Zimbabwe all the way to Johannesburg.

Crossing without an escort enables slightly more control over the situation, but is also difficult - firstly because there are many touts who may grow angry if a migrant declines their services, as seen below, and because the chances of being caught are much higher. *Malaitshas* have connections that individuals do not, and are often able to pay their way out of trouble – many interviews showed that bribery of the guards on both sides of the border is common. Thus although those who cross alone are not at the mercy of illegal organisations, many elements of the process are nevertheless beyond their control: taking more dangerous routes due to lack of knowledge or attempts to avoid running into border guards, or being turned in by South Africans upon arrival in border districts. Nelson (29) related:

I got to near the border with two friends. The *guma gumas* asked if we were crossing, but we said no as we didn't want them. We decided to walk to the border, but when we were still on the Zimbabwean side we were attacked by armed men. I recognised one from the taxi rank when the *guma gumas* were talking to us. We fought them, and managed to run away. We went to the river but it was too high, up to our necks, the first time we went in. It was so cold, and we

were scared of drowning. So we walked further, looking and looking for somewhere to cross. It was the rainy season so it was hard, but we finally found somewhere and swam across. We were scared of the crocodiles, but also it was something we just had to do. So then we were on the other side, in the game park, and now we were scared of the other animals, but we kept walking. We walked for four hours, and when we came to a road we waited to try to hitch a lift. A car stopped, and at first it was okay, but when we couldn't speak Venda they knew we were Zimbabwean. So they stopped the car and robbed us with knives, I thought then I was going to die. Then they dropped us at a police station. We couldn't lay a charge, we were illegal. So that was the first time I came; I was in South Africa for less than a day before I was deported. (Nelson, 29).

Border crossings place migrants within positions of extreme vulnerability, on both the Zimbabwean and South African sides. Additionally, interviews indicated that border crossings were gendered experiences. Simba's narrative, for example, reported that women and men were transported to the crossing point separately. Whilst all illegal immigrants are in a position of marginality, and there is a power imbalance between human traffickers and their 'customers', or border guards and undocumented migrants, both traffickers and guards are usually men and, as such, women are in a position of further marginality. Women's narratives often included gender based violence, with rape an all too common experience. Informants were deeply hesitant to speak about such experiences, and often broached the topic in roundabout ways, allowing silences rather than words to tell the story. As such, I feel that numbers express the realities of gender based violence in as effective a way as presenting these fractured narratives, which were imparted to me in such private settings that I feel it inappropriate to reproduce them here. Of the 12 women I interviewed who had crossed on foot, 4 had been raped, and 1 had experienced attempted rape between Zimbabwe and arrival in Cape Town. Ross (2005:101) has noted "the extraordinary power of violence in making social categories visible, and marking them in everyday practice": in this instance, the unequal power relations between men and women was clearly delineated by the different sorts of violation experienced by men and women when crossing the border. Women's willingness nevertheless to attempt such crossings is a further indication of their desperation in Zimbabwe.

Informants stories suggested that women were also more likely to fail in crossing the border. As these are people who did not succeed in crossing, the number of failed attempts is unknowable. Reasons given were often physical: “if a farmer finds you on his land and you run, the women will be caught first”, and sometimes, from the mouths of men, based on stereotyping: “you have to be very quiet crossing. Women aren’t good at that.” There were more men than women in my sample, which seemed to reflect the ratios I saw in daily life, but whether this is due to failed attempts at crossing or to fewer women than men setting out is hard to know.

‘Illegal immigrants’ are, by the very nature of the category, in a vulnerable position. I use the term illegal immigrant rather than undocumented migrant here in order to emphasise the beginnings of a new state-based categorization within South Africa: categories that were relevant in Zimbabwe begin to fall away upon crossing the border, to be replaced by the category of illegality (from the state’s point of view) and that of foreigner/*makwerekwere* (from one local South African point of view). I will be exploring positions of illegality in more depth below, but it is worth noting here that illegality becomes a reality with powerful consequences the minute one transgresses the border, a shift in political category that is not easily reconciled with such a small movement across space: as Simba reflected, “It was hard to realise that here, because you’d walked across some bush, you were now a criminal.”

What, then, can be said to constitute ‘the border’? On the one hand, it is a physical space, and one that differs for each migrant transgressing it, depending upon events and crossing places: it can be a river, a game reserve, a seemingly empty stretch of bush. All of these physical spaces hold threats and the possibilities of death or punishment, whether from the natural world (the power of the river to drown, the possibility of crocodiles or other animals) or from the socially constructed (the bush may seem empty, but could contain a border guard, or a farmer patrolling his fence.) These threats are opposed, however, to the (positively) imagined possibilities on the other side of the space. Prior to crossing, then, the border is also an imaginative construction, a line that symbolises the difference between the chaos of Zimbabwe and the perceived order of South Africa (see Chapter 4).

However, a border is also a political construction with real effects: as Alvarez (1995:449) notes of the Mexico-US border, but which applies equally to the line between Zimbabwe-South Africa, “Borderlands are both geographic regions and zones of political influence along lines drawn...during a colonial era” which “split and maintain territorial imperatives through nation-state politics, but at the same time regulate, constrict and allow a natural movement of people” (ibid:451). Although the social controls are hardly a ‘natural’ movement, the point that borders constitute physical and symbolic realities is well made. Borders, therefore, are spaces that are imbued with power and are thus also spaces of marginalisation for those who do not hold the power, or cannot access the space in a politically ‘appropriate’ manner⁵⁴. Gupta and Ferguson’s (1992:18) definition of the borderland is useful in this regard: “an interstitial zone of displacement and deterritorialization that shapes the identity of the hybridized subject”. The creation of politically delineated zones creates the conditions for people who cross them, to paraphrase Brysk and Shafir (2004), to be ‘out of place’ and, indeed, phrases such as ‘displacement’ and ‘deterritorialization’ carry with them the dangers of portraying people and places as culturally intertwined (see Malkki, 1995:408). In Gupta and Ferguson’s definition, the ‘hybridised subject’ is shaped by *political* constraints rather than supposedly cultural ones, such that this particular aspect of identity is relevant only within the political context. As Coutin (2000:40) notes, being an ‘illegal immigrant’ is not relevant to people’s experience all of the time: “On a day to day basis, their illegality may be irrelevant to most of their activities, only becoming an issue in certain contexts”.

Borders, however, are most certainly one of these contexts, as they are politicised spaces that open the possibility for forms of categorisation that have very real effects on people’s lives. De Genova (2002) thus argues that the category of ‘illegality’, rather than persons who are ‘illegal immigrants’, should be the epistemological object as this enables “a distinctly anthropological critique of nation-states and their immigration policies” rather than complying with “the discursive power of immigration law” (De Genova, 2002:423). Thus, while the undocumented migrants I discuss are by no means an homogenous group,

⁵⁴ Clearly, as people cross without access to the mechanisms of the state, they are also spaces of resistance, but it is resistance from a marginal position that can easily be over-ridden by the state if one is caught resisting.

the category of illegality has ‘the discursive power’ to position disparate individuals within the same category such that when illegality becomes a relevant criterion (such as in encounters with border guards), it becomes the *most* relevant criteria from the point of view of the state, and thus has real ramifications.

While what Alvarez (1995:447) has referred to as “an anthropology of borderlands” has been primarily concerned with people who live in close proximity to borders, and the theoretical body of knowledge around this topic draws mainly from the wealth of studies conducted on the Mexico-US border, there are useful similarities that can be drawn between this anthropological genre and the Zimbabwean-South African border. Firstly, in the Zimbabwean- South African context, what constitutes close proximity to the border? Physically, most migrants did not occupy literal border zones prior to movement, but came from areas all over Zimbabwe. Whilst there are, and always have been, ‘classic’ borderlanders amongst Zimbabwean migrants to South Africa, what I aim to document here is the shift that has occurred during the present crisis, such that migration is much more extensive than was the norm ten years ago, when cross-border trade was common, but illegal entry into South Africa on a more long term basis was not. If the idea of the borderland is moved from the literal to the metaphorical, however, Zimbabweans can all be said to be borderlanders, in that ideas of regional solidarity incorporate wide geographical regions into the framework of ‘neighbours’, due to regionalism with South Africa being called upon in this present crisis in ways that it was not in the past. This allows for a reading of borderlands as constituting *all* of Zimbabwe. The current disparity between South Africa and Zimbabwe in both economic *and* political terms has caused neighbourliness to be utilised in a way that was previously unnecessary.

Secondly, therefore, the geo-political and economic aspects of the anthropology of borderlands become useful here. Alvarez notes that economic disparities lie at the heart of interactions on the Mexico-US border, and are the driving force behind the circuitous social process of migration between the two states (see Heyman, 1991; Kearney, 1986). Zimbabwean migrants have referred to South Africa as ‘the America of Africa’ due to its economic success within the region and are influenced by the increased chances of

economic survival that South Africa offers. Any analysis of Zimbabwean migration to South Africa, therefore, has to take these economic factors into account. As I have shown in Chapter 3, however, informants are politically astute, and incorporate economic issues into the political realm, thus drawing notions of rights and violation into the economic framework. To return to Gupta and Ferguson's definition, then, the concept of the border also has at its heart 'zones of displacement': chances of economic success take place within a framework of marginalisation, such that Flynn (1997:311) has argued for the need to "centralize marginality in the border experience", a call the above ethnographic examples accentuate. This marginality goes beyond experiences on the actual (physical) border, and extends to categorization within South Africa, which has real economic effects and opens spaces for exploitation (see Chapter 6).

Borders are thus both real and imagined spaces; and borderlands can be said to stretch across immense physical distances. The border, as an epistemological unit, thus raises issues of politics, economics, marginality and identity. "Walking across some bush" is an act that goes far beyond the physical, and highlights the very real effects of the mechanisms of protection engendered by nation-states, causing a shift from heterogenous positions within Zimbabwe to the definitive (and deeply marginal) category of illegality.

