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A cultural response: the exploration of traditional dance and games as an HIV/AIDS intervention. A Zimbabwean case study

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CHAPTER ONE

BACKGROUND TO THE STUDY

1.1 Prolegomenon

According to Nelson Mandela 'AIDS today in Africa is claiming more lives than the sum total of all wars, famines and floods and the ravages of such deadly diseases as Malaria (Mandela, 2008:35). AIDS has created a crisis that has challenged our way of living. The effects of this crisis are such that we find ourselves helpless and not able to manage the disease effectively. Many of us know people who are living with HIV/AIDS or know some one who has died of AIDS. There are many children who have lost their parents, relatives and guardians due to HIV/AIDS and many more continue to loose their loved ones due to this pandemic.

While statisticians try to count the number of people who have died or are infected by HIV/AIDS, the statistics do not fully capture the magnitude and depth of the grief and sorrow caused by the pandemic. As Cameron says in his book *Edwin Cameron: Witness to Aids*:

> AIDS has pitched our continent into a vast agony of mourning. Every family, every workplace, every sphere of very human organization in central and southern Africa has felt the epidemic's seeping of strength, its obtrusion of ghastly and disfiguring symptoms, its premature bereavements, its copious and often unattended product parentless young. And many of us, too many, have reacted mutely. (Cameron, 2005:213)

We have responded to the epidemic with silence. We have embraced discrimination against those infected and affected by HIV/AIDS. The consequences for this action has strengthened the denial and perpetuated the epidemic. Thereby creating an imagined distance between what Cameron says 'the way we can live and the way others must live' (Cameron, 2005: 212).

The issues surrounding HIV/AIDS cannot be ignored. As a continent, country, nation, society, community, tribe, clan, family and individuals; we need to embrace the reality

that we are living with the disease and it requires us to be courageous, compassionate and have solidarity in order to combat HIV/AIDS. It is of paramount importance that we do not deny its existence nor become so fearful that we do nothing about it and its causes. I have lost two very close friends to HIV/AIDS. It is not the loss that was painful but witnessing my own fears as I experienced living with them in a circle of their families, relatives, colleagues and strangers. What I found to be really traumatic was the confusion, the fear, the discrimination and stigma, not only for the ones living with the disease, but all who knew these two friends of mine.

This became my entry point for my creative led research project. It was driven by the need to react to HIV/AIDS pandemic by focusing on the power and popularity of African traditional dances and games as a medium of communication for my community. Hence, this study is an exploration of the cultural response to the use of indigenous knowledge found within the traditional dances and games as an HIV/AIDS intervention.

1.2 Research Focus

The focus of this research report attempts to theoretically locate, outline and analyze the process of the creative led research which was employed as a cultural response exploring the possibility of engaging the indigenous knowledge within Zimbabwean traditional dances and games as an HIV/AIDS intervention.

1.3 Terms Defined and Contextualized

There are several key words and terms that are central to this research report and it is necessary that they are defined and contextualized with reference to their meaning within the frame of this study.

This study acknowledges that the word **culture** has a broad meaning and has been defined by many scholars in various fields such as sociology, anthropology and ethnomusicology. The quest to define culture has always been to understand the basic principles by which human society functions. According to Piddington,

> The culture of a people may be defined as the sum total of the material and intellectual equipment whereby they satisfy their biological and social needs and adapt themselves to their environment (Piddington, 1950:3).

Piddington's definition of what constitutes culture embraces the struggle for survival by a society and the quest to satisfy their biological and social needs. While Piddington's definition of **culture** is adequate for this study, especially when one looks at the notion of new needs and adapting to new environments especially regarding HIV/AIDS, for the purposes of this study the term **culture** is adopted from Ayisi's definition. In his book: *An Introduction to the study of African Culture*, he asserts that, '**culture** consists of the ways, mores, and beliefs transmitted from generation to generation; it may be generally shared by some population or a group of people- in other words, it should represent the collective conscience of a group of people' (Ayisi, 1980: 4).

Every African society has **traditional dances** which use the human body as a tool to communicate nonverbal messages constructed through movement. However, the distinguishing factor is how these **traditional dances** are regarded by that particular society. In most African societies traditional dance is not only a spectacle but is an embodiment of movement that is manifested from an inner psyche and is externalized into a visually shared non- verbal communication form. While Spencer (1980:1) asserts that '**traditional dance** has an elusive quality, which adapts and those who have known it all their lives find it easier to demonstrate than explain in so many words,' John Middleton in his article entitled: *The dance among the Lugbara of Uganda* also quotes one of the best-known statements about dance coined by Isadora Duncan. 'If I could tell you what it meant there would be no point in dancing it' (see Middleton in Spencer, 1985). In this research report, **traditional dance** speaks for itself. It is a living embodied memory that has the power to transgress, transform, transport, transcend, and transmit, yet most of its intellectual property remains unresearched. In the context of this study **traditional dance** refers to the cultural phenomenon that is visually, psychologically and physically communicated as a nonverbal message. The body is used as a tool to convey its messages through movements which have been passed down from generation to generation. It is fully appreciated in relationship with the people's traditions and culture.

As an integral part of traditions, games are also a point of focus in this research report. French sociologist, Roger Caillois in his book *Les jeux et les hommes (Games and Men)*, defined a game as an activity that must have the following characteristics:

- *fun*: the activity is chosen for its light-hearted character
- *separate*: it is circumscribed in time and place
- *uncertain*: the outcome of the activity is unforeseeable
- *non-productive*: participation does not accomplish anything useful
- *governed by rules*: the activity has rules that are different from everyday life
- *fictitious*: it is accompanied by the awareness of a different reality (Caillois, 1975:6)

In this study, I incorporate Caillois characteristics as part of the elements that are imbedded in games. Therefore games are defined as structured activities, usually undertaken for enjoyment and sometimes used as an educational tool and in this research the intention is to use them to speak to HIV/AIDS issues.

My research topic apart from it being a cultural response is set within the confines of exploring traditional dances and games as an HIV/AIDS intervention. Therefore defining what an intervention is in this research report is crucial. In the context of this study, intervention is defined as a deliberate process by which change is introduced into peoples' thoughts, feelings and behaviours through a creative led interaction among a group of people. The overall objective of this intervention being that it is a bridge or an arena that allows the group of people who are willing to engage with the process in a non-threatening and respectful way to explore other options of confronting their challenges with a view of modifying these challenges for the better.

1.4 Why the creative led study?

My concern is based on the fact that traditional dance groups in Zimbabwe use traditional dances for entertainment during wedding ceremonies, competitions, festivals, private parties, state functions, and performing for tourists at hotels and restaurants. While this is acceptable and valid for these traditional dance groups to continue to use traditional dances for entertainment in these various events, as an insider, I propose to transform, translate, transcend or re-appropriate the indigenous knowledges found in traditional

dances and games to speak to the issues of HIV/AIDS. Is entertainment the only axiomatic proposition that these traditional dance groups have in the face of the HIV/AIDS pandemic? Can we not trespass and transform our traditions by creating something new from our tradition and culture that speaks to HIV/AIDS? As noted by Boal,

> If we do not trespass (not necessarily violently), if we don't go beyond our cultural norms, our state of oppression, the limits imposed on us, even the law itself (which should be transformed) – if we don't trespass in this we can never be free. To free our selves is to trespass and transform. It is through the creation of the new that that which has not yet existed begins to exist. To free yourself is to trespass. To trespass is to exist. To free ourselves is to exist. To free yourself is to exist (Boal, 2008: xxi).

I concur strongly with Boal's assertion of trespassing, going beyond our cultural norms and values by exploring the metaphors and cultural expressions found within traditional dances and games to create an HIV/AIDS intervention through creative research. As Cameron says 'healing lies within the power of our own actions (2005:215)' and we can transform the limits we confine ourselves into by confronting our own fears and failures in dealing with the pandemic through the power of creating something new so that that which has not yet existed begins to exist for the betterment of our humanity.

1.5 Selection of the traditional dance group

In order to explore the possibility of applying traditional dances and games as an HIV/AIDS intervention, the research process required finding an appropriate traditional dance group or participants who had knowledge and a deep understanding of the traditional games and dance styles performed in Zimbabwe. The search for this kind of a group led me to Khaya African Arts. This group is based in Yeoville, Johannesburg in South Africa and is composed of twelve members of whom four are female dancers and the other eight are male dancers. Most of the members are immigrants from Zimbabwe.

The selection of Khaya African Arts members as participants in the exploration of using traditional dance and games as an HIV/AIDS intervention was appropriate for this

research project. This group uses Zimbabwean traditional dances for entertainment at restaurants, weddings and other social gatherings around Johannesburg. To date, this group had not used their dances and games in a creative manner in order to directly challenge the HIV/AIDS related issues in their community.

1.6 The research questions

The other consideration of the research process was that it also required guiding questions. Adrienne Kaeppler, (2000) argues that,

> The use of Western dance theory for analysis of non western dance is inappropriate; a dance researcher must attempt to discover indigenous theories about movement. How did the structured movement systems originate? Are they codified into genres? How and by whom can the dances be composed? How can (and cannot) movement and postures be combined? Is there a vocabulary of motifs or grammar for their use? Are there notions about energy and how it should be displayed? On the basis of movement, can dance be separated from ritual? And more basic still, does a culture have such concepts? (Kaeppler, 2000: 21).

