

VOICES OF DISSENT:
THE MUSIC OF CHIWONISO MARAIRE, THE REBEL WOMAN
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Introduction

Through a selected audience response, this study brings to fore the subtle political connotations in Chiwoniso Maraire's music. The song lyrics have uncharacteristically eluded critics' attention in what some perceive as an undemocratic Zimbabwe faced with repressive laws which curtail citizens' rights and freedoms. This study focuses on the effective deployment of an indigenous musical arts type applied to tackle the social-political malaise conflicting the integrity and humanity experiences of current political governance in Zimbabwe. The research is premised on the author's awareness that in indigenous Africa, musical arts was conceived and applied to play critical roles as intangible force that managed societal systems, coerced humanity consciousness and sanctioned deviations in the conduct of sublime societal living. To buttress this Nzewi posits that:

"African musical arts in all its ramifications and transactions, is the product of intuition researched and made concrete in human/societal experiences. That the logic of the musical arts explicates the lore of life is not a mystery, rather a mastery of the intuitive science that systematic sonic rationalizations can process the meaning of human life, death and society" (2007:8).

As such, this chapter pursues a discussion detailing how Chiwoniso continued through her music to subtly negotiate the drastic temper of the governance authority that is intolerant of voices of sanity, dissent and criticism in the contemporary Zimbabwe governance milieu. Regardless of the continued intoxication and repressive antics by the ZANU PF regime in their quest to curtail public criticism, Chiwoniso Maraire managed to manipulate *mbira* music to propagate messages of dissent at the same time getting overwhelming ovation from the Zimbabwean government and the general public alike. Chiwoniso Maraire has on many times been avowed for her mastery of the *nyunga nyunga mbira* as well as her succulent and soothing voice which flawlessly flows on any *mbira* melody be it in the traditional, jazz or Hip Hop style. As a result, attention on Chiwoniso's music has seldom transcended the beauty of her craft. Often attention has diverted from her craft to her parentage which as well just works to solidify that the sultry musician inherited the prowess from her late father Dr Dumisani Maraire and her mother Chengeto Lindarose Nemarundwe Maraire who were musicians in their own capacities. Her parents introduced Chiwoniso to *mbira* at the age of four and professionally recording her at the tender age of nine.

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The late Chiwoniso managed to move away from just playing traditional songs or renditions of such to playing her own compositions which were distinctively 'Chiwoniso'. Almost always musicians famed for playing the *mbira* have not really shown their ingenuity in manipulating the instrument. While it is true that many effortlessly play the different *mbira* modes which include but not limited to *karigamombe, nhiutimu, chigamba, chemtengure, mukatiende, nyamaropa, nhemamusasa, urombo, chigwaya, nd ofa ndichibayiwa, bangidza, kuzanga and zvichapera* very few have managed to create 'new sound on the *mbira*'. But Chiwoniso did not just manipulate the *mbira* sound to identify with urban music and or world music, most importantly, in her music she speaks of the prevailing socio-political situation of her time. Perminus Maturu (2013) posits that:

The current situation has given room for improvisation and individual composition of songs. *Mbira* players are now composing their own songs in addition to the traditional *mbira* pieces. The songs address current affairs which include political, social, or economic issues.

In order to understand the reason and efficaciousness of Chiwoniso's music in voicing dissent and championing for a sublime societal living it is important to briefly discuss the context in which she made the music. Here, I provide the political, social and economic context in Zimbabwe. It is not within the scope of this discussion to provide a detailed history of Zimbabwe, her geographical data or otherwise but to put into context how the music of Zimbabwe is a mirror image of the prevailing conditions. As a result, this subaltern study will provide a contextual background which pays particular attention to the living pressures that Zimbabweans are faced with.

METHODOLOGY

A qualitative research methodology was employed, given that the research sought to give further insight and analysis of the meanings made by a cross section of the society on Chiwoniso Maraire's music. The study makes use of audience views on selected Chiwoniso Maraire's music. The audience interpretations were gathered through focus group discussions and unstructured in-depth interviews. The audience view was gathered to ascertain whether the messages ingrained in Chiwoniso Maraire's music resonates with people's lived experiences and existential realities in Zimbabwe's socio political realm. This discussion is also partly reflective as I also used my lived knowledge of Zimbabwe to come up to some conclusions, especially after interviews with students who were on Presidential scholarship. The study does a textual analysis of five of Chiwoniso's song lyrics to see how they contextualise as well gives insight into how the socio-political crisis in Zimbabwe influenced Chiwoniso in making her music.

