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Personal performative narrative as inquiry: speaking truth to social injustice in Cameroon

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PERSONAL PERFORMATIVE NARRATIVE AS INQUIRY: SPEAKING TRUTH TO SOCIAL INJUSTICE IN CAMEROON.

By

NJI ALAIN

A research by creative and written work submitted towards a MADA.

DECLARATION

I declare that this Research Report is my unaided work. It is submitted for the degree of Master of Arts (Dramatic Arts) in the University of the Witwatersrand Johannesburg. It has not been submitted before in any other university for degree purposes.

NJI ALAIN

1ST June, 2012.

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DEDICATION

This study is dedicated to my family and to all the victims of injustice, including all those who have suffered from any form of human rights violation. I also dedicate this study, especially to the following people; to my parents; Cho Martin and Ntsama Martine, to my elder brothers; Cho Ransome Dzou, Cho Lewis Ade, Cho Donald Fru, my younger brothers; Cho Hofech Noah, Cho Lwanga Charles, and to my younger sister, Cho Elizabeth Mbui, to my nephew and nieces; Dzou Daniel, Dzou Ntsama, Ade Mariana and Ade Ntsama Quinta, that their lives, their spirits and their works live forever.

ABSTRACT

This practice-based research report reflects my analysis; exploration; interrogation and representation of social injustice in Cameroon as a lived experience. It is a personal narrative in performative approach that brings to the forefront the unspoken part of the country's politics. It is an autobiographical account of the researcher-practitioner's lived experiences. The primary source of material used in workshopping the piece is my autobiographical memories of the events that have constructed my socio-political identity so far.

1 MEMORY

1.1 INTRODUCTION

The concept of injustice is complex, controversial and very subjective. One act can be considered just by one person but not so by another. This complexity stems from the fact that judicial systems and governance vary from one country to another. Each country designs bills and laws relative to its policies and context, hopefully with the aim of promoting fairness, justice and maintaining law and order. I begin by presenting the rationale and justification for this study. I then define social justice as it manifests itself in Cameroon and I contextualise the manifestation of the unjust practices by briefly presenting the colonial history of Cameroon which gave birth to the current linguistic composition of the country. To help this, I discuss the origins of what is today known as the *Anglophone Problem*. Because this study consists of a creative research component, I detail the process of the realisation of the creative project, which is inspired by personal and painful events in my life. This is a personal story which lays bare my family's trials and tribulations and their experience of life as English speaking Cameroonians. The creative project is based on a true story. It chronicles the story of my brother, Cho Ransome Dzou and my father, Cho Martin. It is not only my family's story but that of the many Anglophone Cameroonians. It is a depiction of the deplorable injustice meted out at Anglophone Cameroonians in general. I use my family's story as a lens through which to share their plight.

1.2. RATIONALE

Ever since I became a grown man, I started becoming more aware of my social liberties and started thinking critically about socio-cultural and political events that affect my life. On a number of occasions I have been denied the right to; use particular public spaces, access particular jobs, and my family has been denied rights to settlement and land ownership as well as cultural affiliation. Dr Molem Christopher Sama speaks of such a situation, describing it as, the institutionalisation of 'autochthonisation' or 'politics of belonging' (Molem, 2007:204). A situation whereby, citizens who move from one region into another, are considered by the latter as allogenes, so as to give reasons for their exclusion and refusal for ownership especially land ownership. In Nicodemus Fru Awasom's© words, the allogenes, as they are called, are seen as 'land grabber', 'ingrates' and 'bellicose strangers' (Awasom

2004: 283). I and the many people who are in a similar position as mine have often found it difficult to stand and speak publicly against this treatment, which has eaten into the very fabric of the Cameroonian society. Some people are terrified. Eugenia (2010) succinctly articulates this fear by asserting that the power of fear is stronger that the hope for change. In 2011, I received a scholarship to pursue a Masters Degree through a programme called Drama for Life (DFL) at the University of the Witwatersrand in Johannesburg, South Africa. This has been my home, away from home over the past fourteen months. I have met many Cameroonians living and working in South Africa and we often speak about our country and its future. What intrigued me the most about our conversations is the fear of speaking about personal experiences. There is intense fear that many of them do not want to open old wounds. And I respect that. Being away from home, I imagined would give me the courage to advocate for justice without fear of victimisation. I know that in Cameroon I would not be able to undertake the project of this nature because, it would never receive public or government support. As an actor, I believe using the craft that I know well will best articulate my intentions. I resorted to using theatre as a medium, through which to voice out my concern. My creative research is a 'theatre for human rights' project.

The style of performing arts used in this study is new to Cameroon. The conceptualisation and the realisation of my piece, is a form of activism that is not used in the Cameroon theatre industry. The dominant theatre style in Cameroon is neo-colonialist. Most theatre practitioners, especially the Francophone theatre makers on the one hand, tend to work within the mainstream style of representation while the Anglophone theatre practitioners on the other hand are more involved in Popular Theatre and Community Based Theatre. The use of movement and physical theatre is virtually non-existent. Therefore, in terms of style, form and aesthetics, my project can be viewed as an avant-garde form of theatre, which does not only challenge theatre practices in Cameroon, but also introduces a different way to challenge the status quo.

1.3 Cameroon's colonial history

More than seven decades ago, Cameroon was colonised by European countries. The invasion was euphemistically called annexation and colonialism. The Germans were defeated out of Cameroon at the end of World War 1 (WW1) by the French and the British. The League of Nations then declared Cameroon a mandatory territory under France and Britain. These two

colonial powers ruled Cameroon with different social, political and economic ideologies. For instance, the French believed that Cameroon was an extended French territory in Africa. As such, it was, according to their colonial policies of assimilation and association, that Paris expected the indigenous Cameroonians under her mandatory rule to become French. The British, however, believed that Cameroon was a far-eastern part of Nigeria, which came as a compensation for the French and British Allied defeat of the Germans. So, it did not consider Cameroon as an extended colony like the French did. Britain was sure of leaving Cameroon at one point in the future, so it ruled Cameroon, indirectly from Nigeria. It also ruled the indigene, through their traditional rulers.

The British used this system of rule, so as to prepare the indigenes with a colonial spirit of administration, so that at a long run, the traditional rulers, through whom the British ruled the indigenes, would be ready for self-rule, hence independence. Thus, the French speaking Cameroonians saw themselves as 'citoyen francais' (French citizens) living in the French extended territory, while the English speaking Cameroonians are looked upon, and treated by the former, as Nigerians. In other words, this means that the French speaking Cameroonians see their English speaking counterparts as foreigners, immigrants from Nigeria. The Anglophones kept their traditional system of indigenous governance, while the Francophones were assimilated and associated to the French system of life. Because of this ideology, when independence was achieved, the Francophones looked upon the Anglophones as intellectually inferior and under civilised. Moreover, the Anglophones were numerically inferior to the Francophones, and they still are to date, unfortunately. Because of these differences, Cameroonians became socio-culturally and politically different as well.

The British ruled over one quarter of the territory, which is made up of the present day North-Western and South-Western regions of Cameroon. The region is today known as the Anglo-Saxon regions. Its inhabitants, known as the Anglophones are English speakers. The French, occupied three quarters of the territory which is today the Central, South, Coastal, Eastern, North and far North regions of Cameroon. Its inhabitants speak French and are known as the Francophones.