Kaeppler's point of view places trust on the researcher of non-Western dances to use an insider analysis of how dance is perceived. The thrust is not only based on illuminating and empowering non-Western dance researchers to develop their own non-Western dance theories but challenging the non-Western dance researchers to push the periphery far beyond the studying and documenting of movement. Kaeppler's assertion in my opinion is relevant to the study whose focus was to theoretically locate, outline and analyze the process of the creative led research which was employed as a cultural response exploring the possibility of engaging the indigenous knowledge within Zimbabwean traditional dances and games as an HIV/AIDS intervention. Therefore I adopted Kaeppler's (2000) assertion as a frame of reference to lead this creative research project.

1.7 The fire in my belly

Drama, theatre, film and television interventions are at the forefront of information dissemination. They raise awareness and also tap into the consciousness of the people to find solutions to the challenges of the HIV/AIDS epidemic. While it is critical to tackle and combat the HIV/AIDS epidemic from all angles, some of the interventions have not been effective. Many people continue to be infected and affected. As Jonathan Mundell's (2009) article entitled; *HIV Prevention in Africa: Religion, Culture, Tradition and Science* asserts that 'attempts to stem the tide of the epidemic using approaches that rely on just one method of prevention have consistently failed, and will continue to fail'. This observation from Mundell (2009) illuminates the notion that one of the many reasons for the continuation of the rampage of HIV/AIDS in Africa emanates from the fact that some of the interventions used are foreign to the target audience. The disadvantage is that the messages can also be treated as foreign. Traditional dances and games are indigenous art forms that come from known traditions and practices and if they are appropriately used, people can identify with the meaning embedded in these art forms.

In most of the Zimbabwean traditional dance groups with an average of ten to fifteen members both male and female dancers had become a source of employment. The dancers gained income through performing at schools, festivals, weddings, graduation ceremonies, state and private functions. Some dance groups had managed to secure contracts for themselves to perform regularly at tourist destinations such as Victoria Falls, the Great Zimbabwe Hotel, Matopo Hills etc. However, the near collapse of the Zimbabwe economy has had a negative impact in the performing arts sector. Some of the talented traditional dance groups have disbanded due to lack of jobs. Besides the political and socio – economic crisis in Zimbabwe, the traditional dance groups have also failed to adapt and use traditional dance as a means of communication in conveying contemporary issues. It is these observations that were the cause of the 'fire in my belly'. This is what drove me to investigate an area that has immense potential to communicate issues of HIV/AIDS to our community through the use of our traditional dances and games.

The other motivating factor was the lack of traditional games and play among traditional dance groups. Traditional games were not being explored as they represent just 'playing'. In the Shona tradition, play means *kutamba* while in Ndebele it is *ukudlala*. Playing is an activity that is mostly associated with playing games by children and young people. Society expects children and young people to include playing as part of growing up. It is through games that children learn the beliefs, taboos, customs and behaviour of the society. This notion of play forms part of a rite of passage into different stages of the society. Once they reach adult hood playing games is no longer expected to be a part of their daily activity.

According to Chinyowa (2005) play is an activity set apart from the real context, imagination is the feature that engages with the fictional context by helping to create or bring forth alternative realities. When playing a game, participants required not only a space marked out for play but the games also confronted the players with certain tasks and risks. The games could not be enjoyed without affecting the players' attitudes, purposes and behaviours. Thus the playing process itself became a way of making something come into being (Chinyowa, 2005). The illusion associated with the 'operative frame' (Voss Price, 1998) in play is sustained by imagination. It is this use of imagination and metaphor that this creative led research was interested in exploring.

Also the other motivation was that there is lack of material written by indigenous people about their own culture from their point of view as insiders. Even those who are Africans and have written from African perspectives, their research findings are not found in the main stream of various theoretical frameworks and are not being cited by Western scholars.

Denzin (2003) in his book *Performance Ethnography, Critical Pedagogy and the Politics of Culture,* informs us of an emerging anti-colonialist discourse and raises questions of the use of Western science to validate indigenous knowledge. He points out that:

> Lopez (1998) observes that "there is a large – scale social movement anticolonialist discourse" (p.226), and this movement is evident in the

> emergence of the African American, Chicano, Native American, and Maori standpoint theories. These theories question the epistemologies of western science that are used to validate knowledge about indigenous people (Denzin, 2003:6).

Looking at Denzin's point of view, my perspective is that, it is not only the Western theories that are used to validate indigenous traditions that should be challenged but also for the indigenous voices to seize opportunities and create for themselves platforms to question, probe, analyze, and reflect about their own culture through dance and other culturally appropriate forms. Therefore this creative led research project seeks to close that gap by contributing to critical discussions on the process of re-appropriating known embodiment of indigenous knowledge found in African traditional dances and games to explicitly speak about the challenges of HIV/AIDS.

1.8 In search of a practice review

The essence of African traditional dance has constantly been reviewed from a non participatory Western perspective such that its empirical manifestation has not been explored. The challenge is that few scholars have written about African traditional dance, in particular about Zimbabwe dances. Kariam Welsh Asante (1985:381) in her journal article entitled *Jerusarema Dance of Zimbabwe* acknowledges that very little has been written about the traditional dances of Zimbabwe. Asante (2000) in another book *Zimbabwe Dances: Rhythmic Dances, Ancestral Voices- An Aesthetics Analysis* also observes that,

> This absence of full analytical treatments of Shona dance or cultural practices does not, of course, imply that dance did not occur or exist. Rather, most of the writers who wrote about the Shona people initially were missionaries, explorers, or colonial government officials. Their impressions were largely related to their own ambitions. Few if any of them had any interest in dance as an art form in its own context. Consequently when they reported about dance, it was an aside to another enterprise (Asante, 2000:3).

Ajayi, (1998) when referring to Nigerian dances also makes a similar observation on what has been written about Africa dance. He criticizes and dismisses written material on Nigerian dances by outsiders. He notes that;

> For a long time, available information on Nigerian dances was limited to century – old travelogues, ethnographic accounts and reports of missionaries and colonial administrators. These documents whose authors were neither practitioners nor students of dance, provide a far-from-reliable (or even relevant) witness to the cultural institutions they purport to describe given the politics of colonialism, the reports were often distorted with ethnocentric prejudices (Ajayi,1998:5).

My observation (as noted in Ajayi and Asante's arguments) is that most of the literature on African Traditional Dance is heavily grounded in the historical context of colonialism. The African Scholarship standpoints are trying to redress these connotations of Western perspectives by positioning themselves within discourses that address these imbalances. This is crucial for the indigenes as it lays the foundation of emancipation of African traditions from an insider point of view. However, while such standpoint views are valid in trying to redress the imbalances of colonial perspectives, what is also critical for developing African scholarship is the development of other theoretical indigenous dance frameworks away from the colonialism hegemonic control. 'It is through the creation of the new that that which has not yet existed begins to exist. If we do not go beyond our cultural norms, our state of oppression, the limits imposed on us, if we don't trespass in this, we can never be free. To free our selves is to trespass and transform' (Boal, 2008: xxi).

The chosen literature considered relevant to this study examines how, dance and games can be significant in the production and communication of issues pertaining to HIV/AIDS. Kaeppler, (2000) and Hanna (1978) are some of the scholars who are seeking a broader study of dance theory as a nonverbal communication theory that encompasses an insider perspective. Kaeppler observes that a 'dance researcher must attempt to discover indigenous theories about movement' (Kaeppler, 2000:21). Kaeppler's assertion emphasizes the need to illuminate indigenous knowledges and this creative led research

intends to focus on the process of how traditional dances and games can be used as an effective HIV/AIDS intervention.

Hanna who re- examines dance theory looking at dance as a non verbal communication theory offers a valuable insight on how 'dance can communicate information purposefully' from a theoretical point of view. Therefore, Hanna's assession relates to this research report which attempts to theoretically locate, outline and analyze the process of the creative led research which was employed as a cultural response exploring the possibility of engaging the indigenous knowledge within Zimbabwean traditional dances and games as an HIV/AIDS intervention.

Bozongwana, (2000) in his book: *Ndebele Religion and Customs*, as an insider reveals the Ndebele religious and customs philosophy. He gives insight into the Ndebele beliefs and customs from a theological perspective. While his analysis does not in any way explore traditional dances and games found among the Ndebele people of Zimbabwe in relationship to their religion and customs, his views are valuable in this study as they give an insight into Ndebele traditional rituals and customs. He asserts that 'for a sick man to dream that he is well again denotes death for him' (Bozongwana, 2000:15). His insights of common beliefs among the Ndebele people gave this creative research study the idea to explore dreams as a theme in the use of traditional dances and games as an HIV/AIDS intervention.

Literature from Nyathi (1994, 1999, 2000, 2001, and 2005) describes the cultural heritage of the Ndebele people of Zimbabwe. Although his reference to traditional dance is minimal, his written material offers a valuable cultural insight into the important underlying beliefs and cultural practices of the Ndebele society which is critical to this research report.

Also, Gelfand (1988) illuminates the culture, philosophy, moral and ethical behavior of the Shona speaking peoples of Zimbabwe through his book: *The Genuine Shona*, but his focus is more on the attributes and philosophy of the Shona concept of life – *Hunhu.* His

research however, is useful as a cross reference of the Shona and Ndebele cultures especially on the inheritance rituals.

In order to understand people, we have to look at their past and the history from which they arose (Bourdillon, 1998:3). The descriptions of the historical journey of the Shona people of Zimbabwe through his ethnographic accounts of living among the Shona people (the Korekore found in Mashonaland central province) provides valuable cultural reference for this study.

