

Abstract

This Practice led Research Report explores the use of Theatre as Activism to address the violation of human rights, with particular emphasis on gay rights in Zimbabwe. There is scant evidence of any form of theatre in Africa, apart from in South Africa that speaks to the existence of gay people, let alone gay rights. There also appears to be no recorded documentation of theatre that engages audiences in an open dialogue about gay rights in Africa.

This research has taken the form of a Practice led Research Project called *The Trial of the Senior Citizen*. The aim of the project was to create a piece of theatre that could speak to the complex, multiple human rights violations experienced in Zimbabwe under the leadership of President Robert Mugabe's regime. Gay rights form the central canvas in the theatre project, encapsulating all human rights violations and challenging the landscape of human rights discourse relevant in Africa today. The purpose of the research was to explore what kind of theatre, in form and in making, would entice an audience to engage in a dialogue about the complex gay rights issues prevalent in Zimbabwe. The Practice led Research Project seeks to explore the possibility of speaking to the silencing of, and silence by gay people, using Theatre as Activism.

This written report forms the final stage of the Practice led Research, and argues that Theatre as Activism, as conceptualised by this researcher, is an appropriate form of theatre for the integration of both process-orientated and product specific theatre elements aimed at audience engagement.

Chapter One introduces the reader to this Practice led Research Report. The historical context of human rights and gay rights in Zimbabwe is discussed in Chapter Two. Chapter Three explores the meaning, associations and related processes and forms of Theatre as Activism. In Chapter Four, Practice led Research theoretical and methodological underpinnings are discussed in relation to the making of *The Trial of the Senior Citizen*, and in Chapter Five the performances and post-performance audience discussions are reflected upon.

Looking at the performances of *The Trial of the Senior Citizen*, this study concludes that this Theatre as Activism project can be used to break the silence around gay rights and begin a negotiation of beliefs that could lead to the reduction of homophobia.

DECLARATION

I, the undersigned, hereby declare that this research report is my own work unless where appropriately acknowledged and that I have not previously submitted it at any university for a degree or examination.

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Signature:

Date: 30 September 2010

DEDICATION

To the memory of my parents, Harry Andrew Ndlovu and Mainah Sithole Ndlovu

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

I wish to start by thanking my supervisor, Mr Warren Nebe for rekindling my work ethic. I thought I was no longer young enough to start thinking and working again.

I am indebted to the whole Drama for Life concept and what it stands for. My stay at Drama for Life has made me shift paradigms and look at life from many perspectives.

I wish to thank the cast for *The Trial of the Senior Citizen*. Guys you were great.

Many thanks go to those who were willing to share their stories.

Lastly I would like to thank my son who has had to do with some basics while I focused on completing my degree and had to go for some time without learning. Thank you Limkholwe.

ACRONYMS

AIDS- Acquired Immunodeficiency Syndrome

ANC- African National Congress

HIV- Human Immunodeficiency Virus

MDC-T- Movement for Democratic Change- Tsvangirai

MDC-M- Movement for Democratic Change- Mutambara

MDC- Movement for Democratic Change

ZANU (PF) - Zimbabwe African National Union- Patriotic Front

ZAPU- Zimbabwe African People's Union

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