The study used purposive sampling to come up with research participants. Purposive sampling procedure allowed the research work with participants who had a high likelihood of cooperating for the duration of the study and whose encounter with Chiwoniso Maraire's music is enough to warrant credible data. The music under study as well as the study participants was selected using purposive sampling. The cross sectional sample included political activists from ZANU PF and the MDC, and residents of Gweru who were chosen for the availability through-out the research process. The focus group discussion was held with the final year music critique class from the Midlands State University.

According to David and Sutton, in “Purposive sampling, the units are selected according to the researchers own knowledge and opinion about which ones they think will be appropriate to the topic area” (2011:232).

In explaining the *Rebel Woman’s* subversive tendencies, the research embraces the Subject Centred Ethnography as elaborated by Rice (2003). This applied ethnomusicological mode of inquiry allows us to establish how Chiwoniso Maraire’s music and performances re-enacts social and political structures in the contemporary context.

The method has three constructs which are time, metaphor and place. The forwards a relationship between people’s making and experience of music as determined by common time and place. Subjected Centred Ethnography upholds that observing the interaction of people occupying slightly different subject positions but interacting in time and place, can help to establish how that specific time and place influences the ways in which people make and experience music (Rice, 2003). This study used time and place constructs of the theory to establish the late Chiwoniso Maraire’s responses to political and social challenges through her music. In addition, interviews were held with respondents occupying different subject positions in Zimbabwe to gather how they decipher the messages in Chiwoniso’s music. The interviews collected data on the possible reasons why Chiwoniso was never arrested for singing purportedly incitiful music.

The third construct metaphor establishes how Chiwoniso’s music reflects Zimbabwe’s present political structures and how they model alternatives to existing structures. This third dimension of Rice’s “Subject-Centred ethnography”, musical metaphor, makes it possible for people to have a better understanding of music as it brings “seemingly distant domains closer together”. Implied is that metaphor brings music closer to “other domains of human experience” (Ibid 159). Rice forwards four major music metaphors as “music-as-art”, “music-as-social behaviour”, “music-as-symbolic system or text capable of reference not only to already existing music but also a world beyond music” and “music-as-commodity” (Ibid 166-167). This study embraces the “music-as-social behaviour” metaphor, which proffers an understanding of how the socio-political environment in Zimbabwe might have influenced the late Chiwoniso Maraire in the creation of new works. In addition this study employs the “music-as symbolic system or text” which assists in examining what a select Zimbabwean audience feels Chiwoniso Maraire’s music is saying about the time and place in which they live.

Fieldwork was carried out in Mkoba, Midlands State University, Stanger in Durban and the University of KwaZulu Natal also in Durban. During the data collection the author was also a student at UKZN. To that end it was also convenient for him to make contact with Zimbabweans studying at UKZN and those staying in Stanger to offer the Diaspora’s view on the agency of Chiwoniso Maraire’s music in speaking out against socio-political rote in Zimbabwe.

Mkoba is a suburb in Gweru and is the most populous high density² suburb in the city. Gweru falls between the Shona and Ndebele regions hence a sizeable percentage of her residents can speak both of the major local languages although Shona is spoken by the majority with approximately 30% speaking Ndebele³. Gweru experienced all political violence epochs experienced in independent Zimbabwe since *Gukurahundi* disturbances of 1983. Like most urban areas in Zimbabwe the constituency is characterized by declining standard of living, food shortages and severe power and water cuts to that end many Gweru residents have faced political, social and economic woes from emanating from both ZANU PF's long repressive rule and the poignant and stagnant inclusive government. Gweru has a healthy mix of the Ndebeles and Shonas. It is also a place where these two major languages of Zimbabwe are used with lesser tribalistic labels. Consequently, the discussion captures views of Zimbabweans in the North and Zimbabweans in the South.

The Midlands State University provided a pool of ambitious young people who are aware of the prevailing political and economic environment in Zimbabwe. The researcher worked with students from the institution's Music and Musicology department who were taking Music Critique as a module. From the author's previous studies, it was realised that authorities in the Music and Musicology department were not keen to take part in, or associate with subaltern studies which they considered subversive, hence the move to work with students on their individual capacities without engaging the University.

