

**Zimbabwe's Crisis, Civil Society's Responsibility:
Robert Mugabe, the memory of colonialism and the *real* neo-colonial agenda**

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Introduction

Why were we colonized? And were we ever really decolonized?

These are the central questions that should be at the core of liberation discourse in Zimbabwe and Africa at large, in order to start dealing with neo-colonial 'ghosts'. These ghosts are real enough when they take the form of dictatorships, exploitative neo-liberal capitalism and repression of our growing resistance to these.

Rather than reflect upon now distant liberation ideals - one person one vote, or restoring the dignity of the African person, both of which are frankly further from us than they were in 1979 - I think it is important to begin by asking why as Zimbabweans and Africans we were colonised in the first place, and whether even the most radical nationalists in Zanu(PF) are guilty of what Frantz Fanon called 'false decolonisation'.

What forces were at work then and now? Might it be that our continued oppression and underdevelopment result as much from the global capitalist order, as from our own failings as Africans?

Most importantly, are our elite leaders – especially those who excel at anti-imperialist rhetoric when giving speeches at conferences, summits and other public places - the *real* agents of imperialism?

It is crucial to remember the history of colonialism in Zimbabwe, especially 'How Europe underdeveloped Africa' as Walter Rodney phrased it. That history set the stage for the postcolonial political agenda in Zimbabwe, the 'exhausted patriarchal model of liberation' in Horace Campbell's words, in which 'the ruling elite [serve] as intermediary for global capital'. Only then can we tackle the resulting challenges facing Zimbabwe's *new* social liberation movement.

Finally, we Zimbabweans also have something to say about the advent of neoliberalism in South Africa, and we look with disquiet upon Pretoria's plans for a potential 'elite transition' in Zimbabwe. Our ability to resist a bad deal will depend upon how much we learn from the infamous events of March 11 this year, how we counteract state violence, and how we restore the Ubuntu of our Africanness in the face of state brutality and economic exploitation.

I want to argue that it is only by putting these ingredients together that we can identify home-grown struggles that call forth home-grown solutions in the form of people-centred economic and political transformation.

The Zimbabwe case

Over the past years, we who are fighters for genuine liberation in Zimbabwe have been arrested, beaten and tortured – and some of our cohort killed - for daring to challenge Robert Mugabe's dictatorial regime. The paradox is that state violence is committed in the name of correcting past injustices, combating neocolonialism, restoring the dignity of the African people, fighting the British Government, and preventing the recolonization of Zimbabwe.

As activists we have been put in the position of defending our Africanness, our blackness, our patriotism, our love for country and continent, and our vision of an egalitarian society, against a regime which exels at mixing radical rhetoric with reactionary repression. As we saw last weekend in Lusaka, Zanu(PF) and its allies on the continent have generated a solid block of denialism.

The most cynical view of our ruling elites emerges from the comment that Zimbabwe simply moved from a 'White Smith' to a 'Black Smith.' Even after independence was achieved in 1980, a black government took over state power but did not alter in the least, the inherited exploitive economic and political relations.

Fanon's prediction could not have been more precise: 'The national bourgeoisie steps into the shoes of the former European settlement: doctors, barristers, traders, commercial travellers, general agents and transport agents. It considers that the dignity of the country and its own welfare require that it should occupy all these posts. From now on, it will insist that all the big foreign companies should pass through its hands, whether these companies wish to keep on their connexions with the country, or to open it up. The national middle class discovers its historic mission: that of intermediary.'

Therein lies the problem: with no future in this strategy, Mugabe and his national bourgeoisie have turned to corruption and eating the economy in the most parasitical manner, initially to accommodate World Bank and IMF dictates and then, from about a decade ago, on the basis of state commands. And so in this paper I not only wish to look at the nature of the postcolonial state but also at its relationship with global capital and the neoliberal agenda.