CHAPTER TWO

LOCATING THE THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

2.1 Cultural Theory

Bourdillon (1982:3) asserts that, 'a man's character to some extent lies in the traditions in which he was brought up and the experiences he has undergone'. With this view in mind, in order to have a cultural response to issues of HIV/AIDS and explore the possibility of applying Zimbabwean traditional dances and games as an HIV/AIDS intervention it was fundamental to locate the creative research project within the theory of culture. According to Tylor quoted in Ayisi's book; *An Introduction to the Study of African Culture,*

> Culture is that complex whole which includes knowledge, belief, art, law, morals, customs, and all other capabilities and habits acquired by man as a member of society (Tylor, in Ayisi, 1980:1).

While Tylor is distinguishing between the instinctive qualities of man and his acquired habits, it is clear that he is alluding to the fact that culture embraces everything which contributes to the survival of man. This assertion treats culture as a package of social heritage, with all the knowledge and skills vital to survival and reproduction. Culture consists of the ways, mores and beliefs transmitted from generation to generation; it may be generally shared by some population or a group of people – in other words, it should represent the collective conscience of a group of people (Ayisi, 1980:4). Those that share the norms, values, morals, beliefs, customs, habits, manners, traditional dances, songs and games would understand the cultural embodiment of all these aspects as they are part of their culturally shared world view. Culture became a useful framework for this creative study as it is the foundation upon which I explored the traditional dances and games as an HIV/AIDS intervention. Boal assets that,

> It is our responses to the exigencies of life that culture is born. Culture is the doing, the *how* it is done, the for *what* and the for *whom* it is done. Beavers always construct the same dams; they are genetically

> programmed. Sparrows always build the same nest, whilst singing the same song. We human beings have the capacity to invent songs and architecture (Boal, 2006:100).

My interest in relating my creative led research project to culture was based on the observation from Boal that 'We human beings have the capacity to invent songs and architecture'- (Boal, 2006:100) and this study was a cultural response to the challenges of HIV/AIDS. Culture evolves; it adapts itself to new circumstances and environments. From an insider point of view, how do we use these elements of culture to speak to HIV/AIDS issues? While culture as a framework was sufficient to explore this question, my research project was also informed by cultural semiotics.

2.2 Cultural Semiotics as a Theoretical Framework

Traditional dances and games are a composite form of body attitude through which ordinary daily actions have been spatially re- arranged and encoded to convey systems of information (Ajayi, 1998:18). The creative research was set to explore the meaning of movement found in the traditional dances with the view of using them as an HIV/AIDS intervention. The meaning of movement emanates from the body attitude which is a dynamic aspect of communication exchanged in African traditional dances and games. The movements in the African traditional dances and games form a complex structural framework of codes and signals tightly woven into norms and customs of the people. Therefore, this context also called for a practical exploration of traditional dance movements and games through the study of cultural semiotics.

Keir Elam (1980:1) defines semiotics as a science dedicated to the study of the production of meaning in a society and is equally concerned with the processes of signification and with those of communication, i.e. the means whereby meanings are both generated and exchanged. Communication is ~~all~~ about representation, about how things come to mean something within a context. In traditional dance and games communication occurs through a combination of complex movements whereby these combinations of movements become a vehicle for the conceptualization of messages. However, this

communication is not passively absorbed but arises only in the active process of interpretation.

Omolofolabo Soyinka Ajayi (1998) states that the conventional cultural semiotic studies of the body codes as non-verbal means of communication include clinical and structural approaches concentrating on the encoding and decoding of the use of the gaze, facial expressions, gestures, use of space, proxemics, kinesics, posture, general body movements and numerous aspects of other actions.

The main reason I positioned my creative led research project to the theory of cultural semiotics is the understanding of the body as a primary instrument that enables and sends intended signs as messages to the observers who in turn decodes the signs into an interpreted message. The body, through African traditional dance movements and games, communicates meanings that can be encoded and decoded for use as an HIV/AIDS intervention. My point of departure from the cultural semiotic theory was using its concern of meaning construction and interpretation. Signs do not just 'convey' meanings, but constitute a medium in which meanings are constructed and in this case the medium was Zimbabwean traditional dances and games.

Hanna's approach of using dance as a non verbal communication in cultural semiotics was also useful in dealing with the process of re-appropriation of the Zimbabwean traditional dances and games. She illuminates her theory through her book; *To dance is Human – a Theory of Non verbal communication.* According to Hanna (1987),

> Dance is part of this cultural communication system in which information, valuable in adaptation, is relayed to oneself and others. Dance can communicate information purposefully as well as offer an open channel that could be used (Hanna, 1987:63).

One of the key principles of Hanna's theoretical framework that interested me is her assertion that dance is not only a non verbal communicator but also the purposeful alignment of dance to a cultural communication system in which knowledge in dances and games are relayed to oneself and others. Traditional dance movements and games have gestures which are used to communicate certain feelings of emotions and they are

embedded within a cultural phenomenon. John Blacking (1971:39-40) points out that dance movements alone have the capability to communicate affectively and cognitively.

Traditional dances and games have structured movements which with practice become familiar to the dancer's body and to those that share the same cultural background. The movements in the traditional games and dances are also a physical language that is deeply rooted in particular traditions and they are easily understood in the culture where they come from. Hanna further illuminates my argument by stating that:

> Dance is cultural behavior: a people's values, attitudes and beliefs partially determine the conceptualization of dance as well as it physical production, style, structure, content and performance. Dance comments reflexively on systems of thought, sustaining them or undermining them through criticism of institutions, policies or personages. (Hanna, 1987:3)

There is a temptation to read and understand this study as an observation of the cultural theories and semiotics and negate the 'process' of the creative led research. Ideas generated by these theories led to the thrust of the study which attempts to theoretically locate, outline and analyze the process of the creative led research which was employed as a cultural response exploring the possibility of engaging the indigenous knowledge within Zimbabwean traditional dances and games as an HIV/AIDS intervention.

CHAPTER THREE

UNPACKING TRADITIONAL DANCES OF ZIMBABWE

3.1 Introduction

It is critical for this study to give a background to the context and meaning of traditional dances in Zimbabwe for readers who may not be familiar with Zimbabwean culture and traditions. Equally important in this chapter is the unpacking of traditional dances with the intention of giving an insight to some of the research questions raised in chapter one from Kaeppler's assertion in which she states that:.

> …a dance researcher must attempt to discover indigenous theories about movement. How did the structured movement systems originate? Are they codified into genres? How and by whom can the dances be composed? How can (and cannot) movement and postures be combined? Is there a vocabulary of motifs or grammar for their use? Are there notions about energy and how it should be displayed? On the basis of movement, can dance be separated from ritual? And more basic still, does a culture have such concepts? (Kaeppler, 2000: 21).

The background will give the reader an insight of how traditional dances are constructed and how they are perceived within the communities of Zimbabwe.

There are many ethnic groups that make up the Zimbabwean nation. There are Caucasians who are descendents of many European nations with the greater number coming from Britain and South Africa. There are also Asians, mainly from India including a very small population of the Chinese. People of mixed races from relationships between indigenous people and the Caucasians also form part of the Zimbabwean nation. Many Africans from the neighboring countries such as Malawi, Zambia and Mozambique are also part of the minority groups. All these people bring their own traditions and way of living which in turn enriches and informs Zimbabwean culture.

Of the indigenous people of Zimbabwe, the Shona are in the majority followed by the Ndebele who are the second largest ethnic group. Although the Shona people are the

majority, there are several ethnic groups that form the Shona people and these are the MaZezuru, MaManyika, MaKaranga, MaKorekore, MaBudja, MaNdau, Matshangani and other smaller dialects. These various ethnic groups come under one classification which is Shona. They differ in terms of history of origins, topography, customs, beliefs, habits, language, traditional dances and ceremonies.

The nucleus of the AmaNdebele people are the Ndebeles themselves but there are also other minorities who align themselves more with the Ndebele people and these are the amaFengu, amaXhosa, amaVenda, amaKhalanga, amaSuthu and amaTonga. Even though the ethnic groups are dominated by the Ndebele culture they continue to practice their own culture and traditions.

These various ethnic people are situated within the ten provinces *(see figure1; map of Zimbabwe in the below inset)* of which the capital city Harare and the second largest city Bulawayo are part of.



www.mapsofworld.com (Accessed 9/03/2010).

Whilst each province has its own city or what is known as growth points, apart from the two major cities, most of these provincial setups are dominated by rural settlements in terms of structure. The village communities in the rural areas are manly composed and dominated by people from the same clan. Chavundika (1978: 6) notes that 'the Shona people are patrilineal and practice virilocal marriage and because of this, people in each village are usually related to each other'. This means that they practice the same traditions in terms of culture and the chief is the highest authority when it comes to cultural issues. This scenario is the same among the Ndebele people and other ethnic groups found in the rural areas of Zimbabwe.

The tendency with historical written material has been to classify the Shona people as a unit yet if one observes closely; for example, the Zezuru culture is distinctively different from the Karanga, Korekore, Ndau, Kalanga to mention a few. However, most of the Zimbabweans are aware and familiar with these differences. It is with this view that this creative led research is built on. It looks at bringing a variety of traditional dances and games from various ethnic groups on to the dance floor to consciously speak to issues raised by the pandemic. After all HIV/AIDS does not differentiate, discriminate nor does it only affect a particular ethnic group.

3.2 Introduction of the two dimensions of Traditional dances of Zimbabwe

Traditional dances in Zimbabwe are performed and perceived from within two dimensions. These two dimensions are **contextual**, meaning traditional dances performed in their original form and purpose while the other one is the same traditional dances performed for **entertainment** purposes. In the following segment I shall describe a couple of traditional dances in their context with a view of showing how traditional dances are perceived within the cultural context. Then after that I will briefly outline the entertainment dimension of traditional dances.