The socio-political and economic ideologies sewn by the colonisers are the root cause of social injustice and discrimination in Cameroon. Those at the receiving end are mainly the Anglophone population so much so that a term 'Anglophone Problem' was coined by English speaking elites (Konings, P & Nyamnjoh, F, 1997). These ideologies further entrenched

conflicting identities upon Cameroonians. These identities create binaries and division among the two principal social groups in Cameroon. In this case, the English speaking Cameroonians feel communally disadvantaged and socio-politically enslaved (Ejoh Dickson, 1998). In an effort to further implicate the colonisers in the causation of discrimination and injustice in Cameroon, which has braided the 'Anglophone Problem', Molem argues that;

> "Given the linguistic and cultural diversity of the country [Cameroon] with its more than 289 ethnic groups and a colonial legacy of French and English cultures and languages, plus remnants of a German sub-stratum, it should be clear that there are many potential ingredients for conflicts in Cameroon. The politicians seem to have nurtured these cultural and/or linguistic diversities in ways that fuel conflict ['Anglophone Problem'] and can even spark civil war. The tension that results from these ethnic and/or linguistic and religious splinters is not overt, however, due to the repressive nature of the regime in place. However, this tension continues to grow, to the detriment of the country's socio-economic development. There is therefore an acute need for measures to defuse such cultural conflicts which have the potential of sparking future civil strife in the country" (2007:193).

The origin of the term "Anglophone Problem" dates as far back as 1961. It refers to the marginalisation of the English-speaking Cameroonians by their French speaking countrymen which is supported by government (Konings, P., & Nyamnjoh, B.F.1997). Its existence threatens the country's national unity and democracy despite the government's numerous attempts to downplay its prevalence. Government systematically condones the problem in order to achieve political goals. The government promotes political discrimination and ruralisation to counteract the efforts of some entrepreneurs (artists, opposing politicians, scholars, etc), in creating a space for acceptance of ethnic differences (Monga, 2000). For instance, access to essential services, for example security, health etc. In a country where the English-speakers make for about twenty per cent of the population, there is only one English speaking state institution for higher education-the Buea University. Talking about the judiciary, when an English-speaking Cameroonian lawyer comes back from training abroad, he still has to undergo another two-year programme for pupillage, before he is eligible to go to the bar. While a French-speaking Cameroonian, who has undergone the same training, and comes back, is automatically eligible to go straight to the bar, to finish his training (http://www.faqs.org/minorities/Sub-Saharan-Africa/Anglophones-of-Cameroon.html).

The government promotes tribalism, discrimination and conflict between the French speaking Cameroonians and the English speaking Cameroonians. A very common way in which this is done is through developmental plans. One can better understand this phenomenon in Christmas Ebini's point of view. In talking about the state's involvement in promoting social injustice practised against the Anglophones, she describes the situation as follows;

> "The Cameroonian administration has always been resistant to progressive change, especially if such a change or suggestion for one was coming from the English speaking persuasion. This is an administrative system that has become comfortable with making abuse of individual rights, corruption, and tribalism, unaccountability the center of their culture or point of reference for governance. They find no difficulty blocking or opposing any idea that will positively serve the interests of the English speaking population. The government micro manages every aspect of the national life, including even basic decision making at local schools. This will be the constraint to implementation of this recommendation but the resolve of the English speaking population will keep on pushing and forcing the arms of an unwilling, unproductive, corrupt, dictatorial government and system" ('Social-Injustice-in Cameroon', http://www.postnewsline.com).

Most areas in the French speaking part of Cameroon are economically and socially more developed, while the English speaking parts are very much still underdeveloped, even abandoned, in most cases. Developmental plans are more or less often completed in the French-speaking regions than in the English-speaking regions. To speak about infrastructure for example, there is no balance in development of infrastructure in the English-speaking regions, which is proportionate to the population. This is evident in the distribution of state universities and other higher institutions. There is only one English speaking university in Cameroon which of course, cannot admit all the Anglophones who would like to study. So, they are forced to go and register into other universities, which are predominantly French. Hence, they are forced to receive lectures in the French language which is their third language. This makes it difficult for them to score high grades in exams, because their Francophones, whom French is their second language, score high grades in the same exams. It is important to mention here that, the English speaking Cameroonians have been acculturated so much that many of them speak French. Nonetheless, the French language that English speaking Cameroonians speak is less proficient as compared to that of their French counterparts. This is very noticeable in written works. Hence they fail. Whence this happens,

the Francophones make a fool of the Anglophones. The government of Cameroon is run in such a way that fashions socio-political divisions among the citizens (Monga, 2000; Ebini, 2008; 2010; Baker, 2001; Fleurbacy, 2008). Monga overtly puts in the open; the Cameroon government's involvement in the perpetration of social injustice. She raises the argument that the government encourages political discrimination and ruralisation (Monga, 2000) and further justifies the argument by stating that her work "questions the extent to which expressions of ethno-cultural differences can be used effectively to pursue and achieve political goals" (*ibid*). The political goal that the government achieves here is to divide and rule (Nowrojee, 1993). As mentioned above, the imbalance and discriminatory distribution of development, build a sense of inequality and superiority. The Francophones feel superior to the Anglophones. Because of this, there is constant hatred and division among the two social groups, logically making it practically impossible that both parties align to the same political leadership. And since the French numerically outnumber the Anglophones, they have always been a majority in support of the French speaking president, who upholds the French ideologies.

Evidence is that, since a French speaking Cameroonian stepped into power on November 6, 1982, he has never stepped down. There are allegations that the elections are rigged every time. But the reason that is often given for the re-election is that, the president had more votes from the Central, Literal and from the Northern regions, of Cameroon which has the greatest population. And this population is French speaking.

1.4 Social Injustice

Social injustice is malleable in definition. In this section, I define social injustice as I and my family have experienced it in Cameroon. I refer to a number of sources in order to bring the definition into the academic space. Social injustice in Cameroon manifests itself in many forms, among which are discrimination, unjustified and prolonged detentions, tribalism, politicide, 'democide', human right violations, child soldiers, ethnic division, 'victimenemy' and genocide. This study will only focus on language as a form of exclusion because my family has experienced injustice mainly because of language.

According to Lotter (1997), "injustice exists when the benefits and burdens, available in a society are unfairly divided among different groups in a society. Benefits are wealth, property, education, and decent employment. Burdens are hard or dirty work and taxes" (pp.1-2). He further explains that injustice also occurs when rights and duties are assigned to people on arbitrary grounds (*ibid*). In a more simplistic definition, Lotter suggests that injustice is an "unfair distribution of opportunities" (*ibid*, p.3). He comments that "injustice also concerns what people do to one another". This part of Lotter's definition particularly interests me. It brings me closer to the nature of social injustice as I experienced it in Cameroon. It highlights my point of concern, the agreement that social injustice is also about what people do to one another, and especially, government's involvement. Anthony D. Woozley supports Lotter's definition by defining it as the "...unfair discrimination between persons or class or persons in the distribution of advantages or disadvantages (Woozley as cited in Roberts, 2002:32). Daniel Dorling describes social injustice as propagated by the elite class. This class supports injustice by upholding beliefs like; 'exclusion is necessary', 'prejudice is natural', 'greed is good', 'despair is inevitable' (Dorling, 2011:60).

Considering these many definitions, in the case of Cameroon, social injustice is the ill-treatment of the Anglophones by the Francophones. The government's negligence comes in here, in the form of condoning these practices against a certain section of the citizens by not remedying the situation. Lotter (1997) believes that social injustice is a true indicator of future political instability and projects that;

> "Injustice explodes a society. When people [Anglophones] suffering from injustice become aware of what others are doing to them, they mobilize themselves to resist. Injustice enforced through violence leads to resistance and counter violence. Escalating conflict leads to more violence and harm to individuals. Thus, political policies that justify injustice can do immeasurable harm to individuals and communities" (p.1).

1.5 The Consequences of Social Injustice

In this section, I discuss the consequences of social injustice as they relate to this study. I cite examples from the English speaking Cameroonians like myself as we experience it on a daily basis. It is important to note that social injustice has far reaching consequences. They range from genocide, child soldiers, suicide bombing and civil war to cite but a few.