Do we see in Zimbabwe as in South Africa the official dance that Patrick Bond has termed, 'talk left-walk right'? There are mixed signals, for the Mugabe regime adopted the much hated Economic Structural Adjustment Programme during the early 1990s and followed with a chaotic land reform programme from February 2000, all the while stepping up the militarization of the state and repression of resistance.

The torture I suffered on March 11 was just one aspect of the culture of violence that has run rampant within Zanu(PF) since before independence: in 'struggles within the struggle' (as documented by Masipula Sithole), and soon later in the genocide visited upon Ndebele people of the Midlands and Matebeleland ('gukurahundi'), and then again in recent years when paramilitary and formal state violence was again unleashed on opposition party members and other civic activists.

The recent rise of a workers' struggle for emancipation peaked in the Working People's Convention of February 1999, and led to the formation of the Movement for Democratic Change. The Working People Convention resolutions should, like your South African Freedom Charter, become the reference point in the struggle against the dictatorship and for a new Zimbabwe. Democratic forces have to remobilize around these, for they do not only deal with the pressing national democratic issues, land reform, the economy, health and education, but also address the International Financial Institutions which still insist the only way forward is the adoption of neoliberal policies.

My point here is that Zimbabweans know what they want, as they showed in February 1999, but the script is being written for them elsewhere with disastrous consequences. This failure to grasp our own future has led to the current quagmire. Again and again, external forces aim – as we saw in Zimbabwe's own birth at Lancaster House - to promote an elite transition in which they have influence over the who's who of Zimbabwe's next leadership. Pretoria has been endorsed by Washington, London and Brussels to carry out this deal. George W. Bush even called Thabo Mbeki his 'point man' for this task, four years ago.

That is why I am weary of the election project which, as in the past, seems to be a rallying point for Pretoria and the rest of the International Community. The best outcome under prevailing conditions would be what Thandeka Mkandawire calls a 'choiceless democracy'. Why the focus on the narrow objective of elections and not on a long term sustainable democracy and economic development project? The Mugabe regime gets relegitimised each

time an election is held, because there are other elites willing to endorse each stolen poll, as Pretoria has shown again and again. The next election in 2008 must give Zimbabweans the opportunity to elect leaders of their choice freely, and external forces should facilitate this process not the opposite, as Mbeki appears to be hell bent on.

There is a framework for a proper transition to take place in Zimbabwe agreed upon by Zimbabweans ourselves. There is a broad consensus on constitutional reform, on other transformations of the state apparatus, on the demilitarization of key institutions, on the role of traditional chiefs, on press freedom (especially the role of public broadcasters and newspapers), and on an end to violence.

In spite of our own clear statements about these matters, it is tempting for Mbeki and the SADC leaders to simply ignore the democratic grassroots impulses. And it is because of this desire to impose a false democratization on Zimbabwe that we should revisit why we were colonized, and in turn why we sometimes internalize Eurocentric views about us as Africans.

Only then would we become ashamed, properly, at the poverty and dictatorship around us. Only then would it be possible to build a new Zimbabwe, and a new Africa.

The colonial and neocolonial agenda

Different theories have been put forward as to why Africa was colonized, ranging from extreme Eurocentric views to do with bringing civilization to Africa, to pan-African ones to do with Europe's exploitation of Africa's resources, labour and markets, to Marxist theories of Northern capitalist crisis as the driving force of imperialism.

Let us recall the Berlin Conference of 1884-85, devised by key Britain, Germany, France, Portugal and Belgium in order to partition Africa amongst themselves, to share the 'cake'. Africa was thus subordinated to the whims and will of the western powers as a provider of raw materials, cheap labour and markets for their finished products. This economic domination coupled with political subordination guaranteed Africa's underdevelopment and inferior status in the world today.