3.3 The first dimension - Traditional Dances in their original context

Traditional dances play an integral part of life of the various ethnic groups of people of Zimbabwe. Within an indigenous dance tradition, a performance usually has a primary and an explicit purpose to reflect, transmit and preserve communal values and social

relationships within a society. While a dance is valued for the role it plays in social occasions, it is also simultaneously enjoyed as an activity in its own right which entertains and gives pleasure as an expression of communal life. (See Harper, 1988:3) Equally important is the relation of dance movements to the movement habits of daily life. The movements in the African traditional dances and games form a complex structural framework of codes and signals tightly woven into norms and customs of the people. For instance; Among the Shona people, hands are clapped when thanks are expressed and this is called *kuombera*. This is done as a sign of showing respect to another individual or a group of people. There are many different sets of circumstances in which this is performed. When the dancers take the very same movement into the *Mbakumba* traditional dance which is a harvest celebratory traditional dance, the *kuombera* is a sign that expresses respect for the ancestors' offer of good rains. Omolofolabo Soyinka Ajayi (1998) states that the conventional cultural semiotic studies of the body codes as non-verbal means of communication include clinical and structural approaches concentrating on the encoding and decoding of the use of the gaze, facial expressions, gestures, use of space, proxemics, kinesics, posture, general body movements and numerous aspects of other actions.

In his book *Music in African cultures*, Nketia (1966:48) notes that,

> Every musical (dance) played (danced) in community life has a tradition behind it, a tradition which governs its mode of performance, its repertoire… as well as a tradition that governs the context in which it should be played(danced)' (Nketia, 1966:48).

Snipe in his article *Bridges to Humanity* found in the book *African Dance: An Artistic, Historical and Philosophical Enquiry*, states that,

> To dance is to live. In Africa, dance forms a vital bridge between the dead and the living and the unborn. Although African Dance may be entertaining, it functions primarily as a cultural and artistic expression of the community; in Africa the notion of art for the sake of art is a foreign concept (Snipe, 1996:63).

In concurring with Snipe's assertion, some of the traditional dances in Zimbabwe form a rite of passage that facilitates the vital link between the living and the ancestors who are the custodians of people. Some of the clans strongly believe that they may not survive

and live well without the guardianship of the living dead. Therefore, the traditional dances offer a safe passage of communication between the living and ancestors vital for the survival of the kinship especially in times of need in the community. In fact traditional dances serve as stimuli or the foundation for the purposes of the intervention of the ancestors.

3.4 The importance of Ancestral Spirits among the Ndebele People

In his book *Ndebele Religion and Customs*, Bozongwana (1983, 1998, 2000:1) notes that customs are symbols or outward signs of an inward spiritual reality. He asserts that,

> The Ndebele believe that this earth *(umhlaba)* is a land of both happiness and sorrows. The powerful evil spirits bring hardships, sorrow and death upon the people inhabiting it. Surely, if they are to survive, they have to look to someone more powerful to protect them. This is done by the ancestral spirits who act like guardians. They fight the enemy, sustain life and provide riches for the believer. The obvious danger is the witch. The ancestors on reading the intensions of the witch will come to the man or woman in a dream and warn him of the action contemplated by the enemy. The ancestors may send an omen instead of a vision (Bozongwana, 2000: 1).

The omen usually sent by the ancestors as noted by Bozongwana serves as a warning to the living that harm is on its way. Anything amiss from normal life is considered to be a signal from the ancestors that something is wrong. The affected person must consult a *Sangoma* or *Sanuse* who are considered to be powerful spirit mediums who can communicate with the ancestors in order to determine the cause and what has to be done to eradicate the problem. Therefore in order for the ancestral spirits - *Amadlozi* to provide protection for the entire family there should be constant communication with them. This communication is done by performing certain rituals of which traditional dances play a major role. These rituals are part of a belief system that is imbedded in our traditions passed on by the great, great fore fathers – *okhokho*. As Phathisa Nyathi puts it, 'the belief is that behind every ritual behaviour is an underlying philosophy or belief. Sometimes the practitioners do not even know the hidden belief, but are content to go along with the practice' (Nyathi, 2001: xii).

However, with the complexities of HIV/AIDS issues, the question that is fundamental to this philosophy is how has the pandemic affected the beliefs, customs and habits? While

this is an important exploration of ascertaining how the beliefs, customs, the habits and religion have been transformed by the HIV/AIDS.

While there are so many Ndebele cultural rituals with different traditional dances based on the traditions of the people, for the purposes of this study, an analysis of the *Umgido weZangoma* traditional dance will be presented and discussed in the next section.

3.5 *Umgido weZangoma* Traditional dance

Name of the traditional dance: *Isitshikitsha seZangoma*

Provinces where the traditional dance is common: Bulawayo, Matebeleland South, Matabeleland North and parts of Midlands.

The Principal Overt Intention: *Umgido weZangoma* (traditional dances for the traditional healers) ceremony is a popular sacred religious ritual found among the AmaNdebele people. In this ritual the *Isitshikitsha seZangoma* traditional dance takes centre stage and is for those who are already traditional healers - *Izangoma* and those who are apprentices learning to be traditional healers and they are called *amathwasa*. *Isitshikitsha seZangoma* is used as a stimuli or passage for possession to take place during the ceremony.

The *Umgido weZangoma* ceremony can last for two nights beginning late afternoon right into late morning each day. During the event, the dancers can occasionally be joined by the spectators whose main goal is to witness the spectacle of the dancing and the spirit possession that takes place. The songs change and vary according to the dancer's favourite choice but the dance remains the same through out the night. There are occasional breaks to feast and drink the prepared beer of which after that, the dancing continues vigorously until a dancer or somebody becomes possessed. Once the possession takes place the dancing and singing immediately stops. The spectators are then accorded a chance to ask the spirit medium about the misfortunes in their lives seeking remedy and intervention from the ancestors. Nyathi states that 'during the propitiation of the ancestors, *ukuthethela* signals are sent to the living dead by the propitiators (Nyathi, 2001:8). This session is usually led by an experienced *Isangoma* or

Isanuse which is a powerful spirit medium with the ability to communicate with the living dead of any audience member. The ability extends to sniffing out witches and wizards who want to do harm to others within the community. Bozongwana sums up the status of spirit medium by observing that, 'this is a violent witch hunting spirit which is dreaded by wizards and witches' (Bozongwana, 2000:34).

The song texts: *Isitshikitsha seZangoma* traditional dance does not use drums but the songs with strongly syncopated beats in synchrony to the song offer accompaniment for the dance solo movements. The song texts are aligned to the themes embedded in the beliefs and customs of the Ndebele people. According to Nketia (1982),

> …the themes of the songs tend to centre around events and matters of common interest and concern to the members of a community or the social groups within it. They may deal with everyday life or with the traditions, beliefs, and customs of the society. This is true not only of serious songs of the court and songs associated with ceremonies and rites but even of simple tunes, like the cradle songs to children who may not have mastered their mother tongue to appreciate the meaning of the texts (Nketia, 1982:189).

The song texts refer to the bond between the profane world and the living dead, for example; a song like *Sihlale Kunjini somfula Isangoma*,

- *Call: Sihlale kunjini somfula lesisangoma.* (It leaves by the river side this spirit)
- *Sizwa ngomoya lesiSangoma* (It uses the wind to deal with the problems).

The song texts are full of metaphors, proverbs, similes that relate to the customs, beliefs and behaviour of the Ndebele people. Songs through their medium can communicate feelings and emotions that can enhance understanding of a particular issue.

The dance movements

Isitshikitsha is a unique solo dance that can be performed by both male and female dancers. The traditional dance does not use drums as its accompaniment, instead it uses *izikeyi* (hand clappers) or hand clapping, while the dancers rattle the leg rattles called *amahlwayi* tied to their ankles. The *amahlwayi* provides a unique sound in tandem with the hand clamping as they stamp the ground. The essence of the movement is in the way the dancers stamp their feet in synchrony to the hand clappers or hand clapping. The

rhythmic stamping is energetic and vigorous as the dancers compete with each other to the delight of the spectators. While the rhythm found in *Isitikitsha seZangoma* traditional dance is not difficult to define, its significance is arrived at only by actually experiencing it. The dance movements as simple as they may be explained have the power to invoke dancers into a trance. They have the ability to invoke feelings and emotions that transcends the body into a trance. Once the body is in a trance, communication with the living dead takes place. This is the cultural phenomenon that this creative led research explores.

The other traditional dance that I have chosen to highlight how traditional dances are performed in their original **context** is *Mhande* traditional dance. The reason for doing this is because *Mhande* is a traditional dance that includes the entire community of which the chief is the highest authority and custodian of the entire community. Therefore, before we analyze *Mhande* traditional dance, there is need to understand the Chief's role among the communities of Zimbabwe.

3.6 The Role of the Chief

A chief among the Shona is called *Mambo* while among the Ndebele is called *Induna.* All chiefs are part of the government and are in the parliament. Since the chiefdom covers a large area and there are many people under his area, the chief has other subordinates who assist him. These subordinates are called *vanaSabhuku* among the Shona and *oSobhuku* among the Ndebele. They also rule smaller areas on behalf of the chief. Whilst there are no restrictions as to where one comes from and where one can settle, the chiefs are the ones who have the authority to grant permission to anybody who wants to settle in a place of their choice within the spheres and jurisdictions of their chiefdoms. However, if you are an alien in that community and you have been granted permission to settle, you must practice and adhere to the habits, customs and traditions of that community.