Stanger and University of KwaZulu Natal's Howard College Campus cannot necessarily be considered as pools of Zimbabwean Diaspora, but they were just convenient for the author as mentioned earlier. It is however important to note that just like Mkoba, KwaDukuza Stanger is home to many poor Zimbabweans who are economic refugees while UKZN houses ambitious young Zimbabweans studying for different degrees mostly under the presidential scholarship scheme which is funded by Robert Gabriel Mugabe.

Political Polarity in Zimbabwe

Zimbabwe has been facing political polarity from 1980 when the united Patriotic Front which negotiated for the country's independence during the Lancaster House Conference decided to contest in the country's first general elections as different parties. In quick succession with the elections was the *Gukurahundi* massacre which lasted from 1981 to 1987 decimating close to 20000 civilians. The bloodshed was a result of conflict between Joshua Nkomo's PF ZAPU and Robert Mugabe's ZANU PF. Fast forward to 2000, yet another spat of conflict emerge, now between the then nascent and firebrand Movement for Democratic Change and Zimbabwe African National Union Patriotic Front. In light of the recurring violence and polarity Murambadoro and Wielenga posit that:

Zimbabwe has a long history of violent conflict spreading over decades including the independence struggle. The government has implemented several high level initiatives with the intention of resolving the conflict between political parties. And these include the

² Parliament of Zimbabwe Research Department, 2011

³ Accessed from <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Gweru> on 07/11/14

Lancaster House Agreement (1979). The Dumbutshena and Chihambakwe Commissions of Inquiry in 1981 and 1983, the Unity Accord in 1987 and the Global Political Agreement in 2008 (2015:31).

In the year 2000, Zimbabwe embarked on the ill-fated but necessary “*jambanja*” Fast Track Land Reform Program (FTLRP) which precipitated what is now known as the Zimbabwean Crisis. Political analyst and scholar Makumbe views the period after the land reform as a major setback in Zimbabwe’s transition to democracy (2009:1). Zimbabwe’s major political parties, the Zimbabwe African National Union Patriotic Front (ZANU PF) is peripatetic without a solution for the deepening economic crisis while the largely confused opposition party Movement for Democratic Change (MDC) has been rendered ineffective by internal squabbles. Having said that, these two major political parties have shaped the narrative of post 2000 politics in Zimbabwe which is fraught with polarisation and conflict. Consequently, disillusioned and politically polarised Zimbabweans are excluded from participation in mainstream economical, political, and cultural life have lost hope in either of the political parties bringing positive change. However, it is myopic to assume that disenchantment with both parties has amply grown to make a third party viable in the Zimbabwean political matrix as was noted by Joseph Smiles (2006).

A country’s economy is inextricably linked to its politics, implied here is that the performance of the one affects the other. In Zimbabwe as noted by Makumbe “all this progress has begun to crumble in the face of a debilitating economic and political crisis” (2009:6). Zimbabwe currently has an astounding rate of unemployment, standing at over 90 percent. The economy is moribund many companies have either downsized or closed shop out rightly. Zimbabwe is literally running a vendor economy as almost everyone is trying to irk a living from setting up some small business to fill the gap that was created by massive de-industrialisation in the country. News24 reports that “Zimbabwe’s collapsing economy has forced many companies to close, leaving redundant workers, school leavers and college graduates turning to petty trading on the streets” (2015). Such conditions brew the need for protest art to create urgency in redressing the challenges.

As a result of the political-economic malaise, Zimbabwe’s health services system and facilities has been neglected exposing citizen to great danger. Persistence of the crisis could cause unprecedented deaths of vulnerable populations such as infants. The country is also grappling with a relatively high infection of HIV whose prevalence, according to the National AIDS Council stands at 15%, that is an estimated 1,390,211 people living with HIV. In addition to the health care crisis Zimbabwe’s social fabric is also tattered. The people are not productively united across divides, in cases where there is strong social capital it usually is bonding social capital and not bridging social capital. Zimbabwe’s bickering is detrimental to national development as most citizens are now self-centred and are hesitant to cooperate for the common good of the community. Those with political muscles benefit from impunity and have put in place legislation and system which mute voices of dissent.