2 MEMORY

2.1 The Face of Social Injustice in Cameroon.

In this section, I discuss the involvement of the Cameroon government, through the judiciary, in the perpetration of social injustice. I point out recent examples that justify my accusation of government's participation in the cruel game of injustice. Inclusive in this section, are two other stories of discrimination. These stories were captured when I conducted interviews with some English speaking Cameroonians who are resident in South Africa.

Universally, it is common that one is innocent until proven guilty. In Cameroon, the opposite is true. An English speaker is guilty until proven innocent. The judicial system is decomposed so much that the Anglophones in particular have lost trust. It is common practice in the judiciary system to be presumed guilty and detained for five years without an appropriate trial. It is so common that it has become a judicial norm for a person to be imprisoned for 20 years before evidence is found to absolve them of any wrong doing.

There are two most recent cases of social injustice of this kind .The first was the assassination of a journalist and editor of a private bimonthly Cameroon Press, Germain Cyrille Ngota Ngota . Ngota was imprisoned without trial. Due to repeated protest and threat from journalists within and outside the country following his arrest, Ngota was found dead in his prison cell. Apparently he was killed because lack of evidence to prove his guilt. In addition to that, the state could not provide any reason to release him, after he was charged for political defamation. It was rumoured in the media later that evidence was brought to prove that Laurent Esso, the Minister of Justice was involved in his murder. Unfortunately, he is untouchable. Below I present his ascension to the most powerful position in government which made him untouchable and above the law.

Laurent Esso is the present Minister of Justice in Cameroon. He has been lurking in the political era of President Paul Biya since 1988. He was first appointed as Minister of Justice in 1996, where he served until 2000. After that he was appointed as Minister of Public Health and later Minister of Defense. He moved up to the post of Minister of Foreign Affairs. Esso was blessed with another love from President Biya, when he was appointed Secretary-General of the presidency, with the rank of Minister of State. Now he serves as the Minister of Justice.

With all of these honorary appointments on his shoulders, and in the tune of the political system, Esso cannot be sued by any individual, not even by the family of the deceased. The case of Ngota comes just to top the list of journalists and poor Cameroonians who were trying to speak truth to the existing system.

Another case is the imprisonment of a political opponent, composer, singer and mayor, Lapiro De Mbanga. He was alleged to have incited the youths of his council to riot in 2008, where these youths were brutally killed by armed forces. He is till rotting in prison till now without any evidence. The mention of these two cases is just a soupcon to the list of events in Cameroon, to spotlight on government's direct involvement in the perpetration of social injustice and human rights violation.

In case of an instance of social injustice in Cameroon, where an English speaking Cameroonian is victimized, the government either sanctions the perpetrator lightly, or the perpetrator is not sanctioned at all. But the reverse is true. For instance, when it is an Anglophone who victimizes a francophone, the punishment is very severe. In most cases, the Anglophone is prosecuted. The prosecution can either be a six month of imprisonment and above, or the perpetrator of the offence faces serious lashes at the police station or gendarmerie. Then the offender is only released if a considerable amount of money is paid at the station as bail.

Below are two more examples of problems that English speaking Cameroonians face in their day to day life. In respect of the ethical rules that bonded the interviewees and me, I conceal the names of the owners of these stories and keep them anonymously. In order to better integrate their stories in the socio-political lives of the English speaking Cameroonians, I chose to validate their stories with titles.

2.2 Culture and Pension

This section is the summary of two stories of two English speaking Cameroonians who now live in South Africa. These are stories of some sad experiences of discrimination that they had when they were still in Cameroon. It emphasises the plight of English speaking Cameroonians and reinforces why they lost trust in their country of birth.

M was about 51 years old and a retired medical doctor. Due to her ill health, she sent L, her daughter to the bank to collect her pension on her behalf. L assembled all the required

documents and headed for the bank. When she got to the bank, the cashier refused to attend to her. This cashier read from L.s documents and recognized the bearer's name as that of an Anglophone. The cashier made a mockery of L, as she insisted that the bearer of the documents was the person entitled to receive the pension in person. The cashier insisted that L should bring a doctor's note proving that her mother was truly incapable of collecting the pension herself. L was asked to go and make 'original' copies of the original documents.

Just because she is an Anglophone, the cashier refused to make the payment, despite being informed that that payment was for life saving medication. L had to travel 4500 kilometres to receive a pension. The expenses of the trip were almost equivalent to the pension. The relevant authority did not intervene in this situation even after report. The only reason that the cashier forwarded to justify her unwillingness to make the payment was that, L.s documents are fake. She declared that Anglophones are notorious for fraud. She said she was not ready to lose her job for not identifying a fake document.

> *"I was reduced to a dog and to a thief as the lady called the attention of other pensioners, saying that my documents were forged in Bonamoussadi (Bonamoussadi is the name of a student residential around, where ninety per cent of the residents are Anglophones). But worst of it was the indirect accusation [labelling] of my poor mothers as a thief, meanwhile I had receipts indicating previous payments attached to the documents".*

These were L.s words as her eyes welled in tears as she asked me to stop the interview.

2.3 Education? No Way Forward

Mr X is a graduate of a University in Cameroon. He sat for the public competitive exams launched by the government. Institutions of higher learning in Cameroon use predominantly French as the medium of instruction. The language section accounts for forty per cent of the overall marks. This means that if a candidate fails in this section, then there are limited chances to make it in the overall exam. In the language section, particularly in reading comprehension, the essay is of very high register suitable for French first language speakers. As an English speaking person Mr X always failed the exam because of French.

In his words, Mr X angrily ended by explaining in the following words, his reason for being in South Africa.

> *"This is one of my main reasons of travelling to South Africa. I thought that I would be able to pursue my studies at a higher level as I had wished; now here I am doing this business, which is really not want I wanted to do. But what do I do? I had not ready choice, and I still don't have any as yet. By the way, I am gradually like the trade after all. I hope I will go back to school one day… If I have to protest, then I may end up sixth feet under the ground like those in the University of Buea [the only Anglo-Saxon university in Cameroon]".*

His words amplified Ebini's comments that "this [discrimination/social injustice] has created much tension in the education system between the French speaking population (teacher and students) and the English speaking population" (Ebini, 2010). She further explains that "they [English speaking] have come not to believe in the country of their birth. Those who can are becoming bitter by the day and radicalized" (Ebini, 2010). Mr X left Cameroon for South Africa because he no longer believed in his country of birth Mr X is an example of the destiny of a majority of English speaking Cameroonians, youths especially, who have left the country for better opportunities.

After interviewing a few people I realised that people were not ready to share their stories. They did not want to remember their past because it brought painful memories. Others did not find my research motivating enough to make them share their stories with me. Some of them were very sceptical. They were not sure whether I was the student I said I was, or I was a government agent. An example, that justifies this statement, was the spontaneous reaction of one Cameroonian I interviewed. He agitatedly refused to do the interview with me. His reason was that he feared politics and wanted nothing to do with them. He said he feared arrest, because he was convinced that I was an agent. His reluctance was worsened by the recent political events back home where people were constantly detained by government. At the time when I was conducting the interview in South Africa there were presidential elections back home. President Biya was re-elected president of the Republic of Cameroon, after twenty-eight years in power. He has been rigging elections and when the population riots, he reacts with military repression.

The latest case was in two thousand and eight, following a riot by the youths for a constant increase of the level of unemployment, in conjunction with sky-rocketing increment of food items. In his reaction, he first of all issued a threatening declaration to the rioters, warning them that he would brutally react to their actions, if they do not stop. Consequently, since the

rioters were not threatened by his declaration, he deployed fire armed troops who killed dozens of these rioters. But it was later broadcast that eight people lost their lives in the cause of the riot. This is just an example of how state-orchestrated casualties are concealed, so as to safe the face of the government, in Cameroon.

