

Reconciliation, conciliation, integration and national healing: Possibilities and challenges in Zimbabwe

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Abstract

The attainment of independence by Zimbabwe in 1980 was accompanied by great hope as Mugabe enunciated a policy of National Reconciliation. Zimbabwe, in its current state is a country that, more than in 1980, is in need of reconciliation, social integration and national healing. This need arises from the colonial and post-colonial experiences of dehumanisation and brutalisation of segments of the populace in Zimbabwe. It is the intention of this paper to interrogate the need for reconciliation, social integration and national healing in Zimbabwe as well as the challenges and possibilities. The paper traces the earlier attempts at reconciliation in Zimbabwe, the successes and the challenges and what led to the present situation of extreme polarisation in Zimbabwean society. The paper further provides an assessment of current attempts at reconciliation, integration and national healing. Furthermore, the paper discusses some conceptions of reconciliation and integration and what appear to be necessary conditions for the success of any attempts at reconciliation, social integration and national healing in Zimbabwe.

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Introduction

While reconciliation, integration and national healing have a history as long as that of human existence, they remain very contentious issues. The meanings of the concepts, and the conditions of reconciliation, national healing and integration are as diverse as human communities that have had occasion to create conditions that are affirmative of human life, especially after conflict. It is therefore, the intention in this paper to presently explore the concepts of reconciliation and integration which are preconditions for national healing in post-conflict situations. The discussion of these concepts will be followed by an examination of what necessitates processes such as integration and national healing in Zimbabwe. In this paper it is argued that as pointed out by Bloomfield (2003:11) processes of reconciliation, integration and national healing should involve whole communities if they are to succeed, since it is 'entire communities who have to begin to reorient themselves from the adversarial, antagonistic relations of war to more respect-based relations of cooperation'. That is why it is necessary in the final analysis to reconstitute the Organ for National Healing, Reconciliation and Integration (ONHRI) in Zimbabwe.

The concept of reconciliation

That reconciliation is a complex concept is axiomatic (Bloomfield 2003:12). Bloomfield (2003:12) contends that the complexity emanates partly from its being 'both a *goal* – something to achieve, – and a *process* – a means to achieve that goal'. He further maintains that the complexity also arises from the fact that the process of reconciliation occurs in many contexts, for example, between husband and wife, offender and victim, between friends who have disagreed as well as between nations or communities that have fought. Therefore, there is always need to make clear the context in which one discusses reconciliation. Having made clear that his concern is with post-war/post-conflict situations, Bloomfield (2003:12) defines reconciliation as:

... an over-arching process which includes the search for truth, justice, forgiveness, healing and so on. ... it means finding a way to live alongside former enemies ... to coexist with them, to develop the degree of cooperation

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necessary to share our society with them, so that we all have better lives together than we have had separately.

Drawing from a line of reasoning similar to the above, Bloomfield (2003:3) earlier on argued that the basic definition of reconciliation then is ‘a process through which a society moves from a divided past to a shared future’.

Closely related to the above views is Mawondo’s (2009:3) position that reconciliation is ‘a process that re-establishes love and understanding between two or more estranged parties’. He further argues that if reconciliation is to occur, what is important is that the initial cause of the conflict must be honestly and earnestly reappraised with a view to finding a genuine solution. Mawondo (2009:4) states:

Instead of trying to avoid the causes of the conflict, reconciliation requires that all parties to the conflict must present their demands and that any proposed settlement should take into account these various demands.

Along the same lines of reasoning, Asmal, Asmal and Roberts (1997:46) argue that reconciliation is about ‘facing of unwelcome truth in order to harmonise incommensurable world views so that inevitable and continuing conflict and differences stand at least within a single universe of comprehensibility’. Furthermore, it will involve ‘getting used to living with each other’ (Asmal, Asmal and Roberts 1997:46). What emerges from these definitions is that reconciliation necessarily involves uncovering the expectations of the combatants, followed by negotiation and compromise. Reconciliation therefore seeks to re-connect, to re-establish the harmony disturbed or destroyed by the conflict through arriving at a common understanding. This further implies that genuine reconciliation is always mutual. Thus, Asmal, Asmal and Roberts (1997:46–47) regard reconciliation as ‘a shared and painful ethical voyage from wrong to right, and also a symbolic settling of moral and political indebtedness’. It follows, therefore, that reconciliation by its very nature involves a willingness to sacrifice, to take the risk of exposing oneself to possible danger, to be accommodative of each other’s demands and expectations as well as to be prepared to forgo some prerogatives, and to surrender to some extent to the former adversary.