Muting voices of Dissent

Since the turn of the millennium in the 2000 Zimbabwe's political sphere has been marred with incessant contestations and bickering. The ZANU PF government led by Robert Gabriel Mugabe has been accused of undermining key democratic institutions and processes, elections included. To maintain their stranglehold the ZANU PF government has crafted draconian laws which side-line the subaltern to the periphery of decision making and development. The Zimbabwean government also promulgated laws such as the heavily contested AIPPA and POSA which stifle the citizens' voices. They have also selectively used the Censorship and Entertainment Control Act (1996) to mute voices of artists who offer divergent political views as they are considered to derail the 'Liberation war gains'.

Arguably the zenith of ZANU PF's scheming in trying to quell protestant artists is the case of Bulawayo based installation Artist Owen Maseko who has been drawn to the Supreme Court. On March 26 2010, Owen Maseko a Bulawayo based installation artist was arrested together with Voti Thebe, the Director of the National Art gallery. He stood accused of mounting an exhibition which undermined the authority as well as inciting tribal hatred. According to Sokwanele:

Maseko was charged with violating Section 33 of the Criminal Law and Codification Act, a law that punishes anyone who "insults or undermines the authority of the President". He was also charged with Section 42 (2): "Causing offence to persons of a particular race, religion, etc": Any person who publicly makes any insulting or otherwise grossly provocative statement that causes offence to persons of a particular race, tribe, place of origin, colour, creed or religion, intending to cause such offence or realising there is a real risk or possibility of doing so, shall be guilty of causing offence to persons of a particular race, tribe, place of origin, colour, creed or religion, as the case may be.

Maseko's case is one of the many incidences that the Robert Mugabe led ZANU PF government has incessantly tried to erase the shadowy and gloomy Zimbabwean political past which include the Gukurahundi massacres.

The ZANU PF government also goes an extra mile in muting artists' voice through direct political control and interference from the feared State Security apparatus who sit in during rehearsals or attend shows donning military gear. Ravengai posits that "Once the secret service has learned about an intended production by a theatre group, it sends its agents to go and sit-in during rehearsals. The sitting-in is a kind of unsanctioned editorial process during the process of text production." (2015:10). However, ZANU PF's censorship of artistic voices is parallel to blindfolding the blind as it does not really have an effect on either the sight of the blind person or their sense of direction besides causing pain and anguish. Indeed the laws have managed to instil fear in many voices of dissent but regrettably they have dismally failed to mute the voices of dissent. It is in the same manner that ZANU PF has taken a plethora of 'restorative' strategies which have limited the space for socio-political contestation that the artists have also come up with ways through which they continue to question the grand master narratives proffered by the ZANU PF regime. Chiwoniso Maraire is one of the very few artists and probably the most popular female artist, offering diverging views on the prevailing political dispensation thus stimulating debate and discussion on the otherwise "thorny issues". Traditionally one

of the duties of artists in the Zimbabwean community is to relay messages through rank and file of her people without fear of reprisal.

THEORETICAL CONCEPTION

This study is framed under the Alternative Culture Theory by Gugulethu Siziba (2009), which forwards that often in repressed environments the subaltern often find ways through which they can speak out or share their grievances without poking the government. The theory's awareness of the emergency of other cultures in hostile environments lays a foundation from which to ask questions on the implications of staging criticism/ subversive acts, and how the locals take the performances of such. As well as finding out which strategies are used to avoid offensive confrontation with the authorities and getting arrested. Chiwoniso staged her performances at a time when Zimbabwe has been highly politicized and polarised between the ZANU PF and MDC.

I make use of the theory to focus on how Chiwoniso negates political and social constraints and move from the periphery of the making of culture to become a significant actor in culture formation thus challenging gerontocracy and patriarchy which forces many Zimbabweans to be passive imbibers of culture. The Alternative Culture Theory allows this study to explore the widely spread view that the Zimbabwe government oppresses the country's artists' fundamental rights, notably rights to expression and association.