2.4 The Autobiography.

This section is a recapitulation of some instances of social injustice that my family has experienced as a result of our cultural and linguistic backgrounds. The consequences of injustice, led to the untimely passing on of my father and my mother. It also features the dilemma I found myself in before I decided to undertake this autobiographical study. My decision to do autobiographical work was influenced by my desire to speak truth to power and given impetus by the writings I read. I was convinced that by telling my story, it would encourage critical thinking and dialogue around the issue of injustice and human rights violation. I was encouraged by Taylor (2006) who asserts that; "the personal narrative's testimonial character encourages audience members to respond by thinking about their own lives or those close to them" (Taylor cited in Madison and Hamera, 2006: 170). By virtue of my birth, ethnicity, culture and linguistic origins, my family and I are victims of social injustices as mentioned several times above. I started realizing how entangled social injustice was with the life of my family from nineteen-ninety five.

After spending hours reading other autobiographical works, I was inspired to write and perform mine. In the beginning, it was a challenge to share my story with people and to share it in the academic world. I felt that the writing will make me vulnerable and susceptible to mockery. It seemed that my story was not important compared to other people's stories to be made known. I knew that there were countless people who sit with untold stories of unimaginable tragedies.

After reading Richard Dana's work which details his struggles as a sailor, I was motivated to consider my story and that of my family as an inspiration to this study. In response to this motivation, I decided to workshop a personal performative narrative that would make use of my skills, and speak back to social injustice altogether. My goal was to see if I could construct an autobiographical performance as a form of theatre activism.

Linda Park-Fuller's (2000) words further gave me a punch to express myself, against the fears of exposure and vulnerability, to tell my story. The aim was to spark insightful thoughts and create consciousness about the sufferings of the English speaking Cameroonians. She purports that; "the performer of autobiographical narrative risks exposure and vulnerability in the effort to breach rigid prohibitions that perpetuate silence" (quoted in Madison and Hamera, 2006: 170). I began looking at the story as not only mine, but that of my family as well as the story of the lives of Anglophones in Cameroon.

I come from Cameroon, situated in central Africa. It has ten regions. Officially, there are two national languages, French and English and two linguistic groups, the French speaking Cameroonians and the English speaking Cameroonians, as earlier explained at the beginning of this report.

By birth and by culture, I claim equal identity and belonging to the two linguistic groups, thanks to the cultural differences of my parents. My father is English speaking, and my mother is French speaking. One would think that this dual 'membership' would provide some kind of advantage. However, I demonstrate that this is actually a disadvantage. Because of this dual belonging, I am not given full identity and hereditary by either of the groups. This is where the struggle for national integration and the fight against injustice started in my life.

This is where the discourse of my narrative began and how it relates to the bat's story. It is well known that the bat is a creature that is half a bird and half an animal. According to mythology, it was rejected from the birds. kingdom and from the animal kingdom, after a division in the animal kingdom. Because the bat has teeth as mammals, and has wings like birds, it belonged singly to no animal group. Henceforth, it was considered to belong to no group. Having roots in the cultures of the two social groups has proved disadvantageous because none of the groups grants me the right to affirm my identity.

I have lived in ignorance and blindness for a long time. The fact that I thought that I could neatly identify myself with either of the groups, made me feel privileged. Indeed, I was privileged in a way. My multi-linguistic skills made me survive within both groups with ease. I had never really measured the usefulness of my multilingualism, and had not realised the magic that it had, in keeping me away from troubles until nineteen-ninety five. Before this time, I was completely unaware that I was living in an abyss. I was weaving my way into a string of cobwebs as I interacted with the Francophone.

It is important to mention here that I grew up in the central region, which is predominantly French speaking. I was convinced that my ability to speak French fluently was enough to negotiate a place for me among the Francophones, irrespective of my father's origin and regardless of the fact that I am a citizen by birth and by right.

It was only after the incident described below, that I realised that actually, the Anglophones, were not welcome in my neighbourhood. The only thing that made it a bit difficult for them to openly show their hatred for our presence in that area was the fact that my mother belonged with them.

My parents ran a cooking gas business and my father was an independent usurer. As their business flourished, some Francophones who ran similar firms submitted a series of complaints at different police stations and gendarmeries reporting that my father was involved in contraband goods, which was why his business flourished. My father was arrested and detained for several days, without trial before being released on bail.

Corruption was also rampant in the area. The police often conducted random raids in order to extort money from my father. They would arrive unannounced to ask for business documents that were sometimes irrelevant to my father's business, some which did not even exist in the Ministry of Commerce or in the Chamber of Commerce. He was often forced to pay fines or face the possibility of closing down his business. Sometimes they assaulted him. When he reported the situation he was often asked to bring the names of the perpetrators. However, the commissioner would say that they agents were off duty. As such, there was no person to be prosecuted. The situation persisted. A chain of sad and traumatic events followed. My family was evicted from the land with our house raised to the ground. My mother passed away after severe burns which landed her in hospital. Lack of care at the hospital led to her untimely passing. My brother was brutally and violently murdered. While this was being investigated, which took six months, while his body was in the morgue; my father got a heart attack and died. I mention these incidents because they are the subjects of my creative performance which is described below.

3 MEMORY

3.1 CONCEPTUALIZATION OF IF I COULD SPEAK…

This section presents the map through which the ideas of my piece were acquired. For scholarly purposes, I reference some voices that guided the journey into bringing my piece together. I specifically discuss the different challenges that I encountered during the creative process. These challenges were social, academic and artistic. Each category touches on emotions; therefore emotions will come up time and again in the discussion.

If I Could Speak… is a workshopped autobiographical narrative piece that speaks and reflects the unspoken thoughts of the victims of social injustice as experienced by my brother Cho Ransome Dzou and my father Cho Martin and I. As mentioned above, I believe their experiences are shared with many Anglophones in Cameroon. It is a physical theatre piece that externalizes the raw image of soul as the performer and my struggles to speak back to the social injustice in Cameroon. All events captured in the performance are true.

Imprisoned within my own national territory, *If I Could Speak …* chronicles memories of my traumatic experiences as an English speaking Cameroonian whose ethnicity and linguistic background have predisposed me to discrimination and injustice. It is my struggle to reconstructs the events of my life that have constructed a cultural identity within and around me. Yet this culture does not accept me, it rather profiles me as a caste and incriminates me. The unfortunate thing in the perpetration of social injustice is that it happens with the intelligent support of state authorities, hence the urgency to address the issue.

There is a need for particularly English speaking Cameroonians to abandon passiveness, surrender and 'witnessing' and espouse the spirit of concern and consciousness, so as to actively condemn their persecution. This is not just a performance; it is a call to rebellion. It is an advocacy to instigate a rationalized gaze into the apparent existing social injustice, so that consequentially, action is taken against it. Like Martin Luther King Jr quotes; "our lives begin to end the day we become silent about things that matter" (quoted in The Quotation Page; http://www.quotationspage.com). The moment English speaking Cameroonians continue being silent the more they will be persecuted.

The need to expose social injustice and the call for action is paramount to the desire for a change. In my attempt to affect a reverse situation, that is to say, for social injustice to cede

its way to social justice there has to be a move to condemn it. Hence, the conception and the realization of the autobiographical performance piece, *If I Could Speak…*

Being the adult that I am today, I have never been tormented by any process like I have been with the creation of *If I Could Speak*... For about three months prior to workshopping the piece I was not able to think with focus about anything else except the creation of this performance piece. The idea of creating an autobiographical piece that reconstructs the various forms of injustice that my family and I experienced as a result of our ethnicity has haunted me for several months now. I was uncertain about workshopping a personal performative narrative on the one hand, and speaking back to it academically on the other hand.

I mostly feared revealing the saddest and most incomprehensible story of my life to an audience that I barely would know. I had a heavy and saddened heart when I imagined myself writing out a truthful and honest account of my life. Documenting the story of my life felt like an exposure of my family's privacy to the unknown. Again, I judged the process of documenting and staging my contemporary life as unworthy and unimportant.