At the same time, all parties to the negotiation must feel that, in some way, their concerns have been addressed if the resultant reconciliation is to endure.

Having defined reconciliation, Mawondo (2009:3) further argues that there are two models of reconciliation:

1. Reconciliation with justice, and,
2. Reconciliation without justice.

He argues that the latter is bound to fail because it leaves structures of injustice in place; it ignores the causes from which the conflict originated. Since most wars are fought in the name of justice, reconciliation cannot succeed until justice is done or appears to be done. Mawondo therefore advocates the adoption of the former.

Van Binsbergen (1999:3) views reconciliation as 'a creative social act of rearrangement and re-interpretation' and the 'transformation of conflict' into peace. He views reconciliation as involving or leading to 'the reorientation of the everyday life of all group members concerned'. It is both a concrete moment and a process which once initiated needs to be sustained. This means that reconciliation requires cooperation of the parties involved in the creation of a new dispensation acceptable to all. Consequently, this implies the adoption of a shared vision for a collective destiny.

Van Binsbergen (1999:2) further argues that a necessary condition for reconciliation is 'the express recognition by the parties concerned, that there is a specific, explicitly expressed conflict'. He proceeds to argue:

Reconciliation is only possible if the conflict is clearly and publicly discussed by those involved, and such discussion creates a clarity which may well have a beneficial influence on future relations, also because previously unexpressed contradictions have found an overt formulation which allows them to be taken into account much more readily in the social process (Van Binsbergen 1999:3).

So there is need for openness about the cause of the conflict, clarity about what is at stake and a willingness to work for the benefit of all. Furthermore, Van Binsbergen (1999:4) categorises reconciliation into:

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1. One type that allows the 'conflict to simmer on, and as a result one of the parties involved still seeks a genuine termination of the conflict through the effective annihilation of the adversary', which in fact is no reconciliation at all, and,
2. Another type which involves or constitutes 'a total transformation of social relations'.

If we accept the categorisations by Mawondo and Van Binsbergen, it would appear that what occurred in Zimbabwe was reconciliation without justice – where one party sought to annihilate the other. What was desirable and to be cherished, however, was reconciliation with justice which would involve a total transformation of social relations. Indeed, Amadiume (2000:52) argues that social justice is 'both the ends and means of healing and reconciliation'.

We may add that true reconciliation, which is that accompanied by justice and involves the establishment of new social relations, also involves a genuine commitment to end the conflict from all the parties concerned. It has to be a product of genuine realisation and acknowledgement by all that continued conflict is detrimental to the well-being of all the parties involved in the conflict, and that in the end no one will profit from the continuation of the conflict. As a process, reconciliation is sustained through the renewal of effort to promote justice, peace and national healing. When genuine reconciliation takes place, the parties come together to agree that there is need to work together, to admit guilt for crimes, to cease hostilities, and to forge or chart the way forward. It does not involve glossing over the causes of the conflict, but it does involve honest and sincere commitment to the attainment of peace. It, of necessity, involves the acknowledgement of the wrongs of the past, preparedness to forgive, and the expression of a desire to forge new relations and a new direction for the interest of all. But the wrongs of the past can only be forgiven if the truth of the past has been revealed or is known. Indeed Soyinka (2000) argues that reconciliation goes with the truth while Mamdani (2000:182) argues that truth is a prerequisite for justice which facilitates reconciliation and national healing. It is only when we know the truth pertaining to us and the other that empathy is possible. It is also when we empathise with each other that the processes of integration and national healing become realisable.

The concept of integration

Just as in the case of reconciliation, the term integration is a contested one. Indeed, Jeannotte (2008) points out that other terms that have been used to refer to integration are social inclusion, social cohesion and social capital while de Alcántara (1994:5) identifies other terms as 'greater justice, equality, material well-being and democratic freedom'. In explaining the controversial nature of social integration, de Alcántara (1994:3) argues that there are at least three different ways of understanding the concept of social integration.