The roots go back even earlier, according to Walter Rodney:

"Western Europe and Africa had a relationship which ensured the transfer of wealth from Africa to Europe. The transfer was possible only after trade became truly international; and that takes one back to the late 15th century when Africa and Europe were drawn into common relations for the first time — along with Asia and the Americas. The developed and underdeveloped parts of the present capitalist section of the world have been in continuous contact four and a half centuries. The contention here is that over that period Africa helped to develop Western Europe in the same proportion as Western Europe helped to underdevelop Africa."

In Zimbabwe and elsewhere, the ruling elite simply stepped into the shoes of the colonialists, fulfilling Fanon's prophecies:

"The state, which by its strength and discretion ought to inspire confidence and disarm and lull everybody to sleep, on the contrary seeks to impose itself in spectacular fashion. It makes a display, it jostles people and bullies them, thus intimating to the citizen that he is in continual danger. The single party is the modern form of the dictatorship of the bourgeoisie, unmasked, unpainted, unscrupulous and cynical. It is true that such a dictatorship does not go very far. It cannot halt the processes of its own contradictions. Since the bourgeoisie has not the economic means to ensure its domination and to throw a few crumbs to the rest of the country; since, moreover, it is preoccupied with filling its pockets as rapidly as possible but also as prosaically as possible, the country sinks all the more deeply into stagnation. And in order to hide this stagnation and to mask

this regression, to reassure itself and to give itself something to boast about, the bourgeoisie can find nothing better to do than to erect grandiose buildings in the capital and to lay out money on what are called prestige expenses."
(Frantz Fanon in *The Pitfalls of National Consciousness, Wretched of the Earth*)

Rosa Luxemburg also considers the relationship between the elite and the masses in a vicious colonial-capitalist mode of production:

"The method of violence, then, is the immediate consequence of the clash between capitalism and the organisations of a natural economy which would restrict accumulation. Their means of production and their labour power no less than their demand for surplus products is necessary to capitalism. Yet the latter is fully determined to undermine their independence as social units, in order to gain possession of their means of production and labour power and to convert them into commodity buyers. This method is the most profitable and gets the quickest results, and so it is also the most expedient for capital. In fact, it is invariably accompanied by a growing militarism whose importance for accumulation will be demonstrated below in another connection. British policy in India and French policy in Algeria are the classical examples of the application of these methods by capitalism."

The militaristic methods of colonial capitalism, which the mothers and fathers of our revolution valiantly fought against, are well documented:

"Each day 30 to 40 civilian Africans died, whether as 'curfew breakers', 'supporters of the guerrillas', or caught in the crossfire. This killing of innocent civilians was not confined to Zimbabwe but extended to air strikes deep inside Mozambique, Zambia and even Angola. The Rhodesian Air Force supported by the South Africans, carried out bombing raids against the frontline territories, bombing vital communication links, roads, bridges, and refugee camps." – International Defence and Aid Fund (1979) *Political Repression in Rhodesia*. London.

This is what the liberation fighters were against, yet along the way began to adopt methods of the oppressor.

Zimbabwe's elite transition from colonialism to independence

Let us retrace the steps of the transition to our independent country, Zimbabwe. Through this process we consider the dangers of repeating our history: the flawed Lancaster House Agreement/Constitution or 'elite transition' that has haunted us to this day.

During this period white South Africa (under great pressure especially from the Americans) was a key supporter of the Rhodesian government. Ironically, this is the case today with the relationship between Robert Mugabe and South Africa's President Thabo Mbeki. During the period leading to our independence, Ian Smith's continued stay in power depended on South African resources and political support.

The Rhodesians were destined to lose, notwithstanding Smith's claim that 'not in one thousand years' would black majority rule arrive. South African apartheid leader John Vorster withdrew explicit military support to Smith in 1976, in order to gain more room for his own regional co-option strategy. US secretary of state Henry Kissinger meddled in the region's geopolitics, and together with Vorster strongarmed Smith into agreeing to an untenable 'internal settlement'-- called 'Zimbabwe-Rhodesia'-- with the co-opted Bishop Abel Muzorewa in 1978.