The Ramifications of Political Boundaries and Illegality: Experiences of Deportation

The impact of being in a position of illegality can be near immediate, and even where it is not, an awareness of illegality becomes a backdrop to daily life. The primary repercussion of illegal migration is, of course, deportation. Data from fieldwork indicate that this was a fairly common experience, as can be seen in both Simba's and Nelson's narratives. Of the 50 migration histories I gathered, 14 male informants had been deported at least once, and two had been deported twice. Three female informants had been deported once, coming to a total of 21 deportations that affected 19 out of 50 people (see Appendix A). Data from the South African Department of Home Affairs shows a steady increase in deportations of undocumented migrants since 2000, with 145 575 people deported in 2000, and 266 067 deported in 2006 (Vigneswaran, 2008). As Vigneswaran (2008:1) goes on to note, however, "the futility of these policies in

This serves as a stark reminder that migration from Zimbabwe is essential to the maintenance of kin groups still 'at home', as discussed in Chapter 3. Being caught in a position of illegality, therefore, can have serious consequences, and the life or death reality of those consequences means that migrants do not accept their categorisation as illegal as legitimate. One day Simba said to me, "If I am here to prevent my family from starving, how am I different to someone here running away from imprisonment or torture by ZANU-PF? I am also running away from ZANU." Migrants thus hold that South Africa has a *moral* obligation to provide sanctuary, and maintain that, though they may be categorised as illegal, it is not due to any actions of their own, but rather due to inaction by the South African state. Significant amounts of time and resources were devoted to attempting to gain access to Home Affairs to begin the process of seeking asylum (see Chapter 6) in order to avoid illegality. "I am not a criminal," said Agnes, "even though they can arrest me if they catch me here. I know in my heart that I have done nothing wrong, I have done nothing that I am ashamed of before God. I may be illegal, but I am not a criminal." State laws pertaining to migration, therefore, are not coterminous with morality. Crossing borders may be an illegal act, but it is not an immoral one. In the eyes of Zimbabwean undocumented migrants, it is the South African state that is behaving in an immoral manner. As Jonah remarked, "I thought things were different here to in Zimbabwe. But you see Mbeki with Mugabe in the news. They are friends, those men. During the day they shout at each other, but at night they eat together."

Coping with Illegality through further movement

The move across borders thus placed informants within a new and very powerful category of illegality. Being positioned as illegal, however, did not mean that informants self identified as such. Nonetheless, informants were aware that viewing themselves as morally correct (in that crossing the border without documentation was seen as an act of displacement, not mobility) was largely irrelevant towards safeguarding against the dangers of being illegal. To stay safe, newly arrived migrants learnt that their best hope

was to camouflage themselves as rapidly as possible. Tapfuma, a 25 year old undocumented migrant who had been in South Africa for 15 months, related:

When I first came here I was in a small township just across from the border. We had been walking in the bush and were very thirsty. We went to a tap and drank some water. A man came to us and said, 'I know you are Zimbabwean because of how you cup your hands when you drink'. He was a good man, he didn't turn us in. He showed how to drink water to look like a South African. These are the things you have to learn here when you travel across the country, so that people think you are a South African traveller.

Camouflaging oneself when passing through places is easier, of course, than doing so when resident in an area for a longer period, as shown by the narrative of Vengai (28), who had once been deported from Johannesburg:

In Jo'burg it was very bad. I was with Zimbabweans and the first thing they said when I arrived was 'don't speak Shona in the street, if you speak Ndebele you can do that, it's like Xhosa. Don't walk this way, walk that way...they think this is how Zimbabweans walk. They can't know who you are, if they do, you're gone.' I couldn't quite believe it, but now of course we all know. It doesn't matter your history, here you are just *makwerekwere*. That is something you can't hide from your neighbour, unless you are Ndebele because then the language is almost right. If you anger your neighbour they will just call the police. And it's easy to anger someone when they think you are an animal.

Johannesburg was held as a dangerous place without documentation. Vengai further related that "If you want to stay there, the first thing you must do is get a fake ID. And you must change your name to a South African name, even before you get the papers." Informants reported that xenophobia there was much worse than that experienced in Cape Town, and that the chances of deportation were much higher: on the one hand because of the risk of neighbours turning you in, and on the other because the police were seen as far more concerned with illegal immigrants than their counterparts in Cape Town. Moses, a 27 year old Ndebele informant to whom I will return in the following chapter, reported that, "I started off in Jo'burg, but I failed there twice. In Jo'burg the police need money, and they look for foreigners, not criminals. They stop the taxi, say they're searching for guns but then ask for IDs. And then you must give them money or you are going to Lindela."

Movement to Cape Town was therefore strategic. Where originally South Africa as an entirety had been conceptualised as sympathetic to displacements caused by the Zimbabwean crisis, experiences in Johannesburg caused migrants to re-evaluate this. Cape Town came to be seen as a place where it was thought more likely that Home Affairs would grant asylum, and as a place where local South Africans would not turn you in. In the following chapter, which constitutes the last ethnographically based chapter of this dissertation, I turn to migrants' experiences in Cape Town, and the ways in which categorisation there affected the possibilities life offered.

University of Cape Town

6.

Experiencing Cape Town: Categorization and The Politics of Alienism

Together, Mr President, our peoples shed their blood for freedom. Together we reinforced one another during our difficult negotiations in both our countries. Today, at last, we can co-operate as free nations, pursuing the true interests of our people. Zimbabwe and South Africa not only share borders, we have strong cultural and historical connections as well.

Nelson Mandela in a public speech to Robert Mugabe, 1994.

I am honoured to stand before you today, men and women who have fought for their freedom; allies who shared the trenches of struggle with us; and partners in rebuilding our societies. South Africans are free today because the government and people of Zimbabwe considered their own freedom incomplete while their neighbours were still oppressed.

Nelson Mandela, addressing a rally in Masvingo, Zimbabwe, 1997.

The ties that bind us with Zimbabwe are many. But while we have much common history, our paths are very different. We must look at the distinctions as well as the parallels in order to work for solutions that will benefit our countries and our region... Calls for sanctions, to cut off aid are irresponsible. Such action will only result in more illegal immigrants.

Tony Yengeni, speech to National Assembly, 2001.

The people of Zimbabwe must decide their own future.

Thabo Mbeki, *Letter from the President*, 2003.

Political relations between states can be seen to play out at local levels. The first two quotes above, given by then-president of South Africa Nelson Mandela at a time when Zimbabwe was still in a stage of relative economic and political stability, echo Zimbabwean migrants' views on the shared history and commonalities between Zimbabweans and South Africans. The final two quotes, however, are more reflective of the realities Zimbabweans find when they enter the country, where the commonalities of the past are disregarded in light of imagined differences in national futures, and calls to regionality and outside assistance give way to statements of sovereignty and assertions of

the need for internal solutions. Further, Yengeni's quote shows a fear of mass movement from Zimbabwe to South Africa. This attitude has also been shown by the media, where the entrance of Zimbabweans into South Africa has been phrased in metaphors of inundation: for example, 'Zim Refugees Pour Into SA' (Independent Online 2006) and 'Zimbabwe Exodus Overwhelming SA' (Independent Online, 2006). State and media attitudes to the arrival of strangers are telling in an exploration of the politics of welcome, and show that the regionalism called upon by then-Deputy President Mbeki in his 'I am an African' speech ⁵⁶do not reflect the realities of sovereignty, and of state driven mechanisms of protection against this 'inundation'.

In this chapter, drawing on participant observation conducted in 2006 and 2007, I am concerned with Zimbabwean undocumented migrants' experiences in Cape Town, and thus with the politics of welcome and categorisation on both state and local levels. I aim here to document the extraordinary power of categorisation, and the ease with which particular categories are mobilised when dealing with 'the stranger'. Asylum seekers, leaving Zimbabwe with ideas of South Africans as 'struggle brothers', and with local ideas of how one treats strangers, quickly learn that they are perceived as outsiders, and that their notions of regionalism and commonality are disregarded in favour of notions of sovereignty and difference. An element of this process hinges upon the way in which migrants are categorised by South Africans: labels and categories such as *makwerekwere*, illegal immigrant, undocumented migrant, asylum seeker, refugee or simply 'Zimbabwean' all impact upon the ways in which Zimbabweans are able, or unable, to speak and act, and all ensure that Zimbabweans must speak and act across difference rather than through similarity. I argue that the conditions immigrants lived in in South Africa, and the difficulties they had in dealings with the state, contributed to a continuing sense of violation and marginalisation, such that the metaphor of suffering was still held to be as relevant to life as lived as it had been in Zimbabwe. Chenai, a 22 year old woman

⁵⁶ For example, "My mind and my knowledge of myself is formed by the victories that are the jewels in our African crown, the victories we earned from Isandhlwana to Khartoum, as Ethiopians and as the Ashanti of Ghana, as the Berbers of the desert"(Mbeki, 1996).

who had come to South Africa hoping for a better life, thus claimed, “When I came here and I saw how they ignored us or worse, then I knew that I was just born to suffer. Inside of Zimbabwe or out of it.”

First Steps in Cape Town

Informants found Cape Town to be a difficult place on a number of levels. The first action of most informants upon arrival in Cape Town was to seek an appointment with Home Affairs to apply for asylum, and in 2007 this was no easy task. For many undocumented migrants, therefore, their initial port of call and place of residence was a dusty patch outside the Home Affairs Refugee office in central Cape Town, where they slept in order to attempt to be near the beginning of the queue in the morning, and thus be one of the few accepted into the building before the doors were closed at 11 am. Over the course of two months I made ten visits to Home Affairs at night to count how many Zimbabweans were sleeping there: the average was 70, and at times as many as 85 undocumented Zimbabweans were present. Around twenty people a day were taken into the Home Affairs building, making being near the beginning of the queue essential if one was to gain access to the mechanisms of the state.

Zimbabweans were not alone in sleeping outside the building, with Malawian, Tanzanian and Congolese migrants being the most common nationalities attempting to gain legal access to South Africa alongside my informants. Though conversations occurred between different nationalities during the day, and some relationships were formed, at night it was a different situation, with national identities coming to the fore in the selection and allocation of sleeping space. Zimbabweans slept in a dusty corridor between the wall of Home Affairs and a fence that ran alongside a road leading to Cape Town Harbour, with other nationalities in clearly delineated spaces elsewhere. No one space was any more comfortable than another, nor closer to the gate of Home Affairs, and informants did not know when this informal segregation of sleeping space had begun, saying only that, “It was like this when I got here, this is just where we sleep.” Stereotypes of the ‘other’ foreigners were utilised as explanations for the demarcation of space: “The Malawians

will rob us if they are near us at night”, for example⁵⁷. Positioning within particular categories based on nationality was thus relevant from the point of arrival in Cape Town, and ordered relationships and physical positioning.