The chief and his subordinates also have the power and authority to guide the communities especially in relation to cultural issues. Whilst each homestead is responsible for their own rituals within their own family just like in *Umgido weZangoma* traditional dance as an example, the chief is usually in charge of ceremonies which affect

the clan, the most important being the rain and the harvest ceremonies. Bourdillon states that,

> The chief is traditionally guardian of the fundamental values of hupenyu (life) and simba (strength, vitality well being). Life comes from the land of which the chief is the 'owner', and strength or power comes from the chief's status and his accession rituals. The chief is responsible for the prosperity of his people and particularly for the land and its produce. Thus drought may be blamed on the general incompetence of the chief or on the fact that the wrong person was appointed (Bourdillon, 1982: 107).

Bourdillon further informs that,

> In many chiefdoms Nketia (1966:48) the chief is responsible for holding on behalf of all his people a thanks giving festival after harvesting or at least after a particularly good harvest; all villages are represented at these ceremonies -and a large crowd gathers to dance in honour of the spirits and to drink the millet beer brewed in their honour (1982:107).

The festivals that Bourdillon is referring to are sacred rain making ceremonial rituals of which traditional dances play a major role. As Ayisi points out 'rituals are therefore the only means through which the profane world is brought into contact with the sacred' (Ayisi, 1979:90). Among the Karanga the rain making ceremony is called *Doro remukwerera* while the Ndebele call it *Utshwala bokucela izulu.* The rituals are an important part of a belief system anchored in the complexities of the African religion based on the power of trust between the profane world and the living dead – these ancestral spirits are called *Amadlozi* in Ndebele and *Vadzimu* in Shona. The traditional dances performed in these types of rituals are sacred as they carry with them traditional dance movements that have been passed down from generation to generation. The traditional dance performed in *Doro remukwerera* is called *Mhande* while in *Utshwala bokucela izulu* is called *iHosana.* The traditional dances serve an important purpose in that they are part of the rain making rituals in which the community prays for rain through the ancestors of the clan. The ceremonies are usually performed during the months of August to as late as February. Bourdillon states that,

> The most important ritual involving territorial spirit guardians is a ceremony at the beginning of the wet season to request adequate rains – either too much rain or too little can spoil the crops and lead to famine…

> the local community gathers early in the following morning to sing and dance (Bourdillon, 1982:205).

The traditional dances are performed in context by master dancers, master drummers, traditional healers and spirit mediums called *Masvikiro* in Shona and *Izangoma* in Ndebele. The community's presence is there not only to sing and witness the unfolding event but to endorse for themselves that the elders of the community have done the ceremony correctly. After all the entire community benefit from this form of intervention. It is believed that by the time they finish or before they finish the ritual, usually the rains would bless the ceremony as a sign that the ancestors have accepted the request. After some time if nothing happens, the elders of the community together with the chief would consult the spirit mediums and the traditional healers as to the cause of failure after having done a rain making ritual.

If the rain making ritual is successful, the community is bound to have yet another ritual which is held to thank and honour the ancestors for answering their prayers by providing them with a good rainy season. The thanks-giving ritual is usually held long after the harvesting period. The Ndebele people call it *Utshwala Bokubonga Abaphansi* and the Shona people call it *Doro Rematendo.* I will briefly outline the *Mhande* traditional dance in context to give an example of a traditional dance which is performed in a ritual that affects the entire community under the chief among the Karanga people.

3.7 Name of the Traditional dance: *Mhande.*

Province where it is commonly danced: *Masvingo* Province.

The Principal Overt Intention: The *Doro reMukwerera Ceremony* among the Karanga people found in Masvingo province is prepared by the chief of the area. Bourdillon who has written a book about the way of life among the Shona people entitled *The Shona Peoples* notes that 'the ceremony takes place at a shrine to the spirit guardians of the area. This is usually situated by a tall tree just outside the residential area, and takes the form of a roughly fenced shrine in which are kept small clay pots consecrated to the spirits, though some shrines consist of permanent or temporary thatched shelters in the bush…(Bourdillon,1996:260).' The *Mhande* traditional dance is performed at this shrine. The traditional dancers are usually elders (both male and female) who are mediums of the

rain making spirits. However, among them there should also be the most important rain maker of them all who gets possessed by the local territorial lion spirit called *Mhondoro*. He or she is in charge of the proceedings of the entire event, especially when it comes to the libation pouring and how the request for the rain from the ancestors is done. The *Mhondoro* is linked to the common ancestry of the community led by the chief.

During the proceedings of the ceremony when time comes, the *Mhondoro* sprinkles snuff on to the ground while kneeling down with the head close to the ground. After sprinkling the snuff he or she will then do the *Kuombera* (hand clapping) as a sign to show respect to the ancestors while praying, requesting the ancestors to intervene by giving the ground some moisture lest the children (community) die from hunger. This ritual might be done when the *Mhondoro* is possessed which takes place after a thorough intensive dancing session. The prayer is then followed by yet another ritual that is pouring of the carefully prepared home brew beer on to the ground to formally address the ancestors reminding them of their rightful duties of looking after their people.

The *Mhondoro* is the highest medium who presides not only in the way the ceremony is carried out but also leads the *Mhande* traditional dance. The dance is usually performed at a sacred place either under a *Muhacha* tree or any other chosen area for raining making ritual. The traditional dance is identified by the rhythm from the *Magavhu* or *Magagada* that the dancers tie on their legs in order to produce a unique hypnotic 12/8 rhythmic pattern. *Mhande* traditional dance is also identified by the drum rhythms that accompany the songs sung for the traditional dance. Therefore when one is talking about *Mhande* traditional dance, its identity is a synchronous combination of the rhythmic patterns produced by the two drums, the rhythmic patterns produced by the feet movement which affect the leg rattles and the songs that are sung whose text have a meaning about beliefs and customs of the people.

The intense interlocking polyphonic rhythms that emanate from the leg rattles, songs and drums produce an exciting dance presentation that is capable of leading into a trance. When the *Mhondoro* gets possessed, he or she is then able to communicate with the living dead and the people as a spirit medium on issues that concern the community especially the rain request.

Sometimes there is an interpreter whose duty is not only to relate the messages being given by the spirit medium but also acts as an assistant to the spirit medium. This person is known as a *dunzvi.* He or she is the one who brings the material such as the wooden plate into which consecrated water is poured for the medium to drink, a walking stick, hunting spear, dancing axe and clay pot of consecrated millet beer. The *dunzvi* takes up the role of intermediary by mediating between the spirit medium and the participating audience. Through him, the living can dialogue with the departed ancestor possessing the medium (see Chinyowa, 2005:89).Once the ritual has been done beer and food are then given to the people and the traditional dancing and singing intensifies. This event can last for two days especially if there is enough food and beer.

There are gestures which are found in *Mhande* traditional dance. When the dancers point to the sky with their dancing axes, it symbolizes the need for the heavens to open up and give precipitation. When they point to the ground the movement is communicating the need for rain to bless the land. Exploring these movements provided the main thrust of this creative led research.

3.8 The second dimension- Traditional dances for entertainment

In 1982, the Ministry of Education Sport and Culture formed a National Dance Company (NDC) whose mandate was to showcase cultural dances during state functions and other important government events such as summits, conferences, state banquets and so on. Through auditions, the government officials picked suitable traditional dancers, master drummers and master trainers from various provinces to be part of the NDC. These artists from various provinces were then trained and became a traditional dance troupe employed by the government to entertain and showcase traditional dances from various provinces in different forays.

The need to produce a competitive regional NDC led to the government contracting experienced international choreographers whose duty was to choreograph and direct some of the traditional dances of Zimbabwe as a theatrical presentation for not only state functions but to also showcase Zimbabwe traditional dance in various international festivals. Some of the choreographers who were employed to spearhead the NDC were

Kariam Welsh Asante from and Peggy Happer both from United States of America. Due to financial constraints and shift of Government policy the NDC was disbanded in 1992. Its members were given a meagre exit or retrenchment package. Most of these dancers went on to establish traditional dance troupes of their own and continued to perpetuate the choreographed traditional dances versions and with time some of them began to be identified as an authentic original set of movements. It is with this view that such groups as Khaya African Arts continue to present various traditional dances of Zimbabwe following the trends of the NDC. The notion of presenting traditional dances with an entertainment dimension for various functions and events by traditional dance groups is purely based on income generation through live performances.

The entertainment dimension means; those traditional dances that have been adapted and transformed for entertainment purposes only. The traditional dance groups usually are hired to entertain an audience at social events such as wedding, parities, company launches, product promotions, state banquets and so on. During these performances, even if the traditional dancers imitate a trance, its audience knows that the dancers are "acting and being playful" and the imitation is for the purposes of entertainment.

The notion of foreign choreographers directing Zimbabwean traditional dance forms and the fact that Khaya African Arts, the participants of this creative led research emerged out of this context is of vital importance to the study. The reason for this perspective is that it strongly speaks to Boal's assertion of trespassing.

3.9 Summary

The purpose of this chapter was to give an overview of how traditional dances are perceived in Zimbabwe. By locating the traditional dances within their original contexts, one is able to understand the research questions based on Kaeppler's assertion.

By analyzing the traditional dances in their context one is able to trace how the same traditional dances were adapted or 'trespassed' to create the entertainment dimension. Culture is often analyzed as something static, something that should not be tampered with. On the contrary 'culture evolves, adapting itself to new circumstances and

environments. New ideas come from the [inside], to replace older ideas or to be blended with existing ones (Falola, 2003:1).