The nationalists rejected this settlement, and the power-sharing agreement soon collapsed. Increased international pressure resulted in the holding of the Lancaster House Conference, attended by all parties - the Rhodesians and the Nationalists -- with the British mediating.

However there was a conspicuous absence of women's participation, a point I will elaborate on later.

The parties agreed on the following:

- to accept the authority of the Governor;
- to abide by the Independence Constitution;
- to comply with the pre-independence arrangements;
- to abide by the cease-fire agreement;
- to campaign peacefully and without intimidation;
- to renounce the use of force for political ends.

This was a ceasefire agreement and should have remained as such. However as Horace Campbell points out, the whole set up was problematic in the sense that it did not capture the sentiment of freedom for the black majority.

"Even though the agreement was arrived at after 15 weeks of fierce diplomatic struggle and military intimidation by the Rhodesian Forces, the Patriotic Front signed because, though they were well aware of the shortfalls of the settlement, they believed 'it was a sound basis on which to build a truly democratic society in Zimbabwe, free of racism and the exploitation of man by man.' Reclaiming Zimbabwe: The exhaustion of the patriarchal model of liberation. "

So then were the guerrillas pushed? Or did they jump?

Neo – colonial ghosts or hallucinations

To return to Luxemburg's thesis, how did the 'superexploitation' of Zimbabwe's non-capitalist terrain continue after independence? Mugabe inherited a capitalist mode of production whose sustenance was based on the exploitation of the majority black labour and the country's wealth and natural resources. One key resource, land, remained in the hands of the white farmers and eventually some of the black elite became farmers too. For two decades, Mugabe had no political will to redress the imbalances that existed in landownership. Ten years into independence, in 1990, a majority of those in Mugabe's cabinet were commercial farm owners, with some owning more than one farm.

Had there been political will on the part of the ruling elite to deal with the land issue in an appropriate manner, we would have avoided some of the socio-economic problems bedevilling the country today. In fact the manner in which the Fast Track Resettlement Programme was adopted and carried out is a further insult to our dignity and integrity as Zimbabweans.

Sometimes in a barbaric fashion, dressed in party slogans, our mothers, fathers, grand-parents, aunts, uncles were moved from villages they had been forced onto by the settler colonialists to bare pieces of land, with no water, toilets or farm inputs, and dubbed the 'new farmers'. Opposition activists and white farmers were killed during these invasions, and scores of thousands of farm workers displaced, many of them of Malawian and Mozambican origin in yet another sign of how little Mugabe and his cohort care and think of the black masses. It should be noted that the relationship between Mugabe and many fractions of white capital remained very strong even during this period, as was demonstrated in his relations with John Bredenkamp and British businessman Nicholas van Hoogstraten.

What then resulted? According to a study by Joshua Nyoni and Prof. M. Rukuni, problems included,

- „ *the displacement of newly settled farmers by the elite;*
- „ *multiple ownership of farms by the elite;*
- „ *underutilization and neglect of huge amounts of productive farmland allocated under the fast track programme; and*
- „ *low uptake of allocated land.*

The myth that land reform is for peasants is disputed by war veteran Margarat Dongo, interviewed recently on SWRadio:

"For a rural person coming from Chipinge the bureaucracy that he has to go through just to shake [Mugabe's] hand is not easy. He has changed to me, even the behavior. He has changed his behavior in terms of how he looks at the ordinary masses. The issue of land is very crucial. I tell you the majority of ex-combatants who have been used to invade the farms today are being harassed and I don't even think they are comfortable there. And I think they have become the poorest people. I don't know if they are doing any farming because the majority them – if you want to ask on the allocation of tractors, how many of them got those tractors? How many of them are getting enough support in terms of implements? How many of them are actually living comfortably. I am telling you the majority of those comrades who invaded the farms were used as guinea pigs. They were just used as frontiers. They were used just like in a slavery situation. To be honest enough lets do an accountability, let's do an inventory to see what went to real comrades."