In the first instance, as if anticipating the Copenhagen Declaration, de Alcántara (1994:3) says integration can be understood in an inclusionary sense, where it implies equal opportunities and rights for all human beings. In this sense, integration 'implies improving life chances'. In the second instance, integration can be understood as 'a negative connotation, conjuring up the image of the unwanted imposition of uniformity' (de Alcántara 1994:3). In the third instance, it does not carry either the positive or negative connotations because it 'is simply a way of describing the established patterns of human relations in any given society' (de Alcántara 1994:3).

While pursuing the first sense of integration, the second sense can be avoided by acknowledging cultural diversity so that there is no imposition of uniformity. In fact any imposition of unity would militate against social integration. It militates against searching for ways that would foster common identities and a common destiny that obviates the need to resort to violence. However, what needs to be realised is that, to some extent, any process of social integration implies disintegration of existing systems of social relations of societies that are being integrated into a new society. In other words, any birth of a new society will necessarily be painful as some of the cherished beliefs, attitudes and ideals will have to be discarded in the birth of this new community. This is especially the case given that the need for social integration calls for an interrogation of the concrete networks of existing social relations and institutions that need transformation.

Basil Bernstein (quoted in Harley 2010:n.p.) defines integration as 'what binds or keeps people together – although they may have differing interests and outlooks –

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in a particular society? What binds the people is the realisation of the need to live together. In this sense, integration is closely related to reconciliation. Indeed the Copenhagen Declaration on Social Development describes integration as:

... the process of fostering societies that are stable, safe and just and that are based on the promotion and protection of all human rights, as well as on non-discrimination, tolerance, respect for diversity, equality of opportunity, solidarity, security and participation of all people, including disadvantaged and vulnerable groups and persons (Jeannotte 2008:6).

The above discussion leads us to the view that integration, as far as it is a process of solidifying human relations, becomes complementary to reconciliation. We therefore discuss conditions that have made and continue to make reconciliation, national healing and integration imperative in Zimbabwe.

Conditions that make reconciliation, integration and national healing necessary in Zimbabwe

Before 1980, Zimbabwe experienced an exigent war of liberation. During the colonial epoch, the colonial administration passed such legislation as the Land Apportionment Act (1930), which alienated land from Africans and apportioned it along racial lines. This piece of legislation was buttressed by the Land Husbandry Act (1951) and the Land Tenure Act (1969) which cemented land alienation from the Africans. The nature of the Lancaster House Agreement (1979) that brought independence to Zimbabwe was such that the land alienated from the Africans during the colonial era through the afore-mentioned legislation remained with those who had unjustly seized it, claiming the right of conquest at the onset of colonial subjugation. Economic and gender inequalities remained as they were throughout the colonial era, where the majority of the people, and particularly women, remained dispossessed and poor and a few whites continued to wield economic power. In addition, compared to 1 000 whites who died during the liberation struggle, some 80 000 Africans perished either through being shot, hanged, tortured or simply being made to disappear by the colonial regime while women were abducted, sexually abused and mass raped. Some 450 000 Africans were wounded. Others were displaced (De Waal 1990) while still

others were detained (Catholic Commission on Justice and Peace, CCJP, 1997). The Smith regime had employed such tactics as 'Operation Turkey' which involved the destruction of African crops in rural areas with the intention of starving the guerrillas (CCJP 1997:13). All these developments resulted in a fractured society in Zimbabwe. It was therefore under these circumstances that it was deemed necessary to initiate a process of national reconciliation immediately after 1980. It would appear, however, that, then, the idea of national healing and integration had not been fully conceptualised.