CHAPTER FOUR

UNPACKING THE RESEARCH PROCESS

4. 1 Action Research Methodology

My creative led research was based on the Action Research methodology. Action Research is a way of working that allows practice to speak to theory and theory to speak to practice. In their book, *Handbook of Action Research: Participative Inquiry and Practice*, Reason and Bradbury indicate that Action research, 'seeks to bring together action and reflection, theory and practice, in participation with others, in the pursuit of practical solutions to issues of pressing concern to people, and more generally the flourishing of individual persons and their communities' (Reason and Bradbury, 2003:1).

O'Brien (1998) asserts that Action Research is more of a holistic approach to problem-solving, rather than a single method for collecting and analyzing data. Kemmis and McTaggart (1988) also relates to this point of view by observing that Action Research is an open-minded research methodology that counts as evidence or data in that several different research tools are permitted to be used.

Therefore the various research methods, which are generally common to the qualitative research paradigm, were employed for collecting data. These included: participant observation, video recording of the performance of the end product shown as an examination piece, unstructured dialogue and a journal. However, practical dance and games sessions which were the primary source of unpacking the re-appropriating of movements found in the traditional dances, songs and games from Zimbabwe with the view of exploring their application as HIV/AIDS intervention were used as heuristic devices on the foundation of Action Research principles. It is the intention of this report to unpack the process in a precise, systematic way as this will guide the reader as to how the traditional dance and games were used as an HIV/AIDS intervention.

Whilst I realized that I was ultimately responsible for my creative led research report which was to fulfill the academic requirements of the research project, the process was a collaboration between myself as the main researcher and my fellow artists from Khaya African Arts whom I was working with.

4.2 The Time Frame and Rehearsal Time Schedule

The research project was conducted at Khaya African Arts rehearsal venue situated in Yeoville along Yeo Street, Johannesburg, South Africa as from 7th December 2009 to 13th February 2010. Their rehearsal schedule was from 1700hrs to 1900hrs every Monday, Wednesday Thursday and Friday this was because the group members only worked in the evenings. Since most of them were not available during the day, the group agreed that I was going to work on the project on Thursdays and Fridays evenings. I shared with the group that the process we were engaging with was going to create a new form and this entailed the formation of a new dance language which ultimately would require time, commitment, patience and dedication. Therefore the concern was that the four hours per week dedicated to the research process were not going to be enough. The process of engaging with the study required more time. The group agreed to extend rehearsal times as per needs of the rehearsal process. This was a very good approach as later on there was need for extra rehearsals to consolidate the work for the purposes of showing the creative work to my research supervisor as well as the external examiner of the study.

4.3 The Rehearsals Process

The rehearsals were framed according to the spiral principles of Action Research methodology and these were planning, action, observation, reflection and re-planning. Each rehearsal was planned taking into account the rehearsal time periods which Khaya African Arts members had in each session. In view of this fact, time was expected to be used effectively in each rehearsal.

Planning also entailed use of the experience gained from the previous rehearsal with information emanating from the reflection section which in turn would feed the action after which led into reflection. The format of the principles of action research ended up with a spiral effect and issues that needed attention were never missed as they would follow the spiral effect. Each rehearsal session started with everyone standing in a circle holding hands. Any member of the group would sing a song that had a unifying spirit.

Sometimes some of the songs were dominated by Christian hymns. The following is an example of a song that was popular in our rehearsals as we engaged with the study.

x 2	**Ukukhalela:** Aye yeeeeeh yeh yeh yeh Awuwe Ma!	**Ukuvumela:**	Zabala zabala zabalaza x 2
	Call: *Aye yeeeeeh! yeh yeh yeh Awu we Mum*	*Response:*	*Searching! Searching*
x 2	**Ukukhalela**: Uyazabalaza Mama!	**Ukuvumela:**	Zabala zabala zabalaza x 2
	Call: She is searching Mum!	*Response:*	Searching! Searching
x 2	**Ukukhalela:** Ungabombona ye yi ma	**Ukuvumela:**	Zabala zabala zabalaza x 2
	Call: Don't think of her like that	*Response:*	Searching! Searching
x 2	**Ukukhalela:** Usesemncane ye yi ma	**Ukuvumela:**	Zabala zabala zabalaza x 2
	Response: She is still young	Response:	Searching! Searching

When we started our rehearsals, the group would always begin by singing a song inviting everyone's energies, thoughts and bodies into the space. Nketia asserts that, 'sometimes what cannot be said in speech can be said in song: someone who wishes to complain or cast insinuations may find it more effective to do so in song than speech' (Nketia,1982: 204). The song was encouraging a mother not to give up by emphasizing the notion that she has a young child who needs to be looked after and on the other hand the meaning also implies to the family that the mother is still very young and she should be inherited so that she can be protected.

The singing was usually followed by a prayer from any participant. After this ritual the rehearsal manager and I would either choose someone to lead the exercises that warmed up the participants and the space we were working in or I would sometimes lead the warm up exercises. The warm up exercises which included traditional dances and games were not only done to acknowledge each other's presence in the space but were also part of enrolling the participants into the space. Acknowledging the 'here and now' was critical right through the various workshops and rehearsals as we engaged with the process of the study.

While I led the rehearsal process guided by what the group wanted to achieve, at times there was need to guide the group to remain focused on the aims and objectives of the research project. While the sessions were fun, some of them created a somber atmosphere therefore de-briefing exercises were critical to the process. Certain themes would immediately bring tension into the work and required de- briefing exercises that would make the participants leave all rehearsal tensions in the rehearsal space. The de-briefing exercises such as forming a circle, holding hands, closing our eyes and singing songs that were joyful were helpful in making the body and mind relax and appreciate the experience rather than see it as a form of punishment. At times we would use games to lighten our bodies from pressure and intensity of the work and leave the rehearsal room in laughter and big smiles. Yet in some rehearsals just being still; in solemn silence and finding one's own balance was also helpful as a debriefing exercise.

4.4 Khaya African Arts Traditional Dance Repertoire

The next critical stage of the process of exploring the traditional dance and games as an HIV/AIDS intervention was unpacking the Khaya African Arts traditional dances and games repertoire. This was critical to the creative work as it formed the bases for this study. The group showed the researcher their repertoire which had four traditional dances and they were as follows;

- **Isitshikitsha seZangoma** – It is a sacred traditional dance found among the Ndebele people who are found mostly in Bulawayo, Matebeleland North, South and some parts of Midlands provinces of Zimbabwe. The dance is for those who are traditional healers and those who are apprentices in traditional healing.
  Most of the songs are in a call and response mode and are accompanied by hand clapping.

- **Mbakumba** – A harvest celebratory dance found among the Karanga people of Masvingo province near the Great Zimbabwe monument. Most of the song texts talk about work related issues. It has drumming accompaniment.

- **Amatshomani** - a Ndebele and Kalanga traditional dance that is

performed in a rain making ceremony. It is found among the people living in Bulawayo and Matebeleland South Provinces especially in among the Kalanga people in Plumtree area.
Most of the songs are sacred as they link the living world with the spiritual world.

- **Shangara** - This is a social traditional dance performed by the Zezuru People found in Mashonaland Central province. It is performed at gatherings e.g. beer parties, wedding ceremonies and birthday parties.
With drumming accompaniment, the songs text talks about the social behavior of the community.

The group managed to capture the aesthetic and essence of traditional dances of Zimbabwe. Both male and female dancers had the right technique and quality in movement articulation. As a group, they had the right energy for traditional dance performance. They also had a wide range of songs that accompanied the traditional dances.

4.5 Narrative Inquiry as a Methodology

In order to use the traditional dances and games as an HIV/AIDS intervention, the next critical part of the creative led research project was finding out how we were going to relate to HIV/AIDS. Instead of imagining and coming up with fictional stories, the participants of the study decided to look at own personal experiences with HIV/AIDS. The search for true authentic stories led me to the research method called Narrative Inquiry which uses critical event narrative analysis in research on learning and teaching. Webster and Mertova assert that,

> Narrative inquiry is set in human stories of experiences. It provides researchers with a rich framework through which they can investigate the ways humans experience the world depicted through their stories… narratives is well suited to addressing the complexities and subtleties of human experience in teaching and learning (Webster and Mertova, 2007:1)

In Webster and Mertova (2007:2), Dyson and Genish (1994) contend that we all have a basic need for stories, for organizing our experiences into tales of important happenings. They state that,

> Stories help to make sense of, evaluate, and integrate the tensions inherent in experience: the past with the present, the fictional with the 'real', the official with the unofficial, personal with the professional, the canonical with the different and unexpected. Stories help us transform the present and shape the future for our students and our selves so that it will be richer or better than the past (Dyson and Genishi, 1994:242-243).

Clandinin and Connelly also note that 'experience happens narratively therefore, educational experience should be studied narratively (Clandinin and Connelly, 2000: 19) and their point of view became fundamental in aiding the process of incorporating our experiences with HIV/AIDS. In his book *Community Performance, an Introduction*, Petra Kuppers (2007) reflects on his experience by stating that,

> Experiencing myself and others dare to tell stories usually hidden, dare to face one another, via theatrical expression, via the power, the danger and the safety of theatrical process, about our differences, our unequal opportunities, our unequal privilege. And to stay in the room together, via the theatre image, and tell the truth, listen and hear each other as we hadn't before, the reality is frequently revealing, often shocking and always an education to us (Kuppers, 2007:15).