Informants woke at around 4 am, and moved less than a hundred metres away, through the car park to wait by the closed gate that represented the formal boundary of the Home Affairs property. Conditions were generally calm until the gate was opened by a guard at 6 am, when a great rush down the further 100 metres to the entrance would begin. Much jostling occurred, and men rather than women were usually the first at the office door. National delineations were also relevant in the queue, where Zimbabweans, as the greatest number present, were in a slightly less marginal position than others, allowing (Zimbabwean) friends into the queue ahead of other immigrants. After movement to the office door came another hiatus whilst waiting for the doors to open, which was supposed to happen at 8 am but often did not. In terms of informal structures within the queuing process, therefore, gender and nationality were relevant to attempts to gain access to the state. Both formal and informal state structures could override this however, with Home Affairs officials sometimes bringing women to the front of the queue, an action that did not reflect an official mandate but rather a personal awareness of the difficulty of women’s positions; or announcing that they were only processing a certain nationality on a particular day. Initially, this information was seldom released beforehand, so that those of the ‘wrong’ nationality would be angered and disappointed at the 4 or 5 hours they had wasted trying to get to the office door. In late 2007, however, specific days were set aside for specific nationalities each week.

‘Gaining access’ to the legal mechanisms of the South African state is therefore not a metaphor, but a reflection of a physical reality marked by the boundaries of gates and doors, which only a very few ever actually passed. Chronic understaffing seemed to be the core reason for such limited access to Home Affairs, and individual staff members did attempt to alleviate problems. Corruption, however, also seemed to be rife, with all informants certain that for a ‘fee’ of R 1000 they would be able to get their asylum

⁵⁷ Zimbabweans expectations of regionalism are therefore not as pure as they themselves claim.

stemming the flow of migrants has been widely acknowledged.” A small illustration of this can be seen in the fact that my interviews took place in Cape Town: though many informants had been deported at least once, they had returned, making their way further into South Africa to Cape Town, where they were resident at the time of my fieldwork. This is telling in a number of regards: firstly, as shown above, crossing the border is often a traumatic experience. A willingness to undergo the experience more than once serves as an indicator of the difficulty of life in Zimbabwe. Secondly, deportations, and re-entry into the country, are expensive, both for the South Africa state and for migrants (who often have to pay to make their way across the border again). The activist organisation with which I worked in Cape Town maintained that deportation was a waste of resources on both these levels as, in the words of the head of the organisation, “It’s obvious that people will come back when you consider the alternative. South Africa is wasting money it could be spending on sorting out Home Affairs so that people are able to at least get an appointment to apply for asylum.”

The real effects of being illegal can be felt very soon upon arrival in South Africa: of the 19 migrants who had previously been deported, seven had lasted less than one week in South Africa, and geographically reached no further than Limpopo province. The realities of South Africa (as opposed to idealised expectations) thus become apparent very quickly; but this may not mean an immediate re-appraisal of the idea of South Africa as morally just. An imagined wider South African justice may be opposed to the behaviour of particular groups of people, and can be seen in the following extract from an interview with Freddy, a 27 year old undocumented migrant, to be predicated upon notions of racial solidarity:

The farmer who caught me that first time was white. He gave me to policemen who were white. I thought, it’s just that why they are so cruel. We know about whites in South Africa, they’re not like whites at home. I thought if I can get to a place with South Africans who have also suffered under a bad ruler, they will understand.

Some informants made it as far as Johannesburg before being deported. Informants who were deported close to the border generally spent very little time in holding cells before

seeking papers. For most undocumented migrants, this was an unimaginable amount, as almost all resources had been spent in getting to Cape Town. Entrance to the building thus came to seem almost impossible. Maud, a 55 year old woman from Mashonaland province in Zimbabwe, said, “I have been here for two weeks now, and at night I dream about what that building actually look like inside. I have no idea, I don’t think I ever will, but all I want is to get inside it.” When I returned two days later, I was told Maud was gone, having left in despair. Initial experiences at Home Affairs thus ensured that being an undocumented migrant was an embodied experience, marked by hunger, by aching muscles from sleeping on the ground, and by the bodily frustration of periods of intense struggle to get ahead of others, followed by enforced stillness and waiting. After the doors were closed for the day and people knew they had not succeeded, the crowd would begin to disperse, with some waiting for the entire day in the hopes that the door would be opened again, and others setting off into central Cape Town to try to hawk goods. For some, however, the money to do this had run out, and the rest of the day would consist of waiting until night, when a man who preached on trains during the day would use the money he had made to bring food to the people outside Home Affairs. He explained his actions as being prompted by his own previous experience as a refugee, and an unwillingness “to see people degraded in this way.” This informal act of kindness from one man was for a time the only lifeline for many undocumented migrants. In mid-2007, the activist organisation with which I worked began bringing food on a nightly basis, and further external (non-state based) support began after the story of Adonis Musati, a Zimbabwean undocumented migrant who starved to death while waiting outside Home Affairs, hit the media.

For most, attempts to gain legal access to the state⁵⁸ via Home Affairs were unsuccessful. Of the 50 migrants I interviewed, only eight had managed to procure an appointment at Home Affairs⁵⁹. For these eight, interactions with bureaucracy were often frustrating, as I will discuss below. First, though, I wish to follow the stories of those who did not gain access, showing the experiences of the undocumented once they moved away from Home

⁵⁸ Many had of course already ‘gained access’ to the state via being caught and deported.

⁵⁹ Remembering that fieldwork took place in 2007. Following xenophobic violence in 2008, the situation at Home Affairs has improved, and many more asylum applications are being processed.

Affairs into the townships of Cape Town. When ‘living’ at Home Affairs became unsustainable, migrants moved to one of the many townships on the periphery of Cape Town. Migrants utilised networks to find places to stay, with 19 drawing upon the recommendations of family members and friends for which areas to try, and three drawing upon advice from people they had met in the queue outside Home Affairs. 28 informants (over half the sample) moved in with someone they knew who had already set up a place to live in Cape Town.

The following ethnography is drawn from observation and interviews with 50 migrants in Cape Town, forty-two of whom were undocumented migrants, seven of whom had asylum seeker documents, and one of whom had refugee status. The table below shows the family situation of those 50 migrants, drawn from the large data table in Appendix A.

Table 5: Family situation of informants

	No. of informants married, with:		No. of informants single	No. with spouse deceased	No. of informants with children needing support:	
	Spouse in Cape Town	Spouse in Zimbabwe			In Zim	In CT
Men (N= 33)	7	12	9	5	22	1
Women (N=17)	4	4	4	5	10	2
Both (N=50)	11	16	13	10	33	2

Living in Cape Town: The Undocumented Migrant and the Post-Apartheid City

“I was shocked when I saw how things were here. You don’t imagine South Africa as looking like this. These townships are bigger than anything I have seen.” So said Daniel, a visiting student from the University of Zimbabwe, when I took him to visit a group of Zimbabweans resident in Khayelitsha. On entering a shack where seven Zimbabwean men shared a single room with a collapsing roof and holes in the walls, through which the wind whistled and the rain dripped, he went on to comment, “at home we don’t know

people are living like this here. Our people [ie Zimbabweans in Cape Town] are living like animals. Some of the South Africans in these townships have it better, but not all of them. This is a very frightening city.”

Daniel’s comment raises an issue that is unavoidable in an examination of immigration to South Africa. The experiences of Zimbabwean undocumented migrants in Cape Town are of course complicated by the realities of structural violence in South Africa, in that immigrants often move into communities that are already marginalised and situated within the “racialised economic geographies” (de Swart and Theron, 2004:107) which characterised the apartheid city, and which characterise the post-apartheid city today. In these areas situated in the geographic periphery of the city, poverty is a reality for most inhabitants: the Cape Town African Urban Poor (CTAUP) study, conducted in 2004, showed 70% of a randomly selected 624 households in Khayelitsha and Greater Nyanga to have been “excluded from access to sufficient food during the previous year” (de Swart and Theron, 2004:111). The majority of undocumented migrants with whom I worked lived in Khayelitsha, Masimpumelele, Nyanga, Phillipi and Du Noon, all of which are areas of poverty and inadequate housing and infrastructure. The areas that receive undocumented migrants, therefore, are already under considerable strain, with entirely inadequate resources to absorb the constant flow of foreign settlers, and settlers from rural regions of South Africa. A context such as this is one in which xenophobia thrives, and is thus the impetus for the ease with which the categorisation of foreigners is mobilised.

As McCarney (1996:11) has noted, “in most Third World cities, the bulk of housing, transportation, employment and trade takes place outside of formal institutions.” Undocumented migrants thus find it quite possible to situate themselves outside of the formal economy when arranging living spaces, and this of course opens room for exploitation, as described by Anna (27), who had moved to Cape Town with her husband to provide money for their two children who remained in Zimbabwe with extended family:

When we first came here, we waited by Home Affairs for a while, but it was clear we would never be at the front of the queue. After some days we went to Khayelitsha, following the advice of a woman in the queue who gave us a phone number. We thought we would try find a place and then come back to Home Affairs. So we found a small room next to a shebeen, it is horrible because you can hear the men and women...you know. So we are living next door to prostitutes, and when I go to get water I make my husband come with me or else the men hassle me. And now we find out they are charging us much more than we should pay, but because we are foreigners we can't do anything. I go most days to wait by Home Affairs, but I haven't got an appointment yet so there's no way we can get papers. And *makwerekwere* pay more in Khayelitsha...that's just the way it is.

Lack of access to documentation makes for an extremely marginalised position, and one that is accentuated by being not only illegal, but *makwerekwere*⁶⁰. Classification as *makwerekwere* was almost immediate for migrants upon arrival in the townships and though various methods were utilised to escape detection as a foreigner as described in the previous chapter, this is not a ploy that can work for long.