As discussed earlier under issues of censorship and control of arts (Subsection 1.1), the production and reproduction of culture in Zimbabwe is deliberately monitored and controlled by the Government through legislative instruments which safeguard the interests of the ruling elite. Furthermore, in Zimbabwe like many other African states, culture production and reproduction is largely dominated by the adult population and gerontocracy which honours history or tradition at the expense of other diverging or new cultural views. Siziba posits "Culture and its production to date have been informed by patriarchy and gerontocracy and this has disadvantaged young people. The emphasis on age and wisdom simply dismisses the aspirations of young people" (2009:12). In such communities where there is cultural production monitoring there is a tendency to expect homogeneous cultures or similar behaviours from most people as they learn their culture from one source, which is their particular community. Foucault opines that society is constantly engaged in surveillance of individual behaviour and sets sanctions to independent 'in-appropriate' behaviour. Society seeks to generate uniformity and acquiescence to standardized behaviour.

Consequently, aggrieved members of the society are faced with the daunting task of fighting a system opposed to change through alternative cultural strategies.

Indeed, culture is a people's way of life as implied by Tylor, in Naomi Kipuri who defines culture as "...that complex whole which includes knowledge, belief, art, law, morals, customs, and all other

capabilities and habits acquired by man as a member of society" (2004:1). The complexity of culture is embedded in a plurality of factors the most obvious being that the many people who make up a culture bring in an assortment of traits and attitudes whose sum has a bearing on production and reproduction of culture. As such, the frame of this article to discuss how disgruntlement with the social and political environment in Zimbabwe influenced Chiwoniso in making and performing music as is guided by the Alternative Culture Theory. Humanity always purposefully engages in cultural production and reproduction for its own use. By nature human beings are not passive imbibers of cultural knowledge, people internalise schemas, or cultural models which have influence on their decision making and behaviour (Scupin, 2012:43). As communities live and produce culture, differences in expressions and preferences are bound to happen. Issues of contestations and control always come into play whenever culture bearers or opinion leaders, and the subaltern differ in imagining their worldview.

ARTS FOR SOCIAL CHANGE IN ZIMBABWE

The use of the performing arts as an agency for social change is a wide spread phenomenon in Africa. Most parts of Africa are gerontocratic societies where it is difficult in-fact impermissible to public address or counsel elders. As such, the societies use music and other art forms to sanction the elderly and those in power. Commenting on his ethnographic experiences with African music and dance, John Blacking cited by Angela Impey and Barbra Nussbaum posits:

African societies treat music and dance as foundations of social life, which enable people to discover and develop their human potential, reaffirm their relationships with each other, to sharpen their sensitivities and educate their emotions. In such societies music helps people to remain politically conscious, intellectually alive and creative, constantly adapting to the changes that are required as people relate to their environment and make decisions about the future (1996:3).

There are cases which are specific to Zimbabwe where art in general and music in particular has been used to achieve political gains. Zimbabwe's liberation war was not just won from the barrel of the gun. Pongweni dedicated a book to such songs that helped to spur on the liberation war fighters, motivated and united communities (1982). The music which Pongweni discusses together with music which was produced by renowned Zimbabwean artists such as Thomas Mapfumo, Zexie Manatsa and Chinx Chingairai critiqued Ian Smith's government yet it was considered to be nationalist by the ZANU PF leadership and other liberation war parties such as ZIPRA. Interestingly, Chiwoniso made music which critiqued the ruling government and was labelled subversive by the same people who used to hail songs which sanction the behaviours of those in power.

It is important to note that music is not the only cultural activity that has been used by Zimbabweans to negotiate for social space and political recognition (Mazango, 2012:29-44). The era in which Chiwoniso sang Zimbabwe also experienced a surge in protest theatre. Protest theatre is used to speak out against the social and political ills presented by the repressive government in Zimbabwe. Ngonidzashe Muwonwa highlighted the risky and diverging contributions of young people to the

democratic processes of Zimbabwean politics through protest theatre after the year 2000 (2012:1). Some Zimbabwean poets who work under the banner of Zimbabwe Poets for Human Rights use poetry to speak out against human rights abuses in Zimbabwe⁴. Sculptors have also weighed in with their stone work in the call for social change. Jesmael Mataga and Farai Chabata posit that “although the sculptors made and still make sculpture that deals with traditional spiritual values, they have also addressed other pertinent social issues such as poverty, violence, gender, Christianity (especially at the Serima Mission), and HIV/AIDS, all of which affect the sculptors directly” (2011).