This is where we see Mugabe's 'talk left and walk right' rhetoric. Mugabe is notorious for his public dismissal of opposition and civic groups as agents of western imperialism, and has even been cheered at different fora for this stance. But a few weeks ago, columnist Mutumwa Mawere wrote of how this stance allows Mugabe to displace the blame for his own mismanagement:

"I do not think that even the most enthusiastic anti-colonial and anti-imperialist advocates would agree in 2007 that the 1st revolution of Zimbabwe has produced a positive outcome that is in line with the expectations of all those Africans who have made the sacrifices to eradicate the artificial man made colonial distortions. The issues that seem to occupy many regarding the crisis in Zimbabwe are no different from the kind of issues that occupied the pioneers of the decolonisation struggle as is to suggest that the passage of time under self rule was a non event during which no one should be accountable. In the case of Zimbabwe, the architects of the independence project still would want to argue that they were never in control of what President Mwanawasa described as a "sinking Titanic" and choosing to rightly or wrongly assign the blame on the machinations of relentless imperialist forces. In advancing this persuasive argument, they benefit from the global atmosphere created by the conduct of Bush/Blair on global issues including Iraq. A unipolar world in which western values are projected as the only acceptable values to inform global opinion seems discredited to an extent that even the most unacceptable dictators find sanctuary in responding to criticisms about their own disastrous policies and programs by claiming to be victims of an imperialist conspiracy."

Is Mugabe a victim of an imperialist conspiracy? In the book *Zimbabwe's Plunge*, Patrick Bond and Masimba Manyanya dwell on the complexities between Mugabe's dictatorship and the country's economic and political descent in the wake of two historic events, the formation of the Movement for Democratic Change (MDC) in September 1999 and the February 2000 national referendum which rejected Mugabe's sponsored constitution. If the mothers and the fathers of the revolution were 'pushed' into agreeing to unpopular Lancaster House conditions which prevented land and resource redistribution, why did it take decades for them to remember their political obligation to the people of Zimbabwe?

The introduction of the International Monetary Fund (IMF) sponsored Economic Structural Adjustment Programme in 1990 was met with protests from the workers, students and broader civil society. It was only in 1997 – two years after the World Bank called his implementation of neoliberalism 'highly satisfactory' (the best rating they give) - that Mugabe began to reverse the policies.

Zimbabwean capitalism could not have flourished for nearly two decades without the complicity of Mugabe and his cronies. How then has he managed to keep his supporters in a trance with this 'Talk left-walk right' dance?

"We have heard Left rhetoric from Mugabe most vociferously when there arise forceful popular challenges: the early 1960s resurgence of anti-colonial protest, the mid/late-1970s left turn within the ranks of exiles and during the brief Zimbabwe People's Army experiment, the 1980 upsurge of worker confidence in the wake of liberation, mid-1980s dissents from Matabeleland, late 1980s student demonstrations against incipient neoliberalism, the 1996-97 rural and war vet rebellions, and the resurgence of protests by workers and genuine democrats since then. Acting Right has been observed while Mugabe was in league with motley white tycoons (Rowland, Oppenheimer, O'Reilly, Cluff, Bredenkamp, and Rautenbach during the 1980s-90s), white US government military advisors (early 1990s), and white economists from the World Bank and International Monetary Fund (beginning in 1981 but especially from 1990, until the falling out in 1998)--or simply acting in proto-fascist mode in between, and more so at the time of writing." (Zimbabwe's Plunge, Patrick Bond and Masimba Manyanya.)