At the beginning of the process, I wondered whether to use my life story as an inquiry to explore the nature of social injustice in Cameroon, or to preserve the privacy of my life in pursuit of justice. As I struggled with this decision, the words of Martin Luther King Jr rubbed my reasoning and influenced my decision. He declares that, "never, never [should one] be afraid to do what's right, especially if the well-being of a person or animal is at stake. Society's punishments are small compared to the wounds we inflict on our soul when we look the other way" (cited in The Quotation Page: http://www.quotationspage.com).

The fear to reveal my story, would be, as King says, a fear to do what is right. Since, telling the story would be a way to speak truth to power, concerning its involvement in the perpetration of social injustice in Cameroon, particularly towards the English speaking Cameroonians. Still in accordance with his words, any circumstantial repressive reaction by the state, as it is always the case, to a protesting voice as mine, will not equate the pain that my soul would have , for failing to claim justice to the lives of my beloved brother, Cho Ransome Dzou and my father, Cho Martin. If I chose to look "the other way" as King puts it, would mean that I am failing my family. At one point I was at the verge of giving up. I concluded that my story is no special, besides; it is not news to know that millions of people have their own tragedies that till now remain untold. However, just when I was failing to find

more logical and rational voices beside Martin Luther's, to propel me into a decisive move of telling the story of my life, I stumbled on other works (Derbyshire & Loveday, 2008; Kennedy, 2003; Daly, 1998; Dana, 1869, Richardson, 2003) that rooted me in the decision to make an autobiography. Richardson's preview of Kennedy's book, *Speaking Truth to Power* (2003) which cites Nelson Mandela's quote on human rights and human struggle also inspired me. The book pays tribute to the triumph of the human spirit and is proof of the capacity of human capacity to triumph over evil. Inspired by this comment, I saw my work as imperative and worthy told to tell the world of the Cameroonian government repression, to denounce its promotion of social ills against the English speaking Cameroonians. Inspired by Mandela's words, I decided that my workshopped piece alongside the documentation will pay tribute, to my father, Cho Martin and my brother Cho Ransome Dzou, and proof of the triumph of the human spirit. I believe that my efforts will be a step in the right direction to represent this triumph over oppression.

Furthermore, my words of Derbyshire and Loveday (2008) that "there is something extraordinary about real people saying real things about extraordinarily important events" (p.199) further bolstered me. My piece ascribes to the 'realness' that is mentioned here, since it is a representation of a factual event. Carolyn Ellis and Arthur Bochner's believe that, "if you are a storyteller rather than a story analyst then your goal becomes therapeutic rather than analytic" (p.745).If telling the story has had a therapeutic undertone to it is a by-product of the creative process.

With the knowledge that academic writing is not my strength, I had no strong arguments to put forward to convince my supervisor that this work was not a personal exploration of the self in relation to my society and injustice, but as a personal narrative inquiry to address social injustice. My supervisor challenged me to rethink and redesign the work in order for it to suit in the academic sphere which earned me the university's approval to conduct the research.

I feared strongly that this project would likely provoke unresolved feelings. The defeat, cowardice, frustration and incapability that I felt were anchored in my psyche. This was because I had an unexplainable guilt of not being able to prevent the tragic death of my elder brother Cho Ransome Dzou, which triggered the slow but visibly deteriorating health of my father. He finally passed on succumbing to a heart attack which can be blamed on the series of unjust events that preceded my brother's brutal killing.

I decided to channel this frustration into an inquiry, to explore how I could use my craft as a performer to create work that speaks to the injustice in a way that is original and new to Cameroon. I took the courage to make my story and that of my family known to the academic world as my first step towards exposing and denouncing the cruel nature of social injustice. My brother was brutally butchered with a machete after 'friends' spiked his drink. The way his murder was handled, orchestrated the death of my father, as earlier mentioned. These two incidents sparked in me a sudden recollection and reconstruction of memories, following the events that happened before the passing of my mother.

The process of creating *If I Could Speak...* proved to be a tumultuous and challenging journey considering the traumatic and painful effects of the stories being told and the closeness of these events to me. The challenges were social, academic, artistic and above all, spiritual and emotional.

3.2 Social Challenges

The process of creating this work shifted my perception and how I related with people. In retrospect, I now realise that I unconsciously retreated into a psychoanalytical state of mind. My interaction with friends and strangers changed. I became more critical of human relations and behavioural patterns, especially of the people around me. As I reflected on people's response to one another's sufferings, I realised that the majority react with indifference especially when the suffering has no direct impact on their existence. It is in my reflection that Lorna Marshall's (2002) words made more sense. She says "it is easier to respond to others if you genuinely perceive what they are doing, and an overarching 'working' gaze blocks your ability to read what is happening around you" (p.21). In agreement with Marshall's words, I took the decision not to have an overarching gaze so as not to block my ability to interpret people's actions around me. To watch, interpret and understand the reason for another's deeds, in relation to mine was paramount to my research on human behaviour. In addition to critically analysing people's behaviour I saw the truth in Marshall's words that "even our private opinions of other people are affected by our particular social persona" (Marshall, 2002: 6). It took me into an analysis of the Freirean and Boalian pedagogy of the dualistic state of oppression and the dynamics of oppression (Freire, 2000; Boal, 2000). This pedagogy triggered a self-interrogation in relation to my position in the spectrum of social injustice. I transported my mind into the mind of the perpetrator of injustice and asked myself

what would be my action, should roles be changed? Should I take the place of the perpetrator of social injustice, would I fight to maintain the status quo because I am in possession of power, or I would I condemn it. As I shifted my mind to this line of thought, I continued to ask myself if the people around me were worthy to know my story, and if my story itself was worthy to be told?

I came across Brenda Daly's quote which says "…those who have such secrets [stories] to tell should reveal them, at least initially, only to those who will bear witness to their suffering" (1998:11). I therefore became very selective in my interactions and inter-personal relationships. As I work shopped the piece, the process disconnected me from the world; friends and family.

I could barely sustain a conversation with anyone that was out of my topic of concern- the quest for justice. I easily switched off from conversations in friendly gatherings because my mind was constantly thinking of the creative process. This was because I kept asking myself which story I could tell, from my family's experiences of social injustice and discrimination. As I could not get an immediate answer, I retreated from the company of friends and resorted to solitude. I confined myself to my room throughout last year's December holiday, even though I was on a holiday tour with friends. The unresolved questions in my mind, and the weight of the conceptualization of the workshop dissociated me from the group.

3.3 Academic Challenges

I was struggling academically. There were disagreements between my supervisor and I regarding the nature and the objective of the exercise I wanted to undertake.

From a discussion that I had with my supervisor prior to the start of my project, I expressed my desire to create a piece that would heal the wound of the loss of my father and my brother. I was not sure exactly what my intention was but I refused to see my supervisor's point of view because I was hell bent on doing what to me, meant a lot. One the one hand, I wanted to work shop an autobiographical piece that would help me to come to terms with the losses and the traumatic experiences that I have survived. And on the other, I wanted to use my life experiences to create an autobiographical performance that would act as a form of activism. I also wanted to make a performance that would provide a site for the struggle for justice and human rights. With this thought in mind, I knew that I could use the piece to break

the silence that has been imposed on Anglophones, around the issue of social injustice. However, as a performer I was convinced that this project would be an opportunity to better explore my knowledge of the art of performance. Trying to work out ways in which a performative theatre piece could address social injustice was a concern. I call it complex because, in the words of Daly (1998), "self-revelation can be risky, not only for the writer, but for those written about" (p.15).