My experience was similar to what Kuppers captured in the above quotation. While the rehearsal room was a very safe space due to the process that we had gone through to prepare ourselves emotionally and psychological for the narratives (by this I mean the warm ups, the theatrical games, the songs and the briefing about the essence and meaning of sharing narratives), the reality of listening to the personal stories on HIV issues invoked a deep sense of pain, trauma and shock. Participants were emotional as they informed the group of stories which had been safely tucked away inside them for sometime.

Most members revealed that they had known each other for a long time but had never shared such deep feelings about their personal experiences with HIV/AIDS. In my

opinion, sharing these stories also became therapeutic to individuals who had come face to face with the disease and had suppressed their emotions for a long time. Some of the narratives shared were as follows;

1. **Participant 1**

   He informed the group that he doesn't use condoms when having sex with his girlfriends. He doesn't feel good using the "rubber" as it takes away his sexual feeling. Even though he knows of the risks involved and consequences of having unprotected sex with multiple partners in the era of HIV/AIDS, he still preferred having sex the "normal way". He informed the group that he occasionally gets tested twice a year. So far he was negative.

2. **Participant 2**

   He told the group that his experience with HIV/AIDS was what he went through in terms of looking after his HIV positive mother who was rejected by her husband's family because she did not want to be 'inherited' by the uncles after the death of his step father. According to him, the main reason for his mother not to agree to the inheritance was the fact that she knew her HIV status but had not disclosed it to the family members due to fear of stigmatization. However, he informed the group that he was also an outcast due to the fact that he was what is called *Izalizelwe* which means a bastard in his step-father's family. Although he was respected, he was regarded as an alien within his family. He was not accorded the first born status which is known as *indlalifa* which is a status given to the first born. (*All first borns in Shona and Ndebele culture inherit the estate of their parents upon their death.)* The situation became worse when the family discovered that his mother was HIV positive. They blamed her for the death of her husband; therefore they were both chased away and banished from the homestead.

3. **Participant 3 & 4**

   There were two participants who declined to share their stories. They opted to be silent.

After a brief discussion and reflection on the narratives shared, there were themes that were common in all the narratives. The themes that emerged were; rituals, isolation, loneliness, trust, trauma, pain, suspicion, family, togetherness and stigma. We decided to use these themes to explore how traditional dances and games could be re-appropriated to speak to HIV/AIDS. The following are some of the examples of how these themes were interwoven with traditional dances and games as we explored the process of the study.

4.6 The Theme of Trust

The first theme we explored was trust. Perhaps the reason for choosing this theme was not that it was only related to HIV/AIDS narratives we had shared with each other but that it was also the foundation of the study we were exploring. We needed to trust each other in all the work that we where doing. Crewe asserts that, 'learning to trust is about learning to communicate' (Crewe, 2005:72). Therefore if we wanted to learn how to communicate we had to trust one another. We decided to explore the meaning of trust through an exercise which focused on *Isitshikitsha seZangoma* traditional dance.

Partner A closed his/her eyes and a red cloth was tied right round the eyes. Partner B who became the journey leader led A around the rehearsal space while in close contact. In this particular journey the participants who were being led were requested to do *Isitshikitsha seZangoma* traditional dance while the journey leaders did the singing and hand clapping. Partner A followed the hand clapping from partner B. After a while they changed roles. On the second round I intervened by disrupting some individuals. I achieved this by stopping any Partner B or taking over the hand clapping of the song. This caused chaos as some of the Partner As stopped dancing and wanted to take off the cloth around their eyes and look at what was happening while others just stopped and listened attentively. The intention was to disrupt trust and see what would happen.

What came out in the reflection session of this exercise was that the second part of the *Isitshikitsha seZangoma* exercise was difficult compared to the first part. The reason for this observation was not that everyone in this dance was supposed to do the movements at the same time in synchronicity to the song and hand clapping but dancing with closed eyes was the difficult part. The participants expressed their experience by noting that they had never done any traditional dance blind folded. The idea of being blindfolded gave them a need to rely on their hearing more than their sight. The communication was through the sound of the hand clapping. Therefore they placed trust on the hand clapper who was leading the journey. On the issue of disruptions the participants did not like being disturbed. They ended up distrusting their partners. They were not sure what was happening and they wanted to stop. Some participants indicated that dancing with their

eyes closed and using a red cloth was not how traditionally the dance was done. While this is true the reason for doing this exercise was to explore different ways of expressing trust using *Isitshikitsha seZangoma.* I shared with them a proverb from our Ndebele culture which says *"Unless if you try to do something beyond what you have mastered, you will never grow"*. Linked to this notion was Boal's assertion of trespassing. We were seeking an intervention using what we already knew but giving it a different dimension. In most cases we might hate change, yet it is the only thing that has brought progress. However as difficult as it may have been, the exercise created an opportunity for all involved to listen attentively and place trust in one another. Sharing personal stories on critical events in our lives was going to expose us to experiences we might have not shared with anyone in the group. Therefore, learning to trust is about learning to communicate (Crewe, 2005:72).

4.7 The Theme of Being Trapped

The other theme we dealt with was the feeling of being trapped. This theme was addressed by using games. Games by nature are fun to do and in this creative led research project, I found them to be a useful tool of not only bonding the traditional dancers and myself but 'gluing' the whole project together. These games were highly participatory and became a useful research method for investigating an artistic medium that has close links with people's lived experience. While the participants had played various games as children the notion of playfulness was once again revisited. Chinyowa's experience pointed out in his PhD thesis entitled *Manifestations of Play as Aesthetic in African Theatre for Development* that

> My cultural upbringing and research interest in African cultural performances turned out to be more of a liability than an asset. I seemed to have become so familiar with these indigenous theatrical modes that I felt as if I was attempting to study some already-known forms, (Chinyowa 2005:49).

On the contrary, I felt quite differently. It was as if I was discovering a new social phenomenon. The integration of games into this research brought about a different dimension to both the participants and the project itself. Apart from the fun element, the

games provided a rich source of metaphors in relation to the construction of meaning in relationship to the research topic. The games were exciting to do as we revisited our childhood memories through playing. The play impulse never dies with childhood but remains manifest as mature play in adulthood. Such play is rooted in imitation, imagination, repetition, spontaneity and transformation (Chinyowa, 2005:77)

Below is one example of some of the games that were part of the process of the study.

Name of the Game: *Mbuzi, Mbuzi* Meh!

Game Type: Sense of being trapped or caged.

Number of Participants: 12

Explanation: In this game the goat is trapped in a ring formed by other eleven participants who hold hands to form a circle. The participant inside the ring tries by all means to break the arm fence by rushing through it with the entire body not arms.

- All players form a circle.
- One player is inside the ring and identifies himself or herself as a goat.
- The player inside the ring chants and says *Mbuzi Mbuzi Mhe*! –Goat! Goat! Mhe!
- Players in the circle respond by saying, *"wadla amabele, kamama!"* – You ate my mama's breast or you ate mum's millet
- The player inside the circle tries to break the arm fence by rushing through it
- The other players hold on to each other much stronger
- The players forming the circle may loosen the ring if they realize that the *Mbuzi* is no longer making an effort to break the fence.
- Once *Mbuzi* breaks the fence, it has to run not to be caught.
- Who ever catches the goat takes over the role.
- If no one catches *Mbuzi* then the game is over.

The freedom within the play frame provides an opportunity for the players to experiment and generate new symbolic worlds (Dunn, 2000). In this game the circle was a symbol of unit. It was a form that represented strong affinal ties within a family. The imagery also expressed togetherness. Yet on the other hand the *Mbuzi* – Goat was trapped within this fence which was supposedly offering the safety of togetherness and unity. The *Mbuzi's* rush and trying to break the fence symbolized the desperation that one has when faced with issues of HIV/AIDS. The metaphor of the game also depicted the internal struggles that one has with HIV/AIDS.

4.8 The Theme of Ritual

The other theme we explored in view of the study was the meaning of rituals in relation to HIV/AIDS. Rituals among the Ndebele and the Shona people of Zimbabwe are fundamental to the life of the people. In fact most of them are linked to the belief of living dead and the power they have over their kinship. Phathisa Nyathi in his book: *Traditional ceremonies of AmaNdebele* asserts that, 'the beliefs and practices, among the Ndebele as indeed among all African people, manifest themselves as a two-way communication system between the living and the living dead, that is to say, the departed ancestors (Nyathi, 2001:4). My interest in exploring the ritual aspects of the Ndebele and Shona people of Zimbabwe was its power of communication between what Nyathi calls 'the living and the living world.' The approach we took was in the re-appropriation of the inheritance ceremony which is found in many ethnic groups in Zimbabwe. Gelfand asserts that,

> When a man dies, leaving a wife and child, the younger brother is expected to take her and the children. She rarely refuses. The unit must be kept together and provide sufficient for the deceased's family (Gelfand, 1999: 118).

The theme of ritual was the turning point of the creative led research. The participants chose to unpack the theme while focusing on the inheritance system found among the Ndebele and the Shona people. The theme of ritual became the main thrust of the research project and it led to the creation of a dance drama we entitled *Games we play*. The dance drama is an experimental form of African Dance Theatre that uses children's games, songs and traditional dances as it explores a woman's physical, emotional and spiritual dislocation in search for a new identity in the era of HIV/AIDS.