Ghosts of foreign funding and Mugabe's leftist rhetoric

Mugabe was always good at talking left even when he was funded by the right. UKZN politics professor David Moore writes in the *Review of African Political Economy* (Zanu PF and the Ghosts of Foreign Funding) about the financing of Mugabe's liberation struggle from both imperialist and non imperialist forces. What haunts Mugabe, according to Moore, is his understanding of what foreign funding can do having been a beneficiary himself, during the liberation struggle in the 60's and 70's. And so it is not accidental that Mugabe has sought to ban Zimbabwean based Non-Governmental Organisations (NGO's) perceived to be pro-MDC and enacted the Political Parties Finance Act, which criminalises foreign funding for political parties. It is fascist, well calculated to weaken international solidarity for those oppressed by Mugabe especially in financial terms. Sadly, this moratorium on outside assistance has also often included humanitarian assistance in the form of food aid, donated to suffering masses. When food gets through, a Zanu(PF) party card is required to get access.

Moore reveals the relationship that existed between Mugabe and the British Government in the 1960's -70's, and also links some of the funding the nationalists received at the time to CIA front organisations. Humanitarian support for the guerrillas included scholarships (many of them and their spouses studied abroad during the liberation struggle), food, blankets and shelter.

In considering the upsurge in what can only be called paramilitary fascism, albeit camouflaged in leftist, nationalist rhetoric, it is important that we revisit what Campbell calls the 'exhausted patriarchal' model of liberation captured by very narrow elite interests. According to Campbell, *'in more instances, instead of liberation becoming the foundation of a new social order, the militarist and masculinist leadership turned the victory of the people into a never ending nightmare of direct and structural violence.'*

This is what Fanon predicted:

"in an underdeveloped country the direction of affairs by a strong authority, in other words a dictatorship, is a necessity. With this in view the party is given the task of supervising the masses. The party plays understudy to the administration and the police, and controls the masses, not in order to make sure that they really participate in the business of governing the nation, but in order to remind them constantly that the government expects from them obedience and discipline."

The formation of the MDC was thus met with violence and tyranny that has left the masses deeply hurt and traumatised. The Mugabe dictatorship has at each point used the worst forms of

violence in order to remain in power. March 11 2007, or 'black Sunday', dramatises the state-sponsored violence that has been used over the past decade to silence voices of dissent. First there was the Gukurahundi of the early 80's which saw the killing of over 20 000 people from the Midlands and Matebeleland a perceived support base of the late nationalist Joshua Nkomo. Then there was the recent wave of targeted killings of opposition activists, along with torture, abductions and forced removals. Operation 'Murambatsvina', 'clean up the filth', was yet another show of disdain by the Mugabe regime. An estimated seven hundred thousand people were evicted from their homes in the urban areas, which were subsequently demolished. The very livelihoods of many, especially women and children, were destroyed.

Like the colonial group that existed in our region until the early 1960s, history is repeating itself in the sense that a regional coalition has once again ganged up in protection of one of its own, Mugabe. Over 60 activists who had gone to present their case to the Southern African Heads of State Summit, in Lusaka Zambia, last week, were arrested and some of them deported.

Meanwhile the United Nations High Commission on Refugees estimated that there are over 3 million Zimbabweans displaced in the SADC region, and predicted an increase in the coming months. Yet the patriarchs meeting in Lusaka concluded that the problems in Zimbabwe were 'exaggerated.'

What prospects are there for us to unite, across the region, from below, in defiance of the regional patriarchs? Social movements in the SADC region have, through the Southern African Social Forum and other relationships, acted in solidarity with the suffering masses in Zimbabwe. Not only are the social movements tackling the regional dictatorship but global economic justice issues too.

Elite Transition or people first?