It is risky to reveal oneself, particularly in a personal narrative work because of the vulnerability involved in doing so. The narrator runs the risk of losing his personality through the telling of his personal life. This therefore means that it is the narrator's responsibility to minimalize the risk of falling into vulnerability and losing the self in the narration. And this also depends on the audience and on how the narrator chooses to tell the story .This implies that he has to make keen choices as to what to say, how to say it, and to whom to say it. Nonetheless, Renee Emunah comments, in slight disagreement with this conception, that "to play [perform] and pretend [make believe], enables a sense of freedom and permission, and promotes expression and self-revelation (1994:10). One can also take his comment from another angle and argue that even an autobiographical performer, does not necessarily puts himself at risk by revealing his personal story, as it is the case in my study, the performer, is also creating a an atmosphere of make-belief around the narrative. This means that, in one way or the other, he is kind of distant from the story. Hence, it can also be considered that the notion of vulnerability simmers, as the narrator turns to be seen as a performer of the actual story. Despite this argument, I still could not help but envisaged the creation of the piece as a risky endeavour. It was an adventure wherein, I would be exposing my life to 'strangers', the audience of the piece.

Personal narrative is also a risk to the people whose stories are being told. Firstly, it is a risk for the same reasons that it is a risk to the narrator, the possibility of making the subject vulnerable and fragile is very easy. Secondly, the risk may arise due to some lapses in ethical considerations. It is very difficult for a narrator, especially a researcher to consciously maintain an ethical subscription , when there is the burning need to want to narrate a situation in its most simplest and honest state .The narrator can easily slip out on the degree to which a narrative can be conveyed to an audience . It is also risky because the narrator runs the risk of not properly representing the subject, either by over-minding a particular situation, or my undermining it. Perhaps this happens; the person whose story has been misrepresented is abused of the reality of their stories. Artistically, the process was difficult. Throughout my

working session, it was only on very few occasions that I went into the process feeling confident. By confidence, I mean the ability to trust my skills as a performer. Every session was a new discovery of different ways to engage the narrative. I explored different modes to engage in the narrative, particularly dance, movement, projection, voice over, singing and live music. Starting this process artistically, made me to feel as though I was about to go in for an exam, in a subject that I know nothing of.

Each session seemed to expose my blankness in the knowledge of performance. I felt like a beginner even in the arts of physical theatre and movement despite having been moulded by Jacques Lecoqq's theory and training. I then resorted to the Butoh (buto) movement and Marshall's training in movement and body geography, so as to resource, redefine and refine my skills. Yet, due to the nature of the narrative, I always felt that I did not have the required skills to tell the story in the way that I wished to tell it. In a way that would propose an answer to one of my research questions, *'how can a personal narrative performance speak to the problem of inequality and discrimination, practised against some marginal groups in Cameroon?'; 'Why did I struggle? I always wondered! It is not clear what my artistic struggles were. Was I too involved in the subject matter that my body could not respond to it?*

After a critical and intense reading and personal training using the teachings and techniques of great theatre makers like Marshall, Grotowski, Lecoqq and Callery among others, I decided to use my body as the primary source of inquiry and the medium through which my experiences would be channelled to the audience. I utilized my skills as a performer, particularly as a physical theatre practitioner. I resorted to movement as the most appropriate vehicle through which I could drive the narrative. As I started to explore physicality and the existence of memory in the body, I began with the exploration of my body's geography, espousing it to its ability to turn 'text' and representations, to performance and practices (Nash, 2000).

My body and mind began to find unison, I realised that I could best express the images of the scars in me through action-movement, more than words. During the process, I came face to face with the old adage that actions speak louder than words. I found out that in order to find a proper way to use a personal narrative like mine was to allow my body to channel out emotions caused by the experience. As I went further into the process, only then did I really find out my body is the centre of pivotal tool of my inquiry. It is the archive. The body, like Marshall says "is the real site of our emotional lives" (p.57). She extends this by saying that

"in a sense, it [the body] is the sole mediator of human experience …it is our body that actually lives our life" *(ibid: xii).* I realised that this was actually the case, when I could not find the exact words to bring to life, the hurtful emotions and memories that harboured me, due to my experience human rights violation. And it is in an attempt to allow my body to mediate my feelings to the audience, which I unintentionally resorted to dance and movement in the second and third 'memories' of my piece.

I have known that a creative process is usually driven by a director. But because of the personal nature and sensitivity of the subject matter, I was not ready to share my story with anyone yet. Even though I knew that at the end of the day, I was creating the piece for an audience, I was not ready to have a director. Getting a director would have been equal to getting close to someone. I did not feel that a director would be necessary because his presence, I feared might dilute the texture, style and the form of the piece. I was not ready to share my emotions and feeling, which I knew would come out as the process unfolded. The making of *If I Could Speak…* was in Louise Bourgeois' words Process Art. Where she defines Process Art, as a creative process and journey with its own meaning and conceptual power (Bourgeois, cited in Sabatini, 2007).

Considering that the making of my piece was a process full of powerful emotional, artistic and conceptual undertones, it was not safe for me to engage with anyone. The process was also a ritual cleansing. I also saw this project as spiritually cleansing because after the last performance, I believed that the souls of my father and of my brother, kind of found peace with what happened and with my subsequent reaction. Whatever may be the case, I say so because after the events that caused their deaths, up to when I was still battling with what could constitute my research project and finally to the time that I started work-shopping the piece, their ghosts appeared in my dreams almost every night. And it was consistent throughout the working session. They automatically stopped appearing in my dreams after I lastly performed the piece.

It was physically taxing and emotionally exhausting as well. I went through a burdensome routine throughout the creation, to create, shape and define both the psychology of my characters and their physicality. The process of contorting my body to transit from one character to another, and of exercising the body to be able to maintain the postures of every character, especially Ransome's character, was exhausting. Talking about the emotions, the conceptualization of *If I Could Speak…* swung me into a continuum of re-traumatization. As I

struggled to come to term with the losses while I was workshopping, I was simultaneously in pain. I was recreating the events that lead to the dead of my father and my brother, which provoked hard-to-bear emotions. Hence, the challenge of distancing myself from the actual event so as to build a true, yet an artistic autobiography that could still portray the true face of Cameroon in relation to human rights, justice and human rights violation.

As I rehearsed, I experienced for the first time on stage that I could reach the space of liminality, as spoken of, by Victor Turner (1988). I plunged myself into a very deep degree of transposition and transformation as I learned in my acting and movement class. Usually, when I act, in order to create a character, I make a fifty-fifty dosage of transposition and transformation. What I mean here is that, as a performer, one is required to give a certain percentage of oneself to the characters that one is performing. The percentages differ. It ranges from one per cent to a hundred per cent, depending on the nature of the character, the mood of the piece, and most especially, the trend of theatre. The particular theatrical trend can be naturalistic, surrealist, contemporary, symbolist, etc. For a performance of the type that I workshopped, in terms of texture and context, there was need for me to do a dosage of seventy per cent of myself, to each of my characters. The reason for doing so was obvious;

First of all, I wanted to create a situation of make-belief so as to get the audience to sympathise with the characters, and in return, to experience, visually and viscerally, the state of injustice as I experienced it in my country.

Secondly, it was important for me to do this transposition, so that I would be able to explore and access the emotions caused by my lived experience. In so doing, I would be able to allow my body to externalize the provoked emotions. After exploring my body-mind and the memories of the events, only then was I able to fully agree with Marshall, when she says that our body "is the real site of our emotional lives" (p.57). Still in cognizance of Marshall's (2002) words, I would say this was the first time that I claimed my territory. I got into the psyche of my brother, Ransome. It is also helpful to mention that *Ransome* was also the name of one of my characters. The process of reaching and crossing the psychological boundary that existed between Ransome's character and myself, helped me to do back flips which I was not able to do before.