At this stage, then, national identities become, on the one hand, extremely relevant, and on the other are subsumed by the generalised category of foreigner or *makwerekwere*. National identity becomes relevant in the mobilisation of Zimbabwean communities which act as a safeguard against exploitation, and as an economic safeguard where resources can be pooled. In this, ethnic identities may fall away. For example, in mid 2007, I attended a *dara* (a Shona term for meeting) in Phillipi after a Zimbabwean woman, Lucia, had died of TB. Conventionally, only men attend the *dara*, but as I had been involved in transporting the woman to the clinic before her death, and as my position as anthropologist was one that was respected and, to my discomfort, transgressed gender boundaries, I was invited to attend. The topic was the transportation of Lucia's body back to Zimbabwe, which was discussed by approximately 30 men, most of whom were Shona, with Lucia's husband John nominally in charge, and their children in another room. John explained his financial situation, and where in Zimbabwe Lucia's body needed to be transported, before handing over to a man who had been involved in

⁶⁰ *Makwerekwere* is a derogatory term used against foreigners, drawn from foreigners speaking languages that cannot be understood and just sound like gibberish, *makwerekwere*.

the transportation of a body before, who knew the complications and could give an estimate of the cost: around R 14 000. A discussion ensued over whether community members were to be informed that they all must put in as much as they could afford, or whether a minimum amount would be set. Eventually, it was decided on a minimum of R 50 per person, but not before a young Ndebele man had argued for the impossibility of some people paying. The reply to this was an angry, “We are all Zimbabweans here. This could happen to any of us, imagine it is you and you gave no money today. Then you will not get home.” The young man put R50 into the hat that was passed around. With the assistance of every Zimbabwean migrant in that region of Phillipi, Shona and Ndebele; donations from myself and a representative of an activist organisation; the sale of John’s television, bed and small fridge in Cape Town, and his goats in Zimbabwe, Lucia’s body was moved to Zimbabwe for burial⁶¹.

In some instances, then, national identity was extremely pertinent. In relations with neighbours, however, being Zimbabwean often became subsumed by categorisation as *makwerekwere*. Informants who had passed through Johannesburg emphasised that the situation was better in Cape Town, but nonetheless, informants were aware of their tenuous position, and the ways in which being *makwerekwere* could very suddenly become relevant. “I speak to no one in the street when I walk home from the taxi rank,” said Moses, who worked as a bartender in a prestigious suburb of Cape Town and lived with his wife in Khayelitsha, “and my wife hardly leaves the room during the day. We only go to church, because there we are all Christians, not foreigners or South Africans. But even those people – on Sunday you can be worshipping God together, and on Monday when you go to the shop, they insult your wife and call you *makwerekwere*.” The insecurity of being positioned as outsider resulted in a great deal of fear, even prior to the xenophobic attacks of 2008. Moses, for example, would not bring his children to Cape Town, preferring to leave them with kin in Zimbabwe as he was too frightened of what might happen to them because they were foreign. “It is better,” he said, “for them to

⁶¹ Preferred place of burial has been used as an empirical measure of people’s attachment to South Africa, and their desire to stay permanently (see McDonald et al, SAMP, 1997). Very few of the Zimbabweans with whom I worked wished to stay here permanently, and all emphasized that, in Jonah’s words, “if I am unfortunate enough to die here, I do not wish to rest here forever. My spirit could not rest here.”

starve at home with their grandmother than it would be for them to come here. They would be killed when they walk home from school. They would probably be killed *at* school.” Positioning as *makwerekwere* curtails people’s movements: streets are unsafe places, not to be walked along alone. This in turn makes national identity again relevant, as Zimbabweans try to walk in groups together. Being *makwerekwere* thus results in an embodiment of fear: “Here, you are like a bird,” said Moses, “your heart flutters all the time.”

Being categorised as *makwerekwere* has, at times, the additional ironic effect of making Zimbabwean ethnic positioning relevant. There was a perception amongst Shona informants that Ndebele Zimbabweans could ‘pass’ as Xhosa⁶², because the languages are similar. At times this resulted in anger, and feelings of persecution on the part of Ndebele informants. Michael was robbed one night in his shack in Fishhoek Site 5/Masimpumelele. He fought with the robber, who bit Michael’s thumb, and swore at him in Shona. “He would not have robbed another Shona,” said Michael, “it was because he saw that I was selling my beadwork by the Xhosa sellers, who have the best spot in Fishhoek.” As a result of the bite, Michael’s thumb became infected, eventually having to be amputated. He is now no longer able to make the beaded goods that he used to sell. Ndebele informants, though at times able to utilise their advantage in language, did not seem to feel any safer than did Shona informants. Moses, for example, was Ndebele.

Expectations of South Africans as being understanding of movement, and open to acknowledging past suffering, were therefore erroneous, as being *makwerekwere* ensured that the specifics of past experiences were not as relevant as was being foreign. Obviously, this was not the case in every interaction with every South African: Sheila, for example, had developed a good relationship with her South African neighbours, who cared for her children when she was looking for work; and some informants had developed intimate relationships with the South Africans amongst whom they lived.

⁶² I find an absurd irony in the phrasing used by Zimbabweans here, which brings to mind the horrors of Apartheid, and attempts to ‘pass’ as preferred racial categorizations. While South Africans no longer need to do this, and the categories are no longer legally formalized, foreigners attempt to ‘pass’ as South African within a new *informal* hierarchy of categorization.

Sichone (2008) has noted how South African women open spaces of welcome for foreigners in ways that men do not, and that these positive experiences are often disregarded in the literature on the experiences of foreigners in South Africa. Whilst this is true, it is also important to note that these personal relationships do not influence the everyday fear of being *makwerekwere*, in that it is possible to be identified as foreign by strangers, whose attitude to foreigners one cannot know. Thus, whilst it was possible to create and maintain relationships with individual South Africans, informants still feared everyday activities such as walking down streets in townships and travelling in taxis. The outbreak of xenophobic violence in Cape Town in 2008⁶³ showed the validity of this fear. When I drove into Khayelitsha during the violence to pick up Anna, an informant who had become a friend and who was being sheltered at a police station, school children lined the entrance to the police station, jeering and spitting at us as we carried Anna's belongings to the car. At that point, being *makwerekwere* was the *only* relevant criterion, and was not influenced by the protection of neighbours whom Anna had befriended.

Finding Work

In order to maintain households in Zimbabwe, it was essential for migrants to find work as soon as possible. An initial stint at Home Affairs showed informants' desire to work legally, and thus be protected from deportation and exploitation. For most, in 2007, this was unsuccessful. Informants thus had to find work without papers, and therefore engaged mainly in peripheral, informal economic activities. This type of work, by its very nature, is unreliable, and monthly incomes extremely variable. The main sorts of work done by undocumented informants can be split into the semi-formal, such as domestic work or work for building contractors or restaurants, and the entirely informal, such as selling goods on the side of the road. Male informants who had employment within businesses were mainly employed as construction labour, or as waiters or kitchen staff in restaurants and bars across Cape Town. Female informants, on the other hand, mainly found more formal employment as domestic workers in private homes. (see Appendix A)

⁶³ This occurred after I had formally left the field, and as such does not constitute a central element of analysis in this particular piece of work, though it is something I wish to follow in further research. It seems pertinent to mention briefly here, however, as informants' fears existed long before such tangible evidence of their validity.

Though more formalised than hawking goods, these semi-formal types of employment were also unreliable, and a lack of papers ensured that migrants had no recourse should an employer not pay them. Most migrants employed as builders or domestic workers did not have daily employment, but were called upon when they were needed. Employment in restaurants and bars ensured a more reliable source of income, though basic incomes were very low and migrants mainly relied upon tips.

Work in this semi-formalised sector, however, was not possible for many informants, both male and female, who tried to 'get by' through selling goods on the street. At times, informants who did this earned less than R 200 a week, and had to rely on loans from others to pay for rent and food. "Those months are the hardest," said Samuel, "not just because you are hungry, but because you know you are sending nothing home where they are even hungrier. You know they think you are eating money here and forgetting about them, because they do not know how hard it is to find work here." For most, then, whether within the semi-formal or the informal sector, budgeting was a near impossibility, though as one informant commented, "We haven't been able to budget in Zimbabwe for nearly ten years because of inflation, so we know how to live on the edge." This edge or margin was greatly exacerbated by the need to send money or food back to Zimbabwe; and informants often went without food themselves in order to be able to send even a little money home. Of the 50 migrants I interviewed, only three were not sending money to Zimbabwe on a regular basis, and two of these were due to lack of resources. The 47 migrants who were sending money to Zimbabwe sent an average of R162 per month. Being undocumented also meant that informants did not have access to bank accounts: transfers of money back to Zimbabwe were therefore convoluted and extra-legal activities, which always involved additional 'fees' so that the money one had saved to send home was much greater than the amount that actually arrived there⁶⁴.

The prevalence of Zimbabweans in particular industries was commented upon by informants: Simba, for example, frivolously noted, "I don't think South Africa would be

⁶⁴ Due to the illegal nature of these transactions (in both Zimbabwe and South Africa) I do not wish to divulge the details of how money is moved.

building anything if there wasn't a crisis in Zimbabwe. It's lucky for them that we are suffering at home, because now they can build houses and stadiums very cheaply." Jokes aside, Zimbabwe has become a source of cheap labour to South Africa. I find disturbing similarities between this regional situation, and Wolpe's 1972 analysis of the role of the 'Bantustans' (previously Native Reserves) in apartheid South Africa. Wolpe argued that in pre-Apartheid South Africa, segregation policies as laid down in the Natives Land Act 27/1913, which effectively placed 'Natives' in Reserves, relied upon the continuation of pre-capitalist modes of production in the Reserves as this ensured a supply of cheap migrant labour to industry. This was possible as people in the reserves *carried the costs of reproducing the labour force*, and so owners of industry needed only to pay subsistence wages for the individual worker and wages could thus be kept low. Though both increased urbanization of the 'native' population and increased population pressures in the Reserves meant that this situation became unsustainable, the response of the Nationalist Party, which came into power in 1948, was to shift from previous policies of segregation to the more extreme policies of Apartheid, in order "to assert control over African and other non-white people by whatever means were necessary." (Wolpe, 1972:80) and thus continue placing the burden of social reproduction upon the Reserves. Though not as formally controlled, I cannot help but see similarities between this situation and the labour force of Zimbabweans who are resident in South Africa today.

As De Genova (2003:437) has noted of Mexican undocumented immigrants to the United States, "narratives are commonly punctuated by accounts of life in the United States that are distinguished by arduous travail and abundant exploitation." Categories of illegality have definitive effects upon life, particularly in terms of labour exploitation. De Genova (ibid: 439-440) thus argues that "the category "illegal alien" is a profoundly useful and profitable one that effectively serves to create and sustain a legally vulnerable – and hence, relatively tractable and thus "cheap" – reserve of labor." Within the capitalist system, undocumented migrants thus fulfil a particular role. Zimbabwean migrants thus devote much time and resources to attempts to move out of this category.

