



Memory and Community Healing

Venue: Omadu Hotel, Kezi

Date: 22 November 2018

Time: 0800hrs to 1700hrs

Background

According to Amadiume and An-Naim (2000:31)¹, “a people who do not preserve their memory are a people who have forfeited their history”. Looking back at the past helps in exploration of a past wrong which can;

...serve as entry points into any evident malaise within societies, into an understanding of the eruptions that confound even our grossest projections of the capacity of humanity for unconscionable acts of violation against its own kind (Amadiume and An-Naim (2000:22)

A reflection on what transpired in the past including the role played by both victims and perpetrators enables projection of future violations and can be used in preventing a repeat act.

Memorialisation and memory can be demonstrated by the erection of public memorials and these may be “physical representations or commemorative activities”

¹ Amadiume, I. and A. An-Na’im (2000) *The Politics of Memory –Truth, Healing & Social Justice*. London: Zed Books

situated in public spaces in memory of past events (Brett et al 2007:1)². In this same vein there has not been any acknowledgement of the Gukurahundi massacres that occurred in Zimbabwe particularly Matebeleland and Gukurahundi. Memorials are a sign of public acknowledgement of an event or people involved. According to Brett *et al.*, (2007), communities perceive public memorialisation as central to justice, reconciliation and reparations. As people experience or are affected by violations differently, memorialisation and memory gives public acknowledgement of private experiences.. This has not been the case for the people of Kezi who were greatly affected by torture, enforced disappearances, abductions and the murder and ensuing trauma around their loved ones who were affected by the Gukurahundi atrocities that claimed over 20 000 lives. in the 'moment of madness' that ran from 1982-87.

In light of all this, the 2018 Transitional Justice Policy Symposium seeks to identify the sites of atrocity, physical or emotional, through which dialogue can be initiated through storytelling for purposes of exploring community initiatives through which such stories can be used as tools for community healing.

Why memory is important?

Stories are witnesses to the past for future generations. They help us learn and acknowledge the past. They challenge lies, and minimise what lies people are told about their past.

Objectives

1. Hold a community dialogue and interactions with community groups in Bhalagwe to bring the discussion on transitional justice down to the practical level with local communities and individuals that experienced the atrocities first hand.
2. Raise awareness among the public of the importance of story-telling, site preservation and documentation and its relevance in order to make it understood the story of the past;
3. Raise the community's awareness of the necessity of preserving sites of memory for the long-term, and of providing access to them;

Outcome

² Brett S., Bickford L., L. Sevcenko and M. Rios, (2007) International Conference on Memorialisation and Democracy: State Policy and Civic Action Report.
http://issuu.com/flacso.chile/docs/memorialization_democracy

1. Come up with practical measures that ensure justice for victims, accountability for perpetrators and the guarantee for non-recurrence of violence in Zimbabwe again.
2. Map steps towards the development of transitional justice policy measures that take cognisance of the individual experiences of past violence.
3. Enhanced capacity for stakeholders to effectively drive a victim-centred transitional justice agenda for Zimbabwe.

Methodology

Storytelling - Delegates will be put into 5 groups of not more than 15 people per group. Each group will be led by a storyteller who has a personal story to share. Each story teller will guide the group to a 'site of memory' where they narrate their experience. The group will listen attentively. The story will be followed interaction on possible strategies for transforming the site of atrocity to a centre for healing.

Debriefing - The group will converge and make use of the World Café to share their stories with the others.

Exhibitions - The delegates will be treated to an exhibition on some of Zimbabwe's major conflicts.

Expert Exchanges - Expert presenters will share some reflections on the policy implications for community experiences and design some suggestions.

Draft Programme

Refer to Main Programme

Community Dialogue Sessions

Team Leader	Topic
Nikiwe Ncube	In Search of Truth
TBA	We were only children
Katiyo	He did not return
Sekai Gombe	On the third day
TBA	TBA