All these protest art forms have been happening against a background of repressive antics from the ruling party, some of which include draconian legislation and at the very worst violent physical abuse of the artists. Discussing on Marechera’s brush with the law Ravengai posits “The fears of College Press management were proved right as the state moved in to contain Marechera’s intellectual anarchism through violence and arrests. In order to discourage the writer from writing similar works, the writer became an enemy of the state. The state stopped invoking the Censorship and Entertainment Control Act (1967), but used harassment and detention as a method of containing Dambudzo Marechera” (2015: 4). Artists have braved even the worst forms of brutality in their quest for positive social change. Below I discuss the audience interpretation of selected music from Chiwoniso in which she valiantly stood for the betterment of the lives of many.

Audience responses to select Chiwoniso songs

Zimbabwe’s showbiz has very unique patterns. They are a lot of very talented musicians but only a handful manage to attract big crowds at their live shows and these include Oliver Mtukudzi, Jah Prayzah Alick Macheso, Baba naMai Charamba and Winky D. Zim Dancehall artists such as Tockey Vibes, Killer T and Souljah, Kinnah among many attract very big crowds but only when they having joint shows which attract as many as 20 artists. Chiwoniso was not in the category of these crowd pulling artists yet all the participants of this study knew who she was, her songs and what she was famed for. She indeed had a following but sadly, that did not translate into big crowds attending shows. What is important however, is that she had a wide reach which has a high likelihood of contributing to mass positive change. I also found out that Chiwoniso was more popular amongst the activists I interviewed than among interviewees who for lack of a better term had no tags. This probably, was because Chiwoniso was a bohemian and activist of some sorts.

For the purposes of this study, the participants had to listen to selected songs from Chiwoniso Maraire. The songs were taken from her three albums, and these are *Ndofa ndichibaiwa*, *Madame 20 cents*, *Ivaine*, *Midzimu Dzoka*, *Chaminuka*, *Pamuromo paHaruna* and *Rebel Woman*. It is important to note that some of the selected songs are old age folk songs which were certainly created for a context different

⁴ Poets give voice to human rights <http://www.thezimbabwean.co/entertainment/music-anddance/68878/poets-give-voice-to-human.html>

to today. These songs have lived and along the way they have taken up new melodies preferred by whoever sings them. However, most of the songs maintain the form with which they can be identified with as to be belonging to a particular genre. For instance, Chiwoniso and Thomas Mapfumo's renditions of *Pamuromo paHaruna* create two distinct styles yet they both fall into the same genre. It is thus possible that as the songs take new styles they also take new meanings. To that end, the pursuing discussion will detail how the respondents make meanings of the songs in contemporary Zimbabwe.

Of Political violence and fratricidal conflict: The song *Ndofa Ndichibaiwa*.

The song *ndofa ndichibaiwa* is a folk song whose literal meaning is "I will die from stabbed" or I am dying from stabs".

Ndofa ndichibaiwa, maiwe ndofa ndichibaiwa
 Hoiya iyahore ndobaiwa amaiwe iwe herere
 Ndiani wadai zvake amaiwe ndiani wadai zvake
 Ndiani wadai zvake baba ndiani wadai zvake
 Ndiani wadai zvake Shewe ndiani wadai zvake
 Ndoenda baba ndoenda ndoga
 Ndichifa ndichibaiwa ndoenda ndoga

I am dying from being stabbed, oh mother, I am dying from being stabbed.
 (Yodelling) I am being stabbed oh mother
 Who has done this? Oh mother who has done this?
 Who has done this? Oh father who has done this?
 Who has done this? Oh Lord who has done this?
 I will go father, I will go alone
 I will go alone as I die, as I die from being stabbed

A long time ago Zimbabwe used to have wars between paramount chiefs and even within chieftaincy families. Usually wars would erupt between rival groups with victors annihilating the conquered. These wars were fought using spears, bows and arrows. As such the song *ndofa ndichibaiwa* sits well in this old age context. Respondents felt that the song has the same meaning today even though there is no more arrows and bow wars. Zimbabweans have experienced a long spat of internal conflict. The post colonial nation of Zimbabwe has a long history of internal political violence which dates back to 1981 when the infamous *Gukurahundi* strife broke out. *Gukurahundi* became the first of politically motivated violence in Zimbabwe and it has been followed by different epochs of internal strife which include the 1995 elections in which the late Patrick Kombayi was allegedly shot by ZANU PF activist Kizito Chivamba. According to Benedict Unendoro "In the run-up to general elections in 1990, the head of the Central Intelligence Organisation, CIO, in the Midlands region, Elias Kanengoni, and senior ZANU-PF Youth League official Kizito Chivamba shot opposition candidate Patrick Kombayi, who had made the mistake of running against Mugabe's deputy, Simon Muzenda" (2007:2).