Speaking to the State: Rights Discourses as a means of resisting illegality

Conversations with the South African state take different forms: they occur through interactions with police, interactions with officials in places like Lindela, formal interviews with Home Affairs officials, or, from a more removed position, through activist protest against the state's response to migration. As shown in Chapter 5, interactions with police and interactions within Lindela do not leave much room for negotiation or for discourses of rights to be invoked as a means of defence; and arrest and detention invariably result in deportation. Here, however, I wish to explore formal interviews with Home Affairs officials and activist protests against the state, as they allow a little more room for manoeuvre, though this too is constrained by power relations, particularly in terms of official acts of asylum seeking.

Narrating Violation to the State: Speech and Asylum Seeking

In the preceding chapters, I explored people's hopes of what would occur were they able to gain an appointment at Home Affairs, expectations that drew upon a perceived solidarity between Zimbabwe and South Africa based on a shared history, and a perceived sense of South Africa as a morally just state - "I thought if I could just get to Home Affairs, if I could just tell them my story, they would allow me to stay here", as one informant put it. The only way past state gatekeepers is thus through narrative, itself problematic as the state needs to verify the 'truth' of asylum seekers stories. The notion of telling stories of past violation ties into migrants' asserted desire "to talk of these things so that in South Africa they can know how we suffer here" (see Chapter 4).

Ways of speaking to the state, however, are more constrained in reality than migrants had imagined, and do not necessarily result in the legitimisation of experiences of violation that migrants expected. Firstly, the pool of data from which I draw examples of interactions with the state while seeking asylum is very small, as only eight informants ever reached the point of actually having an official asylum seeking interview. Their experiences therefore may not be representative, but the scarcity is important as it shows

the difficulty undocumented migrants had in accessing the state in 2007.⁶⁵ Secondly, the initial official interaction with Home Affairs constitutes a largely perfunctory interview, where a simple form is filled in after questioning, and asylum seeking papers, which are valid for one year, are usually granted. The fact that the interview is so superficial, however, means that there is little space for the legitimisation of experiences that migrants expected, and little to no space for fully narrating a history of perceived violation. Finally, however, as the case studies below illustrate, only narratives that incorporate particular experiences are held as valid *in the long term* (beyond the first perfunctory interview) – generally, those that show violations against first generation rights, which are concerned with political freedom and the basic security of individuals (see Robertson, 2006). Being granted asylum seeking papers was therefore seen, by the very few informants who managed to access them, as a temporary reprieve against illegality, and not an assurance of a legitimate future in South Africa.

Let us return, then, to the case study of Sekai, whose moves within Zimbabwe I have explored in Chapters 3 and 4. Her final move to South Africa occurred because she could not support herself in Harare, and could not return to the rural areas. Using the criteria discussed in Chapter 4, I therefore would categorise Sekai as displaced rather than as economically mobile: unlike the category of illegality, displacement was one that Sekai was eager to embrace. Prior to going to Home Affairs, Sekai said that she had expected to be able to tell the state “how my human rights were taken away from me in Zimbabwe”. Rights discourses were seen as a way of legitimising residence in South Africa, and were thus utilised as a means of resistance to being categorised as illegal (remembering, of course, that being ‘illegal’ was seen by informants as an external categorisation, and did not equate with any personal immorality). Sekai’s migration history, as recounted to me over a long period of interaction, incorporated two incidences of violation of first

⁶⁵ Informal conversations with informants in 2008 indicate that the situation has improved somewhat, perhaps as a result of undocumented migrants’ protests against the inaccessibility of the state, but also certainly as a result of the xenophobic violence that occurred in 2008, which put Home Affairs firmly in the eye of the national and international media.

generation rights⁶⁶, the first occurring at the time of Murambatsvina, and the second when she fled the rural areas after the murder of her husband for his suspected political affiliation. When being interviewed by Home Affairs in Cape Town, however, the emphasis of the questions, she said, was directed to a period of time just before she left Zimbabwe. Murambatsvina had happened nine months prior to this, and so she did not tell the Home Affairs officials about this as “they didn’t ask. They only wanted to know about just before I came. They gave me the asylum papers, but then said I’m just an economic migrant so I shouldn’t expect to become a refugee.” The experiences she had in Harare that she was able to briefly describe were concerned with structural violence, and her movement was thus perceived as prompted by a desire for economic mobility. Sekai’s expectations of spaces for public acknowledgement of violation, through the granting of legal documentation, were thus, in interaction with the South African state, shown to be invalid. Power dynamics obviously come into play in this instance: Sekai did not feel she was in a position to offer the elements of her story that she thought were important, but only to answer the questions asked. The issue of time thus becomes central – events that occurred in the more distant past can easily be overlooked as questions in the first interview in the process of seeking asylum are directed toward the immediate past. In the case of Zimbabwean migration to South Africa, this is deeply problematic, as repeated movement within Zimbabwe had often occurred before the border was crossed and so a great deal of time had usually passed since an incident of ‘valid’ (political rather than structural) violence had occurred.

Although Sekai was issued with asylum seeker papers, she was very afraid of her next visit to Home Affairs to determine whether or not she could be given refugee status, as the Home Affairs official had told her that she would be perceived as an economic migrant. As Merry has noted, one dimension of anthropological research in areas of violence and justice is “the slippage between the role of activist and scholar and the impossibility of separating them.”(Merry, 2005:243). I advised Sekai to emphasise her experiences of Murambatsvina and political violence in the rural areas when speaking to

⁶⁶ First generation rights first generation rights, which came about as a result of the atrocities of World war II are mainly concerned with political rights, and the basic security of persons (Messer 1993; Robertson, 2006).

Home Affairs again, thus playing into the field of legal rights discourse that determines that experiences be told in very particular ways to particular audiences, which tend to focus on 'the event' of violation. Sekai was still waiting for her second appointment when I left the field.

Experiences of forced removal and/or political violence within Zimbabwe, be it through Murambatsvina, farm invasions or any other means, thus form an ambiguous territory where status within South Africa rests upon the ways in which stories are told. It is a territory, however, where there is at least a *possibility* of being granted the right to stay in South Africa until it is safe to return to Zimbabwe, as the story contains an event or series of events that can be held to put the person's life at risk were they to return. For many migrants, however, experiences that they took to constitute endangering survival were not accepted as such by the South African state.

Sekai's narrative, had she been able to recount those parts of it that she felt were central, thus contained elements that could be held as legitimate reasons for coming to South Africa. Other migrants, however, found that the notion of violation that they drew upon was not accepted as valid. For example, in instances where migration occurred due to sustained unemployment, which in the context of Zimbabwe is a short step away from potential starvation, movement to South Africa was taken to be voluntary, and continued residence in Zimbabwe was not seen as hazardous enough to legitimate asylum. Jonah, whose case study I recounted in Chapter 4 within the context of categorisation as Ndebele, had also, after much time and effort, been granted an initial interview at Home Affairs. Though Jonah believed that his presence in South Africa was absolutely essential to the livelihood of his family in Gwanda, his reasons for movement were entirely based upon experiences of structural violence and marginalisation within Matabeleland. Jonah was granted asylum for one year, but told that there was very little chance that this would be extended. "It is not enough that we are starving," he said, "it seems you have to be beaten too for you to be able to stay here." Jonah did not actively seek a follow up appointment at Home Affairs, and his asylum seeking documents have since expired. "I know there's no way for me to be legal here now," he said, "so I must just hide." Thus

far, Jonah has not had any interactions with the police, and is still living illegally in South Africa. “What else must I do?” he said, “I’m not going home unless they send me, because if I’m there, who will feed my mother?”

It is in the context of stories such as these that the rupture between expectations of South African solidarity and the reality upon arrival becomes most obvious. Scott (1998), in his analysis of state structures and institutions, argues that the state is only able to perceive people within the bounds of the categories it has created, and that, due to the constraints of the system, bureaucrats are not able to recognise anything outside these closely specified boundaries. As Kihato (2004:280) phrases it, “anything not in the required format cannot be understood by the state.” Stories of structural violation do not fall within the ‘required format’, and so cannot be heard at an official level.

Speaking from a Distance: Activism as a means of interacting with the state

The above examples outline the sorts of difficulties migrants have when they manage to gain access to the mechanisms of the state. I opened this chapter, however, with a discussion of the difficulty of even getting through the door of the Home Affairs building. What recourse is there where undocumented migrants *cannot* narrate their experiences to the South African state? And, indeed, where they have, like Jonah, told their stories and been told they are not acceptable for refugee status? In instances such as these, some informants turned to activism through public protest, invoking international discourses of human rights to speak to the state from a distance about both violations in Zimbabwe, and marginalisation within South Africa.

“What about human rights?” was emblazoned across one banner in red paint, held up outside the Home Affairs refugee centre at a protest organised by the activist group that I spent some time with in the field. This group, started by a Zimbabwean who was legally in South Africa, aimed to bring attention “to the inefficiency and corruption of South African Home Affairs” and to, “conditions within Zimbabwe that are disregarded in South Africa”, in the words of the leader. Activists spoke to the state from a distance, through press releases outlining conditions in Zimbabwe and at Home Affairs, and

through protests at the Home Affairs building. The undocumented migrants who had aligned with this activist group wrote into pamphlets and press releases, that “life in Zimbabwe is a human rights violation”, drawing upon ideas of structural violence as constituting a form of violence that should be recognised as valid by the South African state. This, however, is a message that cannot be told to the state by individuals, and activism constituted a different way of speaking, that both opened and closed spaces for migrants to tell their stories.

On the one hand, public protests opened spaces of *communitas* that were psychologically important to migrants: “When we are all together here,” said one informant at a protest, “you know you are not alone, and you know that what you are doing is right”.⁶⁷ Though protests invoked images of unpleasant pasts and presents (with banners painted with the statistics of deaths in Zimbabwe, which all migrants present were able to relate to a personal experience of grief; or emblazoned with ‘Remember Adonis Musati’, an undocumented migrant who starved to death outside Home Affairs), the mood was generally one of happiness. On one occasion I took a South African friend with me to a protest; midway through she turned to me and said, “People are so happy, yet they’re speaking of such terrible things.” Public protests, though drawing on tales of deeply felt violation, invoked optimism because they created a sense of community that was able to speak, loudly, to the South African state about things which the South African state would not otherwise hear. Undocumented migrants who had not previously been involved in activism, but who were present at Home Affairs attempting to gain access, were drawn into the protests, which provided a space to speak back to the officials at the door of the building they had not yet been able to enter. “Today you will listen!” one protester shouted, “today you will learn why we are queueing outside your doors!”