The workshopping of my piece drained me emotionally as I earlier mentioned. The images of my father and my elder brother continuously tortured me. Especially, as I constantly went into the liminal space, in order to tap into the psychology of my characters, so as to build

convincing characters, and characters that were close to reality. An instance when this happened was in one workshop session when I was 'physicalizing' the emotion of pain. I literally saw myself lying in Ransome's body on a stretcher in a morgue. I was numbed and immobile for a while before my body started moving again. I used the Butoh movement technique to channel the emotions that the images provoked in me, to the audience, with the help of my body. I realised that the Butoh exercise is a good technique to explore the body's mind. In training with the Botuh exercise, I came to realise as a performer that the body is capable of moving to any direction, if we trust it and give it the permission to do so, to express itself. The exercise also confirmed what Marshall (2002) says, that emotions move the body, and not the other way round.

The intervention of a liminal space comes in this discourse at the point of creating my characters. Once I surrendered my mind to the painfully disturbing memories of my past, I attained a mental readiness, which brought out the emotions of my characters. After I attained my mental readiness, my body automatically swung into each character, slowly and smoothly, with very little effort. Hence, I saw the importance of exploring liminality for a performer.

3. 4 Why If I Could Speak…?

This section discusses the factor that influenced the title of my piece. The title of my piece was not preconceived. It stemmed from the fear of speaking, that I observed from the participants that I interviewed, and from the silent voices of my father and my brother who are no more. I viewed these gagged voices as representative of the many Anglophone Cameroonians. The participants' unwillingness to speak bewildered me. I thought they would be free to talk, considering that they are far away from home, Cameroon. But as mentioned earlier, they did not trust me. I started asking myself questions like *"If they could speak freely, what they would say?", "What if my brother, Ransome and my father, Martin were given a chance to come back to life and speak, what would they say?", " What if I am given a public platform, like in the media, what would I say?".* The most challenging questions that re-surfaced in my mind were that *"If the culprits of my brother's murder were brought to me in front of a court, what would I say to them?"* And finally, *"If the magistrate who refused to release my brother's body, which latter led to the fatal cardiac arrest of my father, was brought to me, what would I say to him?'*

The statement *If I Could Speak*...became the title of the performance, inspired by the questions. In extending the theme, I titled the research report, *Personal Performative Narrative as inquiry: Speaking truth to social injustice in Cameroon.*

3.5 Structure

The structuring of my piece was not only influenced by style or aesthetics. It was also influenced by the mode of inquiry used. Instead of scenes or episodes I decided to name the segments of the creative project *memories*. The umbrella word that is used to group all the memories in my narrative discourse is autobiographical memory (Conway, 1996 & Conway and Wang, 2004).

According to Conway (1996), autobiographical memory means the re-collective experience of memories of one's life. I decided to name the episodes of my performance memories because; the actions in the episodes are the recapitulation of some of the outstanding events that have shaped my socio-cultural and political existence as an Anglophone. The piece is a synchronization of different memories of the experiences, as lived by my family and myself. Calling the events memories allowed me to look at my life in three dimensions; (1) where I come from (2) what I have become and (3) who I want to be.

> Analysing my life as a triad helps me to deconstruct the discriminatory social identity that has been constructed for the Anglophone Cameroonians in general and me in particular. Archer says; "Identity represents the intersection of individual and society. In framing identity the individual simultaneously joins self to society and society to self. As a result, identity comes to serve not only as a guardian of integration and continuity of self-existence, but also as a mechanism for shared meaning-making that embeds the individual with those whom life will be lived with" (Archer,1994:12).

Conway gives a definitive explanation of the term autobiographical memory by saying that it is a form of autobiographical remembering which constitutes the recollection and the reconstruction of the experience of memory.

To begin with, a memory is said to be semantic when the memory is got from factual or conceptual information. It is also called the deep memory. Deep memories are flashes of difficult events that keep resurfacing in one's mind, giving the impression that the event is

not remembered, but relived. It resurfaces with the brutal immediacy of the actual event. This is the case with the last actions that wrap up the piece; the murder of Ransome, and the projections of the pictures of his lifeless body. The happening in the first Memory where my father is insulted, beaten and humiliated is another example of deep memory.

Another subsection of an autobiographical memory is episodic memory. It is a form of memory actually retrieved from an event that one can consciously remember. The use of the word consciousness here is to differentiate a deep memory from an episodic memory. The difference between these two types of memories is very subtle. The subtlety comes from the argument that they are all memories which have a tendency of appearing as powerful flashes in the mind, and that tends to be seen as though they are not memories, but an actual reliving of the experience of the event. It sometimes takes the form of hallucinations.

Episodic memories, also known as common memory are the flashbacks of events that can be acknowledged as memories, irrespective of the degree of effect the memory might have on a person. This form of memory was used in the Second Memory of my piece. It helped me to recall most of the insults, the profiling and humiliation that I was, and still I am automatically subjected to, by virtue of my ethnicity. This ethnicity is detectable from the traditional and cultural clothing that dominated the actions in the Second Memory.

Social injustice in Cameroon and my life cannot be seen separately. It is intertwined into all the components of my existence; culturally, academically, economically and politically. It has become a part of me. It has entangled with my knowledge of myself and my society. Therefore, the reoccurrence of incidences of humiliation, harassment, torture, detention, assaults, insults and eviction, constructed for me an identity which I aimed to deconstruct and reconstruct through the explorations and interrogations of my practice as an artist. .

3.6 First Memory.

The first memory is the remembrance of one series of events that culminated into a Machiavellian scheme to return a loss battle. A commissioner of the police unexpectedly receives a retaliatory humiliation from Ransome, the main character in the piece. Ransome's father is verbally and physically assaulted by the commissioner because the latter claims that Ransome's younger brother, Cho Lwanga Charles, whose name is not mentioned in the piece, scratched off the paint of his 'luxurious car'. 'Luxurious car' is how the commissioner

preferred to call his asset. In response to this harassment that the family usually encounters, Ransome beats up the commissioner and four other policemen whom the latter had called for backup. His father is detained for a couple of days after this incident.

3.7 Second Memory.

The second memory is a metaphorical presentation of the struggle to find a cultural identity. The different traditional regalia that the performer dances his way into finding his appropriate socio-cultural identity represents the three main social groups in Cameroon; the English speaking Cameroonians, the French speaking Cameroonians, and the Hausa (the people from the North and far North regions of Cameroon). They are also French speaking, although they are also a marginalized caste, unfortunately. Despite the pressures of being an Anglophone and the problems of discrimination that I face, I still find the strength to claim the culture of the North -West region of Cameroon because it is my culture by birth. It is where my father came from. Besides, it is the culture that is the cause of my family's side-lining. This assertion and ownership of culture and ethnicity is visible in the treatment that I give to the customs, in the second memory. The treatment was marked by a gracious dance, performed in the traditional wear.

3. 8 Third Memory

The actions of this memory re-enact the actual events that happened before Ransome was brutally murdered, in broad daylight, especially in the presence of the people whom he considered his friends. It is backed by a graphic projection of the actual pictures of Ransome, after he was butchered. I perform a stylized and distorted body movement that brings to the audience's sight, the effect of the traumatic experiences and consequences of social injustice that inhabit me.

3. 9 THE PERFORMANCE

This section of my report presents an analysis of the actual performance of my workshopped autobiographical performative piece, *If I Could I Speak*…. It touches on the performance

from the rehearsal process to audience's response. As Segre (1980) says, "theatre incorporates...a verbal code and a great many other codes...gestures, costume, space, sound, etc"(p.39). This section is the critical review of the performance. It gives an insight into the acting and directorial choices made; use of live music; the use of stage props and of the choice of the performance space. It also presents an account of audience response to the piece, during and after the presentation.

3.10 The Costume as A Pointer Of Identity Construction and Discrimination

In my understanding, costume can be defined as any covering(s) that a performer puts on, on stage, to achieve conceptual objectives and dramatic effect. It can be a piece of cloth, leaves, and pieces of papers and even plastic papers. Most scholars even argue today that nakedness is a form of costume. In *If I could speak…,* I used a number of different kinds of costumes.