Furthermore, it would appear that immediately after independence relations between the former liberation movements were uneasy. Indications were that ever since the Zimbabwe African National Union (ZANU) split from the Zimbabwe African People's Union (ZAPU) there was always an uneasy peace precipitous of war between the two liberation movements. Even during the liberation struggle there were minor skirmishes between them, and even among their supporters. In an attempt to foster National Reconciliation in 1980, Mugabe offered Nkomo, the leader of ZAPU, the Presidency of the country, which he rejected. This did not augur well for the process of nation building in the country. It was no surprise therefore that on 9 November 1980 fighting briefly broke out between the former Zimbabwe African National Liberation Army (ZANLA) and Zimbabwe People's Revolutionary Army (ZIPRA) elements of the Zimbabwe National Army (ZNA) at Entubane near Bulawayo. The situation was exacerbated by the discovery of arms caches on ZAPU PF (Patriotic Front) properties in 1982. This led to the expulsion of ZAPU PF members from the coalition government and the arrest and imprisonment of their leaders. This precipitated civil war in parts of the Midlands and Matabeleland provinces between 1982 and 1987. It created tension among blacks of different ethnic groups in these provinces as there were accusations that both members of the Zimbabwe National Army and the dissidents committed atrocities against the civilian populations in the war zones. These atrocities were in the form of arrests, torture, murder, sexual harassment of women, rape and intimidation. It was therefore the civilian population that bore the brunt of the civil war. In urban areas there were claims that ZAPU supporters were harassed while their properties were destroyed, especially during the 1985 elections (De Waal 1990). The fighting was to end

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with the signing of the Unity Agreement between ZANU PF and ZAPU PF on 22 December 1987. This experience now necessitated the process of reconciliation between the two combatants and among those that supported them.

The parliamentary and presidential elections of 2008 present another scenario that makes reconciliation and national healing and integration immediately called for in Zimbabwe. When the first round of elections took place, there was unprecedented calm, freedom and peace both during the campaign period and the election process. However, when there was no clear winner of the presidential elections, the campaigning for the second round of election became messy as the two candidates were desperate and determined to win at all costs. There were reports of violence, intimidation, torture, murder, arbitrary detentions, disappearances and maiming, forcing one of the contestants to pull out of the race, ostensibly to save his supporters from persecution. Those who were deemed to have voted for one of the candidates were beaten up, and some were disfigured and had their properties seized or destroyed. Some had their limbs cut off. It is these developments that necessitated talk of reconciliation and national healing in Zimbabwe after the establishment of a Government of National Unity. The government of Zimbabwe responded by establishing the Organ on National Healing, Reconciliation and Integration (ONHRI). However, this appears to be a futile exercise fraught with many challenges.

Attempts at reconciliation

But how were these addressed? Immediately after the attainment of independence, Mugabe, the Prime Minister of the new republic, enunciated a policy of National Reconciliation thus:

Surely this is now the time to beat our swords into ploughshares so we can attend to the problems of developing our economy and our society... I urge you, whether you are black or white, to join me in a new pledge to forget our grim past, forgive others and forget, join hands in a new amity, and together, as Zimbabweans, trample upon racialism, tribalism and regionalism, and work hard to reconstruct and rehabilitate our society as we reinvigorate our economic machinery (De Waal 1990:46).

And again:

Finally, I wish to assure all the people that my government will strive to bring about meaningful change to their lives. But everyone should exercise patience, for change cannot occur overnight. For now, let us be united in our endeavour to lead the country to independence. Let us constitute a oneness derived from our common objective and total commitment to build a great Zimbabwe that will be the pride of all Africa. Let us deepen our sense of belonging and engender a common interest that knows no race, colour or creed. Let us truly become Zimbabweans with a single loyalty (De Waal 1990:47).

Mugabe further proclaimed:

As we become a new people we are called to be constructive, progressive and forever forward-looking, for we cannot afford to be men of yesterday, backward-looking, retrogressive and destructive. Our new nation requires of every one of us to be a new man, with a new mind, a new heart and a new spirit. Our new mind must have a new vision and our hearts a new love that spurns hate, a new spirit that must unite and not divide. This to me is the essence that must form the core of our political change and national independence.

Henceforth you and I must strive to adapt ourselves, intellectually and spiritually to the reality of our political change and relate to each other as brothers bound one to another by a bond of national comradeship. If yesterday I fought you as an enemy, today you have become a friend and ally with the same national interest, loyalty, rights and duties as myself. If yesterday you hated me, today you cannot avoid the love that bonds you to me and me to you. Is it not folly, therefore, that in these circumstances anybody should seek to revive the wounds and grievances of the past? The wrongs of the past must now stand forgiven and forgotten. If ever we look to the past, let us do so for the lesson the past has taught us, namely that oppression and racism are inequalities that must never find scope in our political and social system (De Waal 1990:48–49).