Speech through activism is of course not directed solely at the state, but also at an imagined general ‘South Africa’ through the media, be it in terms of press releases or through journalists covering public protests. “We are here to tell South Africa why it is we had to come to your country,” one activist told a journalist. “We are not bad people,

⁶⁷ Again, rights discourses drew upon notions of moral rights versus wrongs.

we are not criminals; we are just people who have suffered. Please explain to your people how we have suffered, how we are suffering still.” In addition to speaking as a group to the state, undocumented migrants used public protests as a means of telling individual stories to journalists. At protests, where many people were present, always including some migrants I did not know, I was often mistaken for a journalist. Undocumented migrants would crowd around me as they crowded around the other journalists, eager for spaces to disseminate their narratives in ways that were not possible in day to day life. Hearing I was not a journalist, some people would lose interest; others stayed to talk, using academia as an outlet to a different audience.

At other times, migrants whom I knew tried to speak to journalists through me. One informant, who had been talking to a journalist for a while, grew frustrated that he was not taking notes. “Speak to this lady,” he said, gesturing to me, “she works closely with us, and she listens to what we have to say. If you do not believe me because I am an undocumented migrant, believe her. We *must* be here.” This statement speaks to the marginalisation undocumented migrants felt: at a public forum designed to facilitate a space for *migrants’* voices, he deferred to me, a white anthropologist with the correct legal documentation. This brings us to the limitations of this means of speaking to the state and to the imagined South African public: speaking loudly does not mean that the state or media will, or can, *hear* in the ways that migrants would like them to. I opened this study with an excerpt from a protest I attended in 2007, where an undocumented migrant attempted to speak to a journalist, who showed no interest in his stories of structural violence, and emphasised that he had suffered, when the man was speaking of suffering. When the paper came out the next day, the story published gave quotes from undocumented migrants which focused on events of physical violation in Zimbabwe. The man’s emphasis on continued suffering was not included. Tsing, in her 2005 ethnography *Friction: An Ethnography of Global Connection*, writes of “the interactions I call “friction”: the awkward, unequal, unstable and creative qualities of interconnection across difference” (Tsing, 2005: 4), the “zones of awkward engagement where words mean something different across a divide, even where people agree to speak.” (ibid: xi). The journalist’s emphasis on ‘suffered’, and Simba’s assertion that ‘we are suffering’

emphasises the disjuncture between undocumented migrants' ideas of violation, and those of South Africans. The daily experience of hunger, of poverty, of lack of access to water or to electricity: in other words, the constant indignities and quiet brutalities caused by structural violence in Zimbabwe, constitute a form of suffering that does not 'sell'. This is unsurprising: it is a story that is not specific to being Zimbabwean, one that could be told by a multitude of South Africans. Stories of this sort, those that do not fit into a mode of spectacular violence, have been told so many times in South Africa that they can no longer be heard.

In the space of the public, therefore, migrants may be able to formulate narratives in ways that they believe adequately fit reality, but this reality is not heard. Spaces for public acknowledgement (and thus spaces for solidarity) open only around tales of spectacular, not structural, violence. Positions of marginality and unequal power relations mean that narratives must be formulated in particular ways. Zimbabwean undocumented migrants adroitly traverse these fields of discourse: at the same protest, for example, stories were re-formulated to fit into the expected narrative. John, who that morning had spoken to me about the need to emphasise the continuity of suffering, listened to the above conversation and then proceeded to describe to the journalist his experiences at the hands of Zimbabwean police. His story was published the next day.

Activism, though a space where narratives could be formulated more freely than they could in direct interaction with the state, thus carried its own constraints. Firstly, it was not in the interests of undocumented migrants to emphasise the conditions they lived in in South Africa, as this highlights the inability of the South African state to deal with the poverty of its own citizens, let alone those trying to seek asylum. Secondly, activism was constrained by the (un)willingness of people to listen, as evidenced by the journalist who would not legitimate a man's story by the simple expedient of writing it down. Thirdly, activism only opens public spaces for stories of unhappiness and violation, as it is against the interests of activists to explore those elements of life in South Africa that are good. Indeed, the utilisation of human rights discourses as a means of speaking to state and to the public virtually *ensures* that the relevant criterion for narrative is that of suffering (see

Auerbach, 2008). Finally, and possibly most importantly, activism did not provide a space for women's voices: nearly all of the people involved in the organisation were men. Whilst these men legitimately emphasised that the process of migrating to South Africa had resulted in a continual sense of violation and marginalisation, there was no room for women to publicly tell of the many ways migration had affected them.

Ranchod-Nilsson (2006:49) has outlined what she refers to as "the swinging pendulum" of progress with regard to gender equality in Zimbabwe, and comments that although on the surface there are times when it appears that progress is being made, the underlying gender order remains the same. In Zimbabwe today, as occurred during the 2nd Chimurenga, women are beginning to play an important part in the political struggle, and through organizations such as WOZA⁶⁸ spaces that were not previously available are beginning to open up. It remains to be seen whether these spaces will remain open once peace is restored or whether, as in the case of the liberation war, there is a reversion to patriarchal order (see Ranchod-Nilsson, 2006; Zimbabwe Women Writers, 2000). Regardless, in Cape Town Zimbabwean women were further marginalised: positioned as undocumented migrants on the one hand, and not allowed recourse to public protest in the same ways as men on the other.

The use of discourses of human rights as a means of speaking to the state and resisting categorisation as illegal was thus neither particularly successful in terms of direct outcomes, such as being granted refugee status, nor did it open spaces for less constrained narratives of the past. It did, however, succeed as a means of speaking together, for men at least, and is continuing to be used in the hope that, in one informant's words, "They will eventually have to listen, eventually the world will show them that it is wrong." This statement has disturbing echoes of the role migrants had hoped South Africa would play in Zimbabwe, which they now hope the wider world will play towards South Africa.

⁶⁸ Women of Zimbabwe Unite (WOZA) has been protesting rights violations in Zimbabwe since 2003. Their mission statement formulates their primary objective as being "to empower Zimbabwean women with knowledge and skills designed to stimulate courageous activities within the community" (<http://www.kubatana.net/html/sectors/wom010.asp>).

The politics of alienism

The experiences of undocumented migrants in Cape Town, like those in Johannesburg, were thus difficult, were embodied, and, most importantly, were continually constrained by the process of varying forms of categorisation. For undocumented migrants in Cape Town, both speech and behaviour are contingent upon how one is categorised, and where one is positioned at that particular moment in time, during that particular interaction with 'South Africa'. Hastrup (1993:732) has noted that "with such invisible facts as suffering in particular, there is no way of understanding people except through one's own experience, and power of imagination." The danger of categorisation is that it limits the power of imagination, as categories work to disallow speaking or acting from positions other than that of the category, and all its attendant stereotypes, and thus disallow varied ways of listening and understanding subjective experiences. If solidarity is framed as the experience of having stories understood by strangers, then categorisation works against this. Zimbabweans who speak and act from within these categories are not passive, but are active agents within discourses of rights and violation. However, it is imperative to consider the ways in which power dynamics affect agency and choice within this. Ross (2003:336), writing on the TRC process in South Africa, commented that "Restoration of dignity is not simply a function of restored voice, but of a voice in control- that is, a voice with a signature." The positioning of Zimbabwean undocumented migrants within moral economies of fear within Zimbabwe *and* South Africa provides only a very tenuous control over which narratives are accepted as legitimate, and thus little space for 'a voice in control'.

7.

Conclusion: Strangers and states

It is no longer possible to overlook the fact that human tragedies on a massive scale are part of the 'normal' order of things.
(Hastrup, 1993:728)

Simmel (1950) describes the stranger as one who is on both the inside and the outside, and who is thus more able to achieve objectivity than those who are familiar⁶⁹. When I began this study, I had expected that the emphasis would be on Zimbabweans' experiences as the stranger in South Africa; but instead I found that in order to explore the categorisations present in South Africa that create the positions from which these strangers might act, speak and live, it was necessary to trace movement back to its origins in Zimbabwe. The multiple displacements that informants had experienced there showed the ways in which political processes within states can create strangers of that state's citizens: one may thus become a stranger in one's native land.

The history of Zimbabwe shows us that some of these processes of making citizens different stretch far back into the past; or, at least, that the past is called upon to justify the creation of difference in the present. Ndebele citizens, for instance, found at the very beginning of independent Zimbabwe that they were differently placed to Shona citizens (and that this positioning could be a matter of life or death) because their origins were taken to lie in South Africa, not Zimbabwe, and their political affiliations assumed to be different to those in power. It is comparatively easy to place someone who speaks a different language as a stranger, and even more so someone who is not of the same race, as white Zimbabwean commercial farmers have found since 2000. But this study has shown that it is not only those of different race or different ethnicity who have become strangers within Zimbabwe; even those who through language and ethnicity would previously have been placed in the same category as those in power are now differentiated. As Gukurahundi, 'the first rain that washes away the chaff of the last harvest before the spring rains', targeted the Ndebele people, so did Murambatsvina,

⁶⁹ I am indebted to Dr Fiona Ross for this point.

'drive out the filth', target the urban Shona and Ndebele. These metaphors reflect the realities of categorization within Zimbabwe, and the disposability of certain citizens: to be the chaff that needs washing away, or the filth that needs driving out, is most certainly to have become a stranger. Simmel reminds us that the stranger's position as simultaneously inside and outside makes him dangerous as he may see things from a different point of view. The Zimbabwean migrants with whom I worked in Cape Town were those who had been assumed to see things differently, and who had thus been displaced within Zimbabwe a number of times prior to movement to South Africa. All had in some way been positioned as 'other' even before they crossed the border. Even those people with whom I worked who were still resident in Zimbabwe felt themselves to be marginalized; the crisis of signification discussed in Chapter 3 is thus common to most of the population. This brings us to the paradox of positioning within Zimbabwe: if all those with whom I worked felt themselves to have been positioned as 'unlike', who in Zimbabwe can be said to be 'like'? Positioning is thus based upon false notions of 'good' citizenship that are not predicated upon the views of the majority, but upon the views of the very few who control the power.