Following through were the 2000 *jambanja* land reform, 2008 harmonised elections and the subsequent run off as well as sporadic well calculated violence of the 2013 elections. The song thus speaks to the internal violence between locals. The text *ndoenda ndoga baba ndichifa ndichibaiwa* literally translated to “I am going alone as I die from stabbing”. It speaks of how multitudes, individual die from politically motivated violence usually triggered by political party elites. In this political madness, politicians have also used drugs as an effective mechanism to control the actions and minds of the young electorate. Commenting on the spate of political violence in Zimbabwe, the then Minister of Public Service who is also a victim of political violence Lucia Matibenga, said “the perpetrators are young, they are poor and unemployed and they perpetrate for just a little amount of money or even drugs”⁵. The deliberate manipulation of young people by politicians to mete violence is further emphasized by Lindsay Hilker and Erika Fraser (2009:32) who argues that “in Zimbabwe, party elites recruited excluded youth into their youth wing and often used them to intimidate and brutalise the population”.

The song has ambiguous, but depressing meanings. Metaphorically *ndoenda ndoga baba ndichifa ndichibaiwa* means “I will do it alone no matter how difficult the going gets”. Respondents concur that in the song, Chiwoniso mirrors the prevailing situation where the society no longer has a sense of community and the government has also forsaken its role of taking care of the citizens. The government of Zimbabwe has been blamed for not upholding the needs of her people. Often the Zimbabwean government is said to be insincere about implementing policies which address the real issues troubling Zimbabwean citizens.

Abject poverty, economic disparities *Madame 20 cents and Ivai nesu*

Prior to my interaction with participants of this study, the song *Madame 20 cents* had quite an obvious meaning. In the song there is a voice of a young person, probably a street urchin who asks for a 20 cents donation to help him see through the day as he no one to take to turn to. I felt the empathic voice was meant to stimulate people to give homeless children better lives. However, respondents pointed out that the song is emblematic of the beggar nation that Zimbabwe as a state has become and how the rich revel in seeing the poor beg from them. The meaning and theme of poverty also dovetails with the message in her song *Ivai nesu*. *Ivai nesu* also speaks to the prejudices of the world, the social inequalities where there is stark different between the haves and the have nots. Below are the lyrics and lyrical translation of the song *Ivai nesu*.

Ivai Nesu

Vamwe vaparara nenzara (As some are dying of hunger)

Vamwe vachifa nekuguta (Others are overfilled)

Kumwe vaparara nemvura (In some places they have been destroyed by water/floods)

Kumwe vachipera nezuva (While in others, they are wiped out by the sun/drought)

⁵ Lucia Matibenga's comment on the use of drugs by politicians to manipulate youth retrieved from <http://akcampaign.wordpress.com/2011/10/11/victim-of-political-violence-becomes-minister-in-zimbabwe/> on 07/11/13

Kutungamira nekutungamirwa (In leading and being led)
Tiri vana venyu (We are your children)
Ivai nesu Mwari Baba (Be with us God our Father)

While poor governance, abuse of power, and undemocratic tendencies are big issues in Zimbabwe, the general public feels most the effects of poverty. These songs were thus lauded by the audience as a mirror image of their daily lives of lack.

Chiwoniso an unscathed Rebel

The foregoing discussion has made it clear that in these songs discussed thus far Chiwoniso pokes the government. However, she was crafty as she used idioms. The idioms have an advantage that they have ambiguous meanings and the speaker can choose to pick that meaning which gives them a safety net in case they are in trouble with the state security. In addition as has been discussed earlier Chiwoniso's association with traditional music was in line with the preferences of the ruling ZANU PF. In her rendition of Chaminuka she forwards the notion that leaders are ordained by a supreme being which is the same line of thought that ZANU PF bears.