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Assumed in Mugabe's call was the desire and commitment of all the citizenry to work together and the sharing of a common destiny, a common vision and conviction that 'the principle of reconciliation has got to permeate society' (Shamuyarira, Kumar and Kangai 1995:35). Castigating any thought of reprisal against the erstwhile oppressors, Mugabe proceeded, 'I have drawn a line through the past I want people to believe in my policy of reconciliation and to respond accordingly' (Fuller 2002:n.p.). But was there such a common vision? This was the first challenge as impediments to the acceptance of this invitation were already present in the form of the socialist ideology that the new government adumbrated. That ideology was naturally perceived as a threat by the white community who formed the elite and were the owners of the means of production that socialism threatened to confiscate and nationalise. So, there were clear ideological differences which were bound to create mistrust between the socialist oriented nationalists and the capitalist settler farmers and industrialists. Was it not therefore probable that the owners of the means of production would have perceived the call to reconciliation as a ruse, at least in the early days? So the call to unity of purpose under the circumstances was met with scepticism.

As we have noted above, Mawondo (2009) argued that reconciliation in Zimbabwe was without justice as relations that obtained during the colonial period remained intact. The wrongs of the past were not righted. The land alienated from the Africans remained in the hands of those who used the right of conquest to unjustly acquire it. Economic inequalities remained as during the colonial era where the majority of the people remained dispossessed and poor, and a few whites continued to wield economic power. Yet, as Hapanyengwi-Chemhuru (2002) argues, among other things justice in Zimbabwe required a radical redistribution of land to the previously dispossessed if reconciliation was to succeed. It would appear therefore that in the absence of an honest reappraisal of the real cause of the war – in the first place – land hunger among the Africans, the chances of reconciliation succeeding were compromised from the very beginning. To the African majority, this policy was a betrayal of the ideals of the liberation struggle.

Another flaw in the policy of National Reconciliation was that it was a victor's declaration in which people was asked to forgive and forget the past.

There was no reciprocation from those who were being divested of political power. There is no evidence that whites in Zimbabwe shared the realisation of the need for reconciliation. In fact, to them, they had never viewed Africans as equals. They never acknowledged any wrongdoing. There was therefore no re-conciliation. In fact, this prompted Siziba (2000) to argue that:

The whites read in the policy a desperate attempt by a nationalist government, to keep whites in this country at all costs. A sense of arrogant indispensability developed among the whites.

As a result of this reasoning, there was no reciprocation of the policy of reconciliation from most members of the white community. Indeed, De Waal (1990:122) argues that 'the former white settlers have had little incentive to change. The life-style of the upper-middle-class whites with financial resources and professional protection, in particular, has remained remarkably secure'. He further observed: 'They tend to think that nothing is required of them, that they do not have to make much effort to alter their attitudes'. As a result there were many unanswered questions in the areas of racial and economic equity. It was these conditions that put the policy of national reconciliation in jeopardy from the very beginning.

In the case of the civil war in the Midlands and Matabeleland provinces, which is known as Gukurahundi, very little has been done by way of reconciliation and integration. Mugabe has described it as a moment of madness. As we noted above, as early as November 1980, there was military confrontation between ZANLA and ZIPRA forces at Entubane. Fighting broke out again in February 1981, this time spreading to Ntabazinduna and Connemara in the Midlands province. This resulted in over 300 deaths (CCJP 1997:7). Ironically, it was the Rhodesian Army elements that intervened to stop the fighting between the erstwhile liberation war allies. When civil war broke out in Matabeleland and Midlands provinces, some of the ZAPU elements believed they could win and lead to the secession of Matabeleland from Zimbabwe. The government of Zimbabwe responded by deploying the Korean trained 5th brigade to the affected areas to restore order. Thousands of people who disappeared remain

unaccounted for. There is virtually no debate on this issue which is very sensitive in Zimbabwe (Machakanja 2010).