In order to study Zimbabweans in South Africa, therefore, it was necessary to, in Falk Moore's (1994:371) words, "imagine the present as an emerging moment". Any understanding of the lived experience of Zimbabwean undocumented migrants in South Africa was not possible without an understanding of their pasts. Categorisation emerged as a key means of making sense of movement to South Africa, of experience within South Africa and of people's perception of the claims they could make of the South African state. It was thus possible to use categorisation "as a path traced through the terrain of lived experience" (Ingold, 2007:90) to explore experiences and meaning making on both sides of the border. People's expectations of South Africa were framed by experiences of marginalisation in Zimbabwe, and by the discourses of regionalism that have emerged in Southern African politics, which led potential migrants to believe that they would be welcomed. Marginalisation within Zimbabwe led to a sense of violation, and international discourses of human rights became the means through which informants expressed their marginality, particularly upon the discovery that in South Africa too they

were strangers: regionalism is a good political tool for talking with, but is not reflected in the realities of welcome. The politics of hospitality were thus found to have definite limits, and the solidarities that informants described as brotherhood came to be understood as solidarities between political leaders, not between ordinary people. Expectations of brotherhood thus gave way to the realities of strangerhood, where relations between people are framed by difference, by nationality, by being *makwerekwere*.

Informants' experiences in South Africa showed the ways in which strangerhood can come to be embodied, and while some of the embodiments of difference can be resisted, others cannot. If drinking water in a particular way identifies one as Zimbabwean, it is possible to change the way in which you drink water. The embodiments of being an 'illegal immigrant', however, are harder to shake off. Informants tried to access the mechanisms of the South African state – for some, the gates of Home Affairs could literally never be passed; while for others the metaphorical gates proved inaccessible. The ideas of structural violence that informants drew upon as a means of describing marginalisation within Zimbabwe were found to be invalid by the South African state, and life thus had to take place within the tenuousness of being illegal. Similarly, South African neighbours did not accept Zimbabweans' reasons for moving as legitimate for residence in South Africa, and life thus had to take place from within the category of *makwerekwere*. Though informants rejected these categories on a personal level – in Agnes' words, "I know in my heart that I have done nothing wrong, I have done nothing that I am ashamed of before God. I may be illegal, but I am not a criminal" – illegality and being *makwerekwere* still profoundly affected daily life.

A key issue raised by this study, therefore, is the fragility of citizenship. Povinelli (2006) notes that citizenship constitutes an internalisation of the idea that one comes from both a human and a territorial body. What happens when one's internalised and embodied sense of self as territorial citizen is delegitimised by the state? In the case of Zimbabwean migration to South Africa, the Zimbabwean state's assault upon people's notions of citizenship resulted in movement; and individuals drew upon regional discourses of

commonality, and international discourses of rights, as a means of asserting another kind of belonging, a 'citizenship' of the Southern African region. Sadly, the South African state did not recognise this. Citizenship may thus be fragile – but being *without* citizenship is a dangerous way to be. This raises the further issue of the ways in which people live their lives within the paradox of state borders that are simultaneously permeable and impassable. It was possible, though frightening, for informants to cross the physical line from one state to another. Physical boundaries can thus be crossed; less concrete boundaries proved impassable. Informants' calls upon regional belonging as a means of moving away from the defining category of 'Zimbabwean citizen' were unsuccessful. Crossing from the marginal position of being an 'illegal immigrant' to being an asylum seeker or refugee – the only categories that allow for the sort of regional citizenship informants had imagined - thus proved in many cases to be an impossible task. Agamben (1993:1) has argued that,

At least until the process of the dissolution of the nation-state and its sovereignty has come to an end, the refugee is the sole category in which it is possible today to perceive the forms and limits of a political community to come. Indeed, it may be that if we want to be equal to the absolutely novel tasks that face us, we will have to abandon without misgivings the basic concepts in which we have represented political subjects up to now (man and citizen with their rights, but also the sovereign people, the worker, etc.) and to reconstruct our political philosophy beginning with this unique figure.

In the case of the migration of Zimbabweans to South Africa, even the figure of 'refugee' is an inadequate means of imagining the relations between people and states; refugees can make claims upon the states in which they are resident, while undocumented migrants cannot. The Zimbabwean undocumented migrant in South Africa is thus a figure of extreme marginality, having no claim upon the place in which he or she is resident, and having, by necessity, to be away from the place in which he or she has the ostensible claim of citizenship. I use ostensible here because, as we have seen, to be a citizen of Zimbabwe in the present climate does not bring with it the usual securities associated with citizenship. Zimbabwean migrants to South Africa thus face a two-pronged dilemma: staying 'at home' does not allow for the maintenance of the family, while 'going away' cannot provide basic securities either.

The figure of the undocumented migrant thus clearly delineates the limits of our current political systems: both systems of territorial sovereignty, and the international systems designed to protect those who find themselves in a situation where citizenship is a meaningless or empty category, which fails to provide one with security. The increases in undocumented migration between Zimbabwe and South Africa show a failure of political systems, not an immorality on the part of those who move. De Genova (2002:422) notes that "'Illegality' (much like citizenship) is a juridical status that entails a social relation to the state; as such, migrant 'illegality' is a pre-eminently political identity." The mobilisation of difference in South African immigration policy, and the closing of borders so as to position innumerable migrants as illegal, rests upon notions of the sovereign nation state. For Zimbabweans, movement into the category of illegality was predicated upon a series of displacements and dislocations that resulted from arguably illegal, and certainly illegitimate, political processes within Zimbabwe. The institution of the border works to normalise displacement, in that it creates the conditions for being 'out of place'. There is nowhere, then, where issues of sovereignty have more absolute effects than they do in matters of migration – yet, ironically, to analyse these processes requires an understanding of the regional, and of the ways in which calls to sovereignty result from transnational processes and movements. National identities cannot be created without recourse to that which, or those who, are outside of those national bounds. Sovereignty is thus integral to the creation of the category 'foreigner', while 'foreigners' are integral to the importance of calls upon sovereignty.

We thus see the creation of a politics of separation in the relationship between Zimbabwean and South African *citizens*, while Zimbabwean undocumented migrants in South Africa came to the realization that there was no politics of separation between *leaders*. Migrants' attempts to utilise regionalism as a means of resisting the categorisations of sovereignty did not work in 2007; nor did their attempts to move beyond the regional to call upon localised discourses of international human rights, based upon morality, as a means of legitimising movement. 'Rights' are thus an imagined resource, which one may call upon but will probably never experience. "What is this

thing called rights?” said one informant. “I didn’t see it in Zimbabwe, I don’t see it in South Africa. I can move forever and I do not think I will find my human rights. Human rights are not for people like me.” If “human rights are not for people like me” then who are they for? The prevalence of undocumented migrants in South Africa also shows a failure of the so-called ‘universal’ rights of man. In the context of South Africa and Zimbabwe, therefore, an emphasis on physical suffering and ‘the moment’ of violation as more legitimate kinds of narrative about the Zimbabwean situation than those that emphasise structural violence, is dangerous in a number of ways. Firstly, it negates the lived experience of daily suffering, and invalidates experiences of ongoing violation. Secondly, an emphasis on physical violation removes responsibility from ZANU/PF for all but direct incidences of violence and torture and, thirdly, removes responsibility from the South African government for experiences of violation in South Africa. Zimbabwean undocumented migration to South Africa is a telling indicator of the state of Southern African politics, and regional (dis)adherence to notions of human rights. Zimbabwean migrants *had* to move to maintain families, but found that there was no place where they could belong. “Here you are like a bird,” said Moses, “your heart flutters all the time.”

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APPENDIX A: DATA TABLES (INFORMANTS RESIDENT IN SOUTH AFRICA)

TABLE 6: Demographics of Zimbabwean male informants resident in the Western Cape

Name	Age	Gender	Area of origin & home language	Education level ¹	No. of Zim internal moves prior to crossing border	No. of moves within SA prior to arrival in CT	Length of time in Cape Town	Family situation (M= married; S single; W= wife; C= child; CT = Cape Town)	No. of times returned to Zimbabwe (D=deported; V=voluntary)	Legal status (UD= undocumented AS= Asylum seeker papers R= refugee papers)	Work in SA (PT = Part time; FT= Full time)	Amount & Frequency of remittances to Zim. ²	No. of people informant helps support in Zim. (N= nuclear E= extended family ³)
Andrew	26	M	Bindura Shona	O level	4	1	7 months	S, no C	1D	UD	hawker	+/-R 100/month	2N; 4E
Amos	32	M	Matb. Ndebele	Form 4	3	1	2 years	M; W & 2 C in Zim	1D	UD	PT labour	+/- R 100/month	3N
Bernard	43	M	Bulawayo Ndebele	Grade 7	2	2	1 year	M; W & 1C in Zim	0	AS	FT hawker	+/- R100 /month	2 N
Christopher	28	M	Harare Shona	A level	5	1	8 months	S; no C	1D	UD	FT hawker	+/- R 150/month	3 N
Clement	31	M	Harare Shona	O level	1	1 → Zambia; 2	9 months	M; W in CT; 2 C in Zim	1V from Zambia; 0 from SA	UD	PT labour	+/- R 200/month	2 N; 3E
David	30	M	Harare Shona	O level	5	1	3 months	M; W & 2 C in CT	0	UD	PT labour	+/- R250/month	3 N
Farai	32	M	Mash. Shona	Form 3	2	2	2 years	M; W in Zim, no C	0	AS	FT waiter	+/- R 200/month	2N
Fungai	25	M	Harare Shona	Diploma in computing	0	1	6 months	S, no C	0	UD	unemployed	Sent money once: R300	unknown
Freddy	27	M	Chiweshe Shona	O level	3	2	7 months	S, 1 C in Zim	1D	UD	PT labour	+/- R100/month	2N; 2E

¹ Zimbabwean primary school education runs from Grade 1 to Grade 7; high school begins in Form 1, and Ordinary (O) Level exams are taken in Form 4. Advanced (A) Level exams take place after a further 2 years of schooling: the lower and upper sixth years.

² These figures constitute estimated averages by informants, as amounts varied month by month, and at times resources did not allow for remittances to be sent.

³ Nuclear family was taken as children, siblings or parents of informant, and extended family as people self identified by informants as 'relatives' eg uncles, cousins, aunts.

