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"LET ME TELL MY OWN STORY":

A QUALITATIVE EXPLORATION OF HOW AND WHY 'VICTIMS' REMEMBER GUKURAHUNDI IN JOHANNESBURG TODAY.

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Abstract[1]

This study is about the ways *Gukurahundi* memory is invoked by Zimbabwean migrants living in Johannesburg, South Africa. The research focused on inner city Johannesburg residents who are actively speaking about the *Gukurahundi*. Participants were drawn from three main migrant groups; Zimbabwe Action Movement, *Mthwakazi* Liberation Front and *Ithemba leSizwe*. Two artworks produced to document the atrocities; a film, The Tunnel, written and produced by an 'outsider' white South African filmmaker and music, *Inkulu lendaba*, written and performed by victims of the violence, were used as case studies; to answer questions about the meaning, role and appropriate form for remembering Gukurahundi in Johannesburg today. The Tunnel has enjoyed a global audience whereas *Inkulu lendaba*, remains within the victims' locality. Findings of this study are drawn from participant observation of victims' community events, in-depth interviews, focus group discussions and, an analysis and comparison of the artworks and their reception by victims. One of the key findings of this study focusing on contestation over how a history is narrated is that translation plays a significant role in maintaining global inequality and continuing forms of colonialism. The memory of *Gukurahundi* is invoked, partially translated, in the music to critique continuing forms of colonial inequality in the ways narratives of victimhood are received by the global audience highlighting a shortcoming in the film, which translates the story of *Gukurahundi* for a global audience yet causing it to lose its authenticity for the victims. The music by victims narrates the experience of being a victim of *Gukurahundi*, a migrant in xenophobic South Africa and black in a racist global community. In this way it postures the socio-economic location of the victims in the global community as the reason for their victimhood and its lack of acknowledgement. This socio-economic location is therefore pivotal to their healing. The study contributes to literature on post conflict transition mechanisms and foregrounds the role of acknowledgement in healing however; specific forms of narration are required for healing. Furthermore the study shows the role of music in the transmission of trauma across generations,

1 Ethics clearance for this research was received from the University of the Witwatersrand Human Research Ethics Committee (Non-Medical), Protocol H121114 & H12/11/14

facilitating the domestication of politics into the everyday and fostering ‘safe’ political participation in repressive contexts. The thesis also presents the potential of creative methodologies in disrupting the researcher-participant relationship power dynamics by presenting research in poetic form and facilitating participant engagement with research output; Poetic transcription similarly does this by creating transparency in the meaning making process of research analysis.

Key Terms

Transmission of trauma, translation, memory, identity, nationalism, poetry, art, music, film, migration, everyday politics, violence