The death of the policy of National Reconciliation in Zimbabwe

Due to the land hunger among the people in Zimbabwe, in 2000, a few landless Africans occupied a farm owned by a white farmer. This triggered the fast track land redistribution programme known as the Third Chimurenga. The ZANU PF government fearing to appear to frustrate land hunger went on a spree to confiscate land from white farmers. This process was and still is characterised by chaos. Violence was and has often since been used to acquire land from the white farmers. The challenge is how to sanitise land acquisition and redistribution as the ruling class is looking after its interests ignoring the interests of the other classes which remain land hungry.

With reference to the pre-election and post-election violence in Zimbabwe, not much progress has been made to reconcile those who were involved, and Zimbabwe remains a fractured society. While the government established the Organ on National Healing, Reconciliation and Integration, this organ is composed of members from the political parties involved in the skirmishes who are themselves not so clean in terms of their utterances. One questions the wisdom of entrusting the process of national healing and reconciliation to partisan individuals. How does reconciliation occur where one can see that the individual who burnt one's property does not show any remorse? How is one expected to reconcile with someone who still holds on to property he unjustly grabbed? How does one reconcile with any individual who cut off one's limb? How do people reconcile with those who committed atrocities, but have not, and will not acknowledge that what they did was wrong, or with those who believe that anyone who thinks differently needs 're-education'?

In Africa we are born into families, into clans, into ethnic groups and into communities. This has a bearing on who we are as we do not have individual identities but communal identities. According to African logic, 'guilt is collective', argues Amadiume (2000:52). If you kill someone, you do not offend that person;

you offend the family, the clan and the community of that individual. It is to these that the murderer has to pay to pacify the spirit of the murdered. If the murderer is apprehended and the courts find him/her guilty or not, that does not put the matter to rest. In the case of loss of life, reparations have to be paid otherwise any attempts at reconciliation would be futile. In support of this, Amadiume (2000:52) further points out: 'It is a modern arrogance to assume that the courts are instruments of healing'. So, given that in the harmonised 2008 elections and indeed in the Gukurahundi, people were killed and the perpetrators are known, how then, can justice be achieved without *kuripa Ngozi* (pacifying the spirit of the murdered)? Many of those who believe in the power of memory have reduced the Gukurahundi to inter-ethnic conflict between the Mashona and the Matabele with its roots in the pre-colonial period in Zimbabwe.

Indeed, in discussing inter-ethnic conflict, how far back should our memory go? Soyinka (2000:21) has posed the question elsewhere, 'How far into the recesses of the past? How far into the past should memory reach?' Deng (2000:188) argues: 'We have the tendency to begin the history of our crises with colonial intervention. This tendency is now being questioned, particularly because it connotes denial of responsibility and placing blame on other'. It is important to understand why things are as they are. This is complicated by the realisation that memory defies confinement in time and space. Thus in dealing with Gukurahundi, it has been suggested that if we want to discuss inter-ethnic atrocities, we cannot ignore the pre-colonial era in which the Matabele are claimed to have used the Mashona as their hunting grounds. Indeed, Asmal, Asmal and Roberts (1997:11) argue: 'The exercise of facing the past is no mere luxury or optional extra. [It]... is ... a cornerstone of reconciliation' based on 'an historically accurate picture of the past'. While this may appear to open a can of worms, a part of our history that we would rather forget, Soyinka warns against 'editing out' atrocities perpetrated by Africans against one another – that is, if it is necessary to know the truth and come to terms with it. So, it can be argued that the fact that the Matabele raided the Mashona in pre-colonial time is an historical reality. But what this does, is to create a further challenge to the process of national healing, reconciliation and integration. We concur with Huysse (2003:23) when he argues that 'silence and amnesia are the enemies of justice'.

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Be that as it may, the further challenge is that the Matabele state is no more. There is no Matabele state to hold accountable for atrocities against the Mashona. At the same time the Matabele were to fall victims to conquest and subjugation by the imperial forces under Cecil John Rhodes. Under these circumstances, can we obliterate that part of our history that tends to be divisive? Perhaps this is what should be done in the absence of an entity that can be held accountable. Or can those who are calling for reparations and apology from those in authority also first acknowledge the wrong done to the Mashona? Whatever answers are given to the above questions, what is clear, as pointed out by Bloomfield (2003:12), is: 'Reconciliation [and we might add, integration and national healing] is not a luxury, or an add-on to democracy. Reconciliation is an absolute necessity'. This is especially true if we accept that effective reconciliation is the best guarantee that the violence of the past will never occur again. Unfortunately, currently, it would appear that the process of reconciliation is in need of resuscitation.