Because Mugabe's reign is untenable, even to other Zanu(PF) elites who cannot cope with inflation or the closure of retail trade, the real challenge is the kind of transition we will end up with. Mbeki has been given the role of mediator in the Zimbabwe crisis, yet he endorsed the last 3 stolen elections: 2000, 2002 and 2005. Mbeki has sought at each turn to find a solution that re-legitimises the Mugabe regime, in the form of an elite transition, which once again like the Lancaster House Agreement is not based on popular sentiment. Once again, as Everjoice Win warns us, we will suffer a patriarchal mode of liberation:

"Whatever 'deal' is worked out to resolve Zimbabwe's crisis, women and their rights should be at the centre of it. We want feminists -- women who care about the rights of other women and who are prepared to rock the patriarchal boat -- to be in leadership positions and to be there when the deal is made. Women want a new and comprehensive Constitution that guarantees their rights. This includes a provision which clearly states that customary law and tradition must not violate international human rights, norms and standards. We want to see a complete overhaul of a political system that has seen women reduced to political cheerleaders, or worse, sex workers with few economic prospects and the lowest life expectancy in the world."

Women whose conspicuous absence I noted above at the Lancaster House negotiations are now demanding a place at the table as a right and not out of the largess of fellow male comrades or the regional patriarchs.

But like many, Mbeki's own brother Moeletsi does not have much confidence in him. Commenting on South Africa's mediation process, Moeletsi said in an interview with Sky News Sunday Live:

"You are very unlikely to get any meaningful intervention by South Africa or other Southern African countries, because [for] all of them, the trade union inspired political party led by Morgan Tsvangirai is a threat also to them... You know our own government is faced with challenges from the trade unions, so if

you are faced with that situation I think the priority for any politician is his own power, his own opportunity to stay in power rather than issues of conscience. So I think in terms of South Africa the issue of how to frustrate the trade unions taking power and challenging the power of the ruling parties is more of a priority than the beating of opposition demonstrators and their leader."

One does not need to go very far to confirm this cynicism than Thabo Mbeki's own ANC news letter column entitled 'Who are our heroes and heroines', published last week in defense of his sacking of former deputy health minister, Nozizwe Madlala-Routledge. It is Mugabeism par-excellence. Not only is Mbeki drawn to using the royal 'We' in reference to himself, as does Mugabe, it is quite clear that everyone else is to blame but him. Mbeki's culture of denialism has characterized his responses to the HIV/AIDS pandemic (part of the fiasco with the former deputy minister of health), the arms deal, the damage done by neoliberal policies, and Zimbabwe.

Relaunch a people's struggle

I want to argue here that there is a strong case for people to people solidarity. Always in history underdogs have united against different forms of tyranny as witnessed in both anti-colonialism and apartheid struggles. This is the challenge we are faced with as activists, in the world.

The starting point for this is to reclaim the left from a local to a global perspective. We seem to have been lulled into believing there is a multiple choice of whether we want a dictatorship or the neo-liberal agenda. This is how polarized the debate on Zimbabwe is. Speak truth to power. Wage a new struggle truly from a leftist perspective and that means clarity on who our friends and allies are going to be.

By this I mean unity for the sake of unity against Mugabe has not worked, it is not working, let us be honest. There are those who claim to be with us but who are suspect in their quickness to consume the crumbs that fall from the dictators table. In the past years this included standing for senate elections, a costly venture for the suffering masses. Another example is the speed with which they endorse Mbeki's mediation without taking due regard of the desires of people on the ground.

These are the people whom many of us claim to represent, and yet we know who is there to help demonstrate against the raw sewage their children play in everyday, and when they suffer from the commodification of basic services such as water and electricity. We know who cares when they languish at Lindela Refugee Camp. We see how much money is used in lobbying and advocacy in South Africa alone.

Our struggle has to be defined by our Ubuntu-ness, the ability to link the bigger questions of democracy and human rights to us as a people and our compassion for other suffering people.

We cannot blame the elites for their dismal failure as leaders but at the same time we reproduce the same vampire like elitist tendencies. We must untrap ourselves from buzz words used to attract donor funds. For example, what can possibly be 'people centered' when over half the population - women - are not involved. Who speaks on behalf of whom, to what end?

Comrades, the next few months are not going to be easy ones for us as we once again confront Mugabe's tyranny.