I used three different traditional regalia and a transparent tap. The costumes represent the different social groups that make up the Cameroonian society. First, I used a set of sky blue silk gown and a pair of trousers, to represents the North and Far North regions of Cameroon. Secondly, I used a black long sleeve silk shirt and a thick brown lawn, to represent the people from the Coastal region of Cameroon. And finally, I used a cotton weaved gown and a knitted traditional cap, to represent the people from the North-Western region of Cameroon.

The costumes, in itself, fortify and symbolise injustice. The costumes have been used as an identifying tool. Once a person is dressed in any of these different costumes, he is immediately profiled either as a brother or an enemy- either as an Anglophone or as a Francophone. This goes a long way to demonstrate the decree at which social injustice, discrimination and profiling has eaten into the heart of the Cameroonian society. So much that, costumes that are meant to display the beauty and the diversity of Cameroon's cultural heritage, has become a pointers of social injustice. Another kind of costumes that I used was transparent Sellotape. It was worn as an undergarment. The Sellotape costume had a number of functions; (1) to cover my genitalia, (2) to represent transparency and (3) as a symbol of stripped identity. While the transparent nature of the tape symbolises the openness with which the incarceration is practised, the stickiness of the Sellotape costume, to my body, symbolises incarceration.

The ‘me’ here is my genitalia, because that is the natural body part that first gives me an identity. And when this one is under suffocation, then my entire life, as an Anglophone, is in suffocation.

3.11 Music and Performance

My initial idea was to use composed sound and play it on CD. But because I wanted the audience to re-experience the memories with me, I decided to bring life music onto the stage. My intention was to draw the world of the events, closer to the audience, as much as I could, in an effort to bring the audience in direct contact with the narrative. I felt that the intention was achieved, because some audience members commented positively on the effects of the music on them. The music fashioned a sense of intimacy that drew them closer to the performance. I also decided to use live music with the intention to trigger the right emotions in me that I needed to move with, into the third memory. Audience members also commented on the complementary and entrancing effect of the live music as it drew them into the performance.

3.12 The Audience and the Performance Space

Due to the nature of the story as a personal and very private narrative the space needed to be intimate. The physical space brings the audience physically, emotionally and psychologically closer to the story being told. The closeness created intimacy which is important because of the nature of the narrative as a personal account of traumatic experiences, which I was not ready to share with a big audience. So, choosing a small space was in one way, to limit the size of the audience, and in another way, to make the smallness of the space speak for itself. This choice was intended to burden the audience with the weight of the issues at play. The intention of the piece was also to provoke emotions and create critical dialogue amongst the audience as a subtext.

Furthermore, the proximity of the performance to the audience shattered the forth wall and made the audience live and experience the events with me. They were witnesses to the atrocities committed by the Cameroonian government towards its people. Marshall (2002), supports this view by commenting that, “… the more we [audience] permit new reactions, the

more we inhabit the physical reality of another person, the greater our understanding [of the cause and effect of the physical reality] becomes" (p. xiii).

3.13 WAY FORWARD

In this section I cast my eyes forward to dream about the future of *If I Could Speak…*; where I would like to take the performance; possible considerations that might be made about style and form and possible challenges that I might encounter when presenting the piece to a Cameroonian audience back in Cameroon.

After performing the piece three times, and judging by the audience's response, I have a strong desire to perform the piece over and over again. First of all, I feel like I gained authority over the traumatic memories. I can now distance myself from the events and fully engage with the narrative rationally and critically. But now, since I have come to terms with the trauma, I am now ready to take the piece back home as a work of activism for social and political change.

I am very conscious of the difficulties and the challenges that face the future of my piece as I intend to take it back home. The Francophone elites are not likely to welcome the piece, which is obvious, because it confronts and threatens their social status. As for the government itself, I do not see them welcoming the piece either, because, as I mentioned earlier, it challenges the status quo. Most of all I run the risk of ending up like my predecessors who have attempted to challenge the political situation.

The strategy is to first take the piece to the English part of Cameroon, and then to the North and far North parts of Cameroon. These regions are inhabited by many victims of social injustice. I hope I will be able to garner enough social and political support that might act, perhaps, oppose the government's likelihood of banning or repressing the piece.

I am under no illusion that it will be easy to perform the piece back home. I know the consequences that might emanate from staging a piece of this nature. I might end up being incarcerated or of killed. But I am determined. Not only for me and the many marginalised Cameroonians, but also to honour the memories of my father and my brother.

4. CONCLUSION

So far, this document has discussed the journey through which I travelled in the conceptualization and finalization of my workshopped autobiographical piece titled *If I Could Speak*... It has touched on the different levels of challenges that the practice put me through; academic, social, artistic and emotional. I have demonstrated that social injustice is a phenomenon that threatens the social and the political lives of marginalised social groups, especially the English speaking Cameroonians. This work has not failed to explain how president Biya's regime and that of his predecessors propagate discrimination and inequality among the citizens, with the aim to achieve political goals. The core concern of this work has also been explained, which is the activist stand to paint the true face of the Cameroonian government to the world. As I embarked on an academic and artistic journey to explore different theatre-making techniques; styles and aesthetics, I used the memories of my lived experiences together with my family's, in regards to injustice to create an autobiographical performance as a form of theatre activism. In doing so, I hoped that, in workshopping such a piece, I would be creating a site that is relatively safe in instigating and triggering the struggle for justice and human rights. Due to the dictatorial tendencies of the government, that represses its people and any protesting works of arts, this work has explained how I took a brave decision to workshop an autobiographical performative piece that breaks the silence. In so doing, I have highlighted the potential of theatre in breaking silence and in challenging a status quo.

Theatre brings people together into a common space and the theatrical piece provides a topic of discussion among the audience. The subject matter of the piece, social injustice is it is the case of my piece, touches the audience who identifies itself with it, and forces the audience to engage in a critical and dialogical discourse around injustices and human rights violations.

This work has also shown the activist dimension that I took, that would mobilize other Cameroonians to join in the struggle for justice and human rights. I have also contextualized the reason for this work, in the frame work of the theatre-making process in Cameroon. As mentioned in the body of this work, the theatre-making industry in Cameroon is still in the tune of the mainstream theatre and popular theatre, because of government's hegemonic censorship and repression. Protest theatre and theatre as activism is non-existent. Not to talk about a theatre-making process that involves autobiography and makes use of the techniques and the aesthetics that I used in my piece. This is to mean therefore that, to present a piece

like mine to a Cameroonian audience in Cameroon would mean to introduce a new genre of theatre-making.

I have also presented my dream of re-creating the piece and eventually presenting it in Cameroon. I am aware that this ambition involves enormous challenges and risks to my life. But I am determined. I hope the piece will mobilise victims of social injustice and discrimination to stand and speak for their rights so as to make Cameroon a better place for all those who live in it. It is my wish that the Cameroon that I was born in does not stay the Cameroon that future generations will inherit. However, I know that to achieve this ideal, great sacrifice will have to be made. It might take many years to realise that dream and I might not live to see that ideal country just like Martin Luther King never lived to see the changed United States of America of today. But I am optimistic that perhaps like Nelson Mandela who fought and lived to see the free and democratic South Africa, I might just live to see the changed a non-discriminatory Cameroon that I dream of. I would recommend that this form of theatrical piece be workshopped and performed quite often. Let young theatre practitioners consider a new way to make theatre useful; to make their challenge unacceptable conditions in their contemporary lives. I would also ask that there should be much considerations and diligence in conceiving and workshopping a piece of this amplitude.

The theatre practitioners must be aware of the political underpinnings and possible reactions from the relevant authorities. It must be known that, to take on an activist stand and challenge institutionalised norms, requires courage, support and determination.

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