Towards national healing, reconciliation and integration

What is clear in Zimbabwe is that victims of the liberation struggle and Gukurahundi as well as of the election periods, especially the 2008 ones, have not told their stories. The truth remains hidden or is told from the perspective of those that have power. Rosenberg, quoted in Huyse (2003:26), warns:

If the victims in a society do not feel that their suffering has been acknowledged, then they ... are not ready to put the past behind them. If they know that the horrible crimes carried out in secret will always remain buried ... then, they are not ready for reconciliation.

Then the truth is one-sided and distorted. As a result the wounds remain open. While during the colonial era the divide between the haves and the have nots was on the basis of race, now this has been complicated by the fact that it is also now on the basis of class. The rich are the ruling elite; these are the people who have acquired the land for themselves in the name of the poor. Most of those who had no land during the colonial era have remained landless and poor, eking a living from tired, sandy, and dry soils. At the same time land acquisition has assumed a racial character. How then can we achieve reconciliation?

What will be the basis of this reconciliation? Can we even discuss national healing? On what basis? From the fractured society that characterises Zimbabwe, how can we build an integrated society? What then are the possibilities under the circumstances? How can we remove the high levels of political polarisation that characterise Zimbabwe today?

Machakanja (2010:12–15) identified twelve conditions or factors that need to be in place if reconciliation, national healing and integration are to succeed in Zimbabwe. These are:

- i. Legislative reform,
- ii. Political will,
- iii. Transformative and restorative justice,
- iv. Civil society engagement,
- v. Consensus building,
- vi. Truth telling,
- vii. Education for national healing and reconciliation,
- viii. Research on trauma and grief,
- ix. Counselling for trauma and grief,
- x. Special healing places and community intervention programmes,
- xi. Memorialisation and ritualisation, and
- xii. Funding.

On the other hand, Huyse (2003:23) contends that four mechanisms need to be put in place if reconciliation, national healing and integration are to succeed:

- i. Healing the wounds of the surviving victims of conflict and violence,
- ii. Restitutive or restorative justice,
- iii. Historical accounting via truth telling, and
- iv. Reparation of the material and psychological damage inflicted on the victims of conflict or violence.

While we concur with Machakanja and Huyse, we want to add and argue that the first major possibility of reconciliation, national healing and integration lies in the identification, formulation and utilisation of the philosophic-cultural heritage of Zimbabwe. There is need for culturally rooted responses to the challenges of reconciliation, national healing and integration. Hence, the

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philosophy of *hunhu/ubuntu*, with its emphasis on a common humanity, on recognising that we affirm our humanity through the affirmation of the humanity of others creates fertile ground for reconciliation, national healing and integration. *Hunhu/ubuntu* enjoins us to be conscious that we cannot degrade other human beings without degrading ourselves. It makes us aware that the fact that we share the geographic space called Zimbabwe ties our destinies together. The sooner we realise the need to forge a common identity, the sooner we will take steps to achieve reconciliation, integration and national healing.

But national healing, reconciliation and integration cannot be achieved by burying our heads in the sand. Memory, as we have seen, defies confinement to space and time. Indeed Bloomfield (2003:14) argues: 'Seeking for accuracy about the past is a vital step in the reconciliation process.' We need to heed Santayana's (quoted in Huyse, 2003:30) warning that '[t]hose who cannot remember the past are condemned to repeat it'. We share Huyse's (2003:30) view that amnesia is an obstacle to reconciliation because it:

- denies victims of conflict the public acknowledgement of their grief,
- encourages offenders to follow the route of denial of their culpability, and
- robs future generations of the opportunity to draw lessons from the past that would enable them to engage in reconstructing lasting reconciliation.

Thus, once memory is invoked, retrospective apologies become imminent. The unpalatable past experiences have to be confronted and accounted for. Hence, Bloomfield (2003:15) further argues:

Such reflection on the past is as necessary as it is painful because a divided society can only build its shared future on its divided past. It is not possible to forget the past and start completely afresh as if nothing happened.