It is during this period where upholding of democratic values was arguably at its lowest ebb in Zimbabwe that Chiwoniso made her name in the music industry at home and abroad. It is highly likely that the ruling party embraced her for because of her use of traditional instruments. During this time ZANU PF was facing arguably the toughest threat to power in form of the nascent Movement for Democratic Change. ZANU PF resorted to aligning itself to the values of Chimurenga, ancestral spirits, traditional life and by extension music. Gonye argues that ZANU PF "seeks to clandestinely connect the First, Second, and Third chimurenga by making *kongonya* a dance for land, the gala a site for the nation's reorientation, and the *kongonya* jingle a provocative reminder to forgetful citizens" (2013:76). It is against this backdrop that I also think that Chiwoniso was embraced by the government.

This is, however, not to demean the immense role she played as a de facto cultural ambassador whenever she staged outside Zimbabwe. It is also important to note that Chiwoniso did not from the beginning oppose the Fast Track Land Reform Program, she supported the land redress. However, she had different views on how it was implemented and how freedoms were curtailed in Zimbabwe. In introducing her song Kurima in one of her performances in Lafayette a city located along the Vermilion River in south western Louisiana she boldly declared that the land reform was necessary⁶. Freemuse also reports that "originally a strong supporter of President Robert Mugabe's land reforms in Zimbabwe, Chiwoniso Maraire started openly criticizing the lack of competence, the increasing corruption and lack of free speech". Ultimately she had to leave Zimbabwe for the United States in 2007 just like many did in pursuit of better lives as Zimbabwe's economy was failing by the day.

⁶ Kurima performance in Lafayette can be accessed from <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=FQuVXAnlyz8>

However, in the song *Mudzimu Dzoka* which is a folk song there was consensus from the participants that the song is a prayer to God through the ancestors that they should come save them from continued persecution from ZANU PF. The argument forwarded is that if the ancestral powers were to be cast in Zimbabwe today, they will serve in a Zimbabwe under the leadership of Robert Mugabe. Implied is that they will help people from the powers Robert Mugabe has caused. In addition, Tapiwa⁷ observes that in the song calls the name of living ZANU PF and ex ZANU PF instead of calling names of the dead who qualify to be *vadzimu* which could be a call to ZANU PF to change leadership or at least notice that people are suffering. Following is an excerpt of the lyrics of the song Rebel woman:

There will be no compensation
It was of your free will
Oh, that you stood on the frontlines
Rebel woman, these are the rules of war
Remember that you fought for your people
I know the freedom has been hard won
It's been so hard won
But as you weep Rebel Woman
Remember you are strong

As rebellious as Chiwoniso was she still had motherly love. Her track 'One world' on the album Rebel woman is a sentimental song which dovetails with what Chiwoniso rebels for. While, it was agreed by participants that in the song Chiwoniso chose to speak with the voice of a mother who is imploring her family to observe peace, they also feel it's a clarion call for everyone to practise peaceful coexistence with the next person whether known or unknown and from across divides. The lyrics are as follows

Ngatibvisei zvibingaidzo izvo (Let us remove these barriers)
Rusarura neruvengo, zvinoparadza (Discrimination and hatred can only destroy)
Vana vanotarisisira rudo kwatiri (Our children expect love from us)
We have only one world, to give to the children

Conclusion

It is this vibrancy and quality that distinguished her creativity in contemporary context to creativity in the traditional milieu, for while traditional musicians and their communities by all means maintain authentic performance practices, Chiwoniso was an unlimited artists who went further than the confines of her tradition and experimented with world music, while ensuring that her Zimbabwean musical roots are not submerged nor exterminated in the process. Chiwoniso managed to use music as agency for positive change. She managed to manipulate both the *mbira* playing as well as song lyrics to speak to otherwise thorny issues while attracting minimal persecution from the media. Under the ZANU PF edicts Chi was definitely a rebel. However, many interviewed appreciate the role which Chiwoniso's music spurs them to fight on till injustices are eradicated.

⁷ Pseudonym given to interviewee

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Legal instruments

Censorship and Entertainment Control Act (1996)
Constitution of Zimbabwe (1980)
Copyright and Neighbouring Rights Act (2006)
Public Order and Security Act (2002)