Name	Age	Gender	Area of origin & home language	Education level	No. of Zim internal moves prior to crossing border	No. of moves within SA prior to arrival in CT	Length of time in Cape Town	Family situation (M= married; S single; W- wife C= child; CT = Cape Town)	No. of times returned to Zimbabwe (D=deported; V=voluntary)	Legal status (UD= undocumented AS= Asylum seeker papers R= refugee papers)	Work in SA (PT = Part time; FT= Full time)	Amount & Frequency of remittances to Zim.	No. of people informants helps support in Zim. (N= nuclear E= extended family)
George	29	M	Matab. Ndebele	O level	2	2	2 years	M; W & 2 C in Zim	1D	UD	PT labour	R100	4N
Jacob	45	M	Gweru Shona	Grade 7	3	1	17 months	Widower, 3 C in Zim	1 V; 1 D	UD	FT labour	+/- R300/month	3N; 1 E
John	50	M	Mash Shona	Form 2	2	1	1 year	M, W in CT; C in SA	0	UD	FT labour	+/- R 200 / month	2N
Jonah	29	M	Gwanda Ndebele	O level	2	1	9 months	M, W in CT; 2 C in Zim	1 V	AS	FT waiter	+/- R400/month	3N
Lionel	22	M	Harare Shona	O level	1	1	2months	S, no C	1D	UD	hawker	+/-R 100 /month	5N
Luke	37	M	Beitbrige Ndebele	Form 3	0	2	2 years	M; W and 2 C in Zim	2 V	UD	hawker	+/- R100/month	4N
Martin	24	M	Harare Shona	Form 2	2	1	2 years	S, 1 C in Zim	2 D	UD	FT kitchen staff	+/- R 200/month	4N
Michael	32	M	Masvingo Shona	Form 4	3	1	2 years	M, W & 2C in Zim	0	UD	hawker	+/- R 150/ month	3N; 1 E
Milton	26	M	Harare Shona	O level	3	0	6 months	M, W in Zim, no C	0	UD	PT waiter	+/- R 100/ month	2N; 1 E
Moses	27	M	Gwanda Ndebele	O level	2	1	2 years	M; W in CT; 3 C in Zim	2 D	UD	FT bartender	+/- R 250/month	5N
Nelson	29	M	Matab. Ndebele	A level	3	2	8 months	M; W & 3 C in Zim	1D	UD	hawker	+/- R 100/ month	4N
Nyarai	32	M	Mutare Shona	O level	2 pre 1 st move; 2 pre 2 nd move	2	8 months	M; W & 3C in Zim	1D	UD	PT driver	+/- R 200/ month	4N
Samuel	35	M	Bulawayo Ndebele	O level	3	1	2 years	Widower; 3 C in Zim	0	UD	unemployed	Prev. R 100/ month; nil	3N; 3E

TABLE 6 CONTINUED

Name	Age	Gender	Area of origin & home language	Education level	No. of Zim internal moves prior to crossing border	No. of moves within SA prior to arrival in CT	Length of time in Cape Town	Family situation (M= married; S single; W- wife)	No. of times returned to Zimbabwe (D=deported; V=voluntary)	Legal status (UD= undocumented AS= Asylum seeker papers R= refugee papers)	Work in SA (PT = Part time; FT= Full time)	Amount & Frequency of remittances to Zim.	No. of people informants helps support in Zim. (N= nuclear E= extended family)
Simba	24	M	Harare, Shona	O level	1	1	3 months	S, no C	1D	UD	PT gardener	nil	2N need support
Sibanda	27	M	Matab. Ndebele	A level	3	2	1 year	Widower; 3 C in Zim	0	AS	FT labour	R250/month	5N
Silus	36	M	Mash. Shona	Form 2	3	1	3 years	M; W & 2 C in Zim	1D; 1 V	UD	hawker	+/-R 100/month	3N
Steven	41	M	Chinoyi Shona	Grade 7	3	1	2 years	Widower, 4 C in Zim	1D	UD	hawker	R 100/month	4N
Tafadzwa	28	M	Mash. Shona	Form 3	4	1	2 years	M; W in CT; 2 C in Zim	2 V	UD	FT waiter	+/- R 450/month	4N; 2 E
Tapfuma	25	M	Mash. Shona	A level	3	2	15 months	S, no C	0	UD	PT labour	+/- R100/month	5N
Tendai	31	M	Harare Shona	Form 3	3	1	1 year	M; W & 1 C in Zim	0	UD	PT labour	+/- R 75 /month	3N
Tino	26	M	Mash., Shona	Form 4	2	1	2 years	S; no C	1D	UD	PT labour; PT hawker	+/- R150 /month	4N
Vengai	28	M	Harare Shona	O level	3	2	11 months	M; W & 1 C in Zim	1D	UD	PT labour	+/- R100/month	4 N
William	27	M	Bulaway Ndebele	A level	4	1	9 months	M; W in CT, 2 C in Zim	0	UD	hawker	+/- R 100/month	4N; 1E
Zachariah	42	M	Matab; Ndebele	Form 2	2	1	7 months	Widower; 4 C in Zim	0	AS	FT driver	+/- R200/month	4N
	AV= 31		Totals: N: S:		AV= 2.5				Total= 16D	Total = 28 UD 5 AS		AV= R 165.32	

TABLE 7: Demographics of Zimbabwean Female informants resident in the Western Cape

Name	Age	Gender	Area of origin & home language	Education level	No. of Zim internal moves prior to crossing border	No. of moves within SA prior to arrival in CT	Length of time in Cape Town	Family situation (M= married; S single; H – husband)	No. of times returned to Zimbabwe (D=deported; V=voluntary)	Legal status (UD= undocumented AS= Asylum seeker papers R= refugee papers)	Work in SA (PT = Part time; FT= Full time)	Amount & Frequency of remittances to Zim.	No. of people informants helps support in Zim. (N= nuclear E= extended family)
Alice	34	F	Midlands Shona	Grade 7	2	2	1 year	M; H and 2 children in Zim	1 V	UD	PT domestic	+/-R100 /month	2 N
Agnes	48	F	Matab. Ndebele	Grade 5	2	2	2 years	Widowed; 4 children in Zim	1 V	UD	FT domestic	+/- R200/month	4N
Anna	27	F	Harare Shona	O level	2	0	2 months	M, H in Cape Town. 2 children in Zim	0	UD	PT domestic	R 100/ month	2N
Betty	25	F	Bulawayo Ndebele	Form 3	4	1	6 months	S, no children	0	UD	Unemployed	R 50/ month	4 N need support
Chenai	22	F	Harare Shona	O level	3	1	7 months	S, no children	0	AS	PT domestic	R 150/ month	2N
Fadzai	27	F	Masvingo, Shona	Form 2	1	1	2 years	M, husband in Zim, no children	2 V	UD	FT domestic	+/- R300 / month	3 N
Gina	24	F	Mash; Shona	O level	3	0	1 year	S, 1 child in CT	0	R	Shop cashier	+/- R 200/month	2N
Lucy	35	F	Harare Shona	Form 2	1	2	7 months	M, H in CT, 3 children in Zim	1 D	UD	PT domestic	+/- R150 /month	4 N
Maud	55	F	Mash Shona	Grade 5	2	1	2 weeks	widowed	0	UD	unemployed	none	3N
Nothando	32	F	Hwange Ndebele	Form 4	2	2	1 year	M, H in CT, 3 children in Zim	1 D	UD	Shop assistant	+/- R 320 /month	4N; 3 E
Sekai	59	F	Midlands Shona	Grade 4	2	1	2 years	Widowed. Children in SA	0	AS	hawker	No remittances	0
Sheila	40	F	Matab.	Form 3	unknown	0	3 years	S; 4 children in	2 V	UD	FT	+/- R300/	4E

Susan	29	F	Ndebele Bulaway Ndebele	O level	2	9	1 year	CT M; 1 child in Zim	Over 10 V (was cross border trader until 1 year ago)	UD	domestic hawker	month +/- R300 /month	6 N
Tapuwa	31	F	Harare Shona	O level	1	7 ⁴	8 months	M, H and 2 children in Zim	10 V ⁴	UD	Seasonal farm worker	Prev. carried all saved wages back; currently sends nil.	2N need support
Tatenda	34	F	Harare Shona	Form 3	0	1	1 year	Widowed; 3 children in Zim	0	UD	PT domestic	R 100/ month	3N
Violet	42	F	Matab. Ndebele	Grade 7	3	0	18 months	Widowed, 4 children in Zim	0	UD	hawker	R 100/ month	4N
Veronica	34	F	Mash. Shona	Form 2	2	0	6 months	M; H in CT; 2 children in Zim	1 D	UD	hawker	R 100/ month	2N
	AV = 34				AV = 2				Total= 3D	Total = 14 UD 2 AS 1R		AV= R154.37	

⁴ Tapuwa had previously travelled between Zimbabwe and South Africa in order to find seasonal work on South African farms, going back to Zimbabwe when the season was over. By the time I met her, however, she had settled permanently in South Africa as she was expecting a child and did not feel Zimbabwean healthcare was adequate.

APPENDIX B: PHOTOGRAPHS FROM ZIMBABWE



'Coz of ZANU PF Mbava [ZANU PF thieves], no food, no ZESA [Zimbabwe Electricity Supply Authority], no water'. Graffiti, Harare, 2007.



The once busy streets of central Harare, devoid of traffic due to the petrol crisis.



January 2008 : R5 equates to 2 million Zimbabwe dollars at the black market rate.



Queues outside a bank in Chinoyi, during the cash crisis 2007.

Appendix C: Displacement and Refugee Definitions

1. United Nations Definition of 'Internal Displacement':

“persons or groups of persons who have been forced or obliged to flee or to leave their homes or places of habitual residence, in particular as a result of or in order to avoid the effects of armed conflict, situations of generalized violence, violations of human rights or natural or human made disasters, and who have not crossed an international state border.”

(Para 2.1 of Deng, Francis *The Guiding Principles on Internal Displacement*, United Nations Document E/CN.4/1996/52)

2. Excerpt from 1951 Geneva Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees:

“The term “refugee” shall apply to any person who...owing to well-founded fear of being persecuted for reasons of race, religion, nationality, membership of a particular social group or political opinion, is outside the country of his nationality and is unable or, owing to such fear, is unwilling to avail himself of the protection of that country; or who, not having a nationality and being outside the country of his former habitual residence as a result of such events, is unable or, owing to such fear, is unwilling to return to it.”

(cited in Malkki, L. 1995: 501)

Appendix D: Exchange Rate of the Zimbabwe dollar to the US dollar (2003 – 2009)