The past should be confronted. Atrocities of the past have to be acknowledged and reparation has to be made since there can be no healing without justice. Indeed, Soyinka argues that reparations do not have to be material. But there are cases where material reparations and restitution are unavoidable. For example, if one is to reconcile with a person who stole one's cattle, and still holds on to them, reconciliation can only occur when that person returns one's cattle and shows

genuine remorse that issues out of a realisation that what he/she did was wrong and that the person he/she offended is also a human being. It is when there is genuine contrition that forgiveness, which is a prerequisite for reconciliation and integration, is possible. Again, if one killed a person, restitution as required by African tradition in the context of *hunhu/ubuntu* is imperative since western justice falls short of African justice. But how do we go about all these steps needed to facilitate national healing, reconciliation and integration?

Zimbabwe's Organ for National Healing, Reconciliation and Integration (ONHRI) presents a golden opportunity to rethink national healing, reconciliation and integration. Its mandate is indeed to establish 'a mechanism for national healing, cohesion and unity and laying the foundation for a society characterised by mutual respect, tolerance, and development and where individuals enjoy the freedoms as enshrined in the Constitution' (United Nations Development Programme Zimbabwe 2011). A product of the Global Political Agreement, ONHRI has attempted to come up with a code of conduct that will hold political parties accountable for political violence perpetrated by their supporters. The aim is to instil discipline among political parties and promote tolerance for different political ideas and in the process break the cycle of politically motivated violence (Gande 2011; Chinoputsa 2012). One major problem with ONHRI, currently, is that it has no means of enforcing its code of conduct for political parties.

We also wish to point out that another major problem is with the constitution of the ONHRI itself. It is made up of members from the political parties that have been fighting and that continue to fight each other. Sekai Holland as co-chairperson is a Movement for Democratic Change Member of Parliament while John Nkomo who is also one of the vice-presidents was from ZANU PE. Mzila Ndlovu is a Movement for Democratic Change Minister. It is like picking players in a football match and making them referees to the match that they are playing while the victims remain spectators of activities and processes in which they should be participating. This simply does not work, as Huyse (2003:23) observed that for reconciliation to succeed, both victims and perpetrators of conflict and violence have to be at the centre of reconciliation, national healing and integration activities. What is required then is to reconstitute the ONHRI

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to include civic society, academics, traditional leaders (who would need to be re-educated about their proper role in community where they have to shun partisan politics), religious leaders and representatives of the private sector. This process cannot be led by political parties if it is to succeed.

To neglect education in the process of national healing, reconciliation and integration would be irresponsible. Education for national healing, reconciliation and integration would seek to develop an appreciation of differences and diversity and an acceptance that others have their own history, traditions and spiritual values. It creates an awareness of interdependence and a common destiny. There should be a deliberate adoption of 'education for reconciliation' targeting all learners. It would be an education for *hunhu/ubuntu* emphasising human dignity, respect, equality, peace, justice, tolerance, and fairness. It would be an education that would equip learners with conflict management skills.

Conclusion

Once ONHRI is reconstituted, what then is needed is to empower ONHRI and widen its mandate to include all kinds of political atrocities that Zimbabweans have perpetrated against one another. The terms of reference it currently has, as reflected in the annual work plan produced in 2011, are not going to lead to national healing, reconciliation, social justice, and integration as long as they do not actively engage the populace (Office of the President and Cabinet 2011) and as long as they are not based on a solid philosophical base. ONHRI has to engage victims as well as perpetrators of violence at all levels of society, especially at grassroots level where most of the violence has taken and is still taking place. It has to be informed by the philosophy of *hunhu/ubuntu* which has the potential to foster humane relations among Zimbabweans. Perhaps the Zimbabweans can benefit from studying the South African model of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission, which has been characterised as reconciliation and truth without justice, the experiences of Rwanda which has been characterised as justice without reconciliation, and the experience of Biafra which has been characterised as having no healing. In other words, social justice, national healing, reconciliation, establishing the truth and integration are all aspects of creating a community that is at peace with itself.

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