In this dance drama, women entered the space and one of them was carrying *Udiyo* in Ndebele– *Hari* in Shona *(clay pot)* and inside it there was cleansing medicine. The clay pot was a property that represented some of the artifacts that are used in cleansing ceremonies. The use of this prop communicated that the participants were doing a ritual. This ritual which is called *Kugara nhaka* among the Shona and *Ukungena* among the Ndebele is for a widow whose husband would have passed on a year or so ago. The

widow wears a black dress and a black duke and these clothes symbolizes that she has been mourning the death of her husband. The mourning usually lasts for a year or more and sometimes until the ritual *Kurova Guva* or *Umbuyiso* which means to bring back the spirit of the deceased into the homestead is done. In fact until this ritual has been done she should wear black clothes all the time. Another custom related to this is that the widow can-not indulge into any sexual intercourse with anyone until she has been cleansed.

The traditional dance we chose to work on in this theme of ritual was *Mbakumba.* The dance is performed after a bumper harvest whereby the community sings praises and pays homage to the ancestors for providing a good rainy season. In this theme we were exploring ritual and the idea was based on how *Mbakumba* traditional dance movements could be combined to generate new meaning in view of HIV/AIDS. The dance became a metaphor in this scene. The reason for this assertion was that the widow was harvesting a new status after going through a long mourning phase.

The journey of emancipation began with her being flanked by two women performing a dance style called *jeketera* (it is a dance movement used to link sequences of dance styles in *Mbakumba* traditional dance). In this scene the style showed unity and solidarity among the women within the family. The flanking by two women offered her protection. When the women rotated and moved their bodies in one place, this was a signal to indicate that she had been stuck in a mourning status for a long period. When the dancers moved in a circle shuffling and kicking with one leg, the movements expressed the need to get rid of the long mourning status. The style also indicated her willingness to move into a new status whereby she was free to be with any man she wanted to be with. Moving in a circle was a metaphor for a transformational journey into a new life and it ended with her kneeling down with the other two women placing *udiyo* or *hari* – a clay pot on her head. The placement of *udiyo* or *hari* on her head symbolized cleansing of the mind. Nyathi informs that,

> …(they) place a gourd full of good luck herbs, *isithundu,* on her head. She holds it with both her hands. (They) use *Uphehlo,* a whisk to stir the herbs

> with froth profusely. Meanwhile, (she) is uttering quiet incantations (Nyathi, 2001:116). (The words in brackets are my own).

Therefore, the removal of the black clothes was a very important part of the ritual as it gave her freedom not only for a new identity but also in the fact that she gained freedom to marry any of the brothers of the deceased. The removal of the black clothes was also a symbol of cleansing the body as well as serving ties with the old life. The ring which was put on around her neck signified the new identity she undertook. She led the dancers expressing her newly found freedom. She achieved this by having her body slightly bent forward and showing her bottom to the observing men who sat behind her. The effect of the style meant that she had the freedom to remarry.

My analysis of the ritual is that it was successful as an enactment that signified what happens during the inheritance ceremony. The movements chosen to depict objection of the widow's decision by the brothers were effective. The body attitude and posture that is found in *Mbakumba* traditional dance showed tension. The gestures employed in communicating anger were effective. We managed to create tension after showing how the ritual is done and what each individual is expected to do within this ceremony. However, we failed to show the internal struggles that the widow had in view of her HIV/AIDS status. The challenges that beset our families nowadays in view of HIV/AIDS is disclosure. As Cameron shares his own observation in view of his HIV status by stating that,

> I carry in me now, a memory like blood, the shock of my own diagnosis, the long years of muteness and secrecy, the fear of fleshly failure, the allies I harboured and natured within the stigmas and hatreds outside. I know I have AIDS. It is not that I refuse to forget. It's that I cannot. Remembering is in me like blood' (Cameron, 2006: 214).

The participants knew the reason why the woman objected to be remarried by the young brothers of the deceased. She was HIV positive. The choices we made to unpack the ritual did not in my opinion emphasize the trauma associated with secrecy that surrounds the knowledge that the widow had in view of her HIV/AIDS status. What we explored

and the image which we were comfortable with was the pain, the trauma, the nightmares of being lonely but failed to challenge our selves to speak to the notion of disclosure.

4.9 Summary

Whilst I could not talk about every aspect we explored in this study, this chapter has given an insight on how some of the traditional dances, games and narratives were manifested as a methodology in this creative led research. Examples, where appropriate, were given and explained to support and illustrate points on the process undertaken. The study also attempted to explain how the action led research paradigm was given attention in the framing of the study. The rehearsal format was also unpacked for the reader to get an overview of how the study was framed. Enrolling and de-briefing of the participants was explained as the study explored the traditional dances and games as an HIV/AIDS. While explanations can be given and words can be written, to describe the creative element of the study experience of the process is beyond words.

CHAPTER FIVE

REFLECTION ON THE CREATIVE LED RESEARCH

5.1. Limitations of the study

The amount of time set aside in consultation with the group on the creative led research was not sufficient. Whilst there was an agreement that I would have rehearsals every Thursdays and Friday from 1700hrs to 1900hrs, the reality was that, sometimes I had to wait for members to come for rehearsals which meant that I would only work for as short as forty five minutes. Some of the days the group had visitors whom they would perform for during the time allocated for the research project. In order to solve this problem, we agreed that they had to rehearse on their own. But this was not helpful either as they were not keen in doing this without my in put. The other challenge that I faced was lack of **commitment and consistency** from the group members. Some of them would not come for rehearsals but that did not deter me from forging ahead with the experiment. Even though they were few members of the group we continued with our rehearsals.

Whilst the Yeoville Boys Club is Khaya African Arts's home, I found the **rehearsal venue to be a big challenge**. It was near a police station therefore, the area was full of police. In one of the sessions a group member went outside the rehearsal venue to answer a call on his mobile phone and the next minute he was being chased by the police who wanted him to produce his identity card or passport. Obviously being a Zimbabwean he was arrested for not possessing any legal documents. I had to stop the rehearsal to attend to his case. I eventually paid the arresting officer two hundred rands even though he had wanted to be paid three hundred rands.

The reasons for sharing these experiences is not to expose the corrupt practices of the law enforcers but it is rather bent towards sharing with the reader of this report the notion that when working on such creative led research, the report is confined within the boundaries of the aims and objectives of the research yet there are other experiences that affect and influence the process of the creative led research. For instance the experience with the police made participants refer constantly to the clock during the rehearsals and this at

times affected their concentration on the rehearsal. Sometimes when participants where late or absent for rehearsals they would make excuses that would have been held up by the police even though this might have been not true.

My other observation was the research project I embarked on required funding in order for participants to be committed and dedicated to the project. In as much as they wanted to do more rehearsals they had other performance commitments which interfered with plans we had for the creative led project. Therefore, giving honorariums will have cushioned their loss of income during rehearsals of the research period.

5.2 What worked?

Teaming up with Khaya African Arts to unpack the process of exploring the traditional dances and games as an HIV/AIDS was appropriate for this creative led research project. Their in-depth knowledge and understanding of the various traditional dances and games from Zimbabwe made the process experiential in many interesting ways far beyond the rehearsal room and the proscenium stage. As Crewe says in her book: *Instructions in Physical Theatre,*

> Dancers are not just doers but also thinkers, and their commentary on the world that surrounds them is important to listen to. Using the body as the medium and vehicle for thoughts and feelings is an art that cannot be ignored. Thoughts and feelings have always been housed in the body and people from any place, in any time have always felt the desire to dance and move (Crewe, 2005:115).

Their ability, commitment and dedication in valuing cultural metaphors and allowing themselves to engage with the process with the view of creating an HIV/AIDS intervention from the indigenous knowledge was transformative for this study. The research report takes into account the challenges encountered while engaging with Khaya African Arts as part of the experience of the process and it is critical to look at it from that perspective.

5.3 Discoveries

The process of being actively involved in the creative research undertaken uncovered important ideas and even broadened my understanding of my own culture as a

Zimbabwean. The reason for this perspective is that the process creatively allowed the fusion of traditional dances, games and narratives as devices of the process such that at the end of the journey we managed to create a dance piece entitled ***Games We Play*****.** The next level of this study will be to turn ***Games We Play*** into an interactive piece that will involve audience participation and this will capture the power of traditional dance and games.

What I also discovered during the engagement with the study is that, in some instances living with HIV/AIDS can be viewed as an issue that is easily glossed over in various magazines, books, statistics, reports and statements during World AIDS day. I had never personally taken the time to actually question and critically analyze what HIV/AIDS means to me. By sharing experiences with others through narratives from a simple question such as 'What has been your personal encounter with HIV/AIDS' unpacked stories that none of us had ever shared before. While we encountered sadness, tears, pain, trauma, fear, loneliness, secrecy, the thread that joined all of us was that the process undertaken made us realize that none of us were alone. The process of the creative led research took us to a space of openness re-enforcing the notion of "together we can do more" and this being embedded in our cultural values and beliefs – that emerged powerfully through the traditional dances and games as a form of HIV/AIDS intervention.

5. 4 Conclusion

There is one common and essential thread that is implicit in any creativity, and that is source. Being creative is not about being born with creative ability, but rather nurturing that inherent ability with inspiration (Crewe and 2005:115). In this creative led research my inspiration came from many different places – personal, social, artistic, historical, memories, and dreams. All these were sources that guided the quest to react to the HIV/AIDS pandemic by analyzing the process that myself as the main researcher and participants of Khaya African Arts went through in exploring traditional dances and games as an HIV/AIDS intervention through a Zimbabwean case study. This creative led research was set as a cultural response in using the traditional dances and games as devices for sharing thoughts and feelings within the gratifying experience of the process.

The creative led research methodology unpacked narratives that were intensely personal experiences and as participants worked through the process, their narratives shared the hope of inspiring ourselves and others from their indigenous knowledges as an HIV/AIDS intervention. While the experience of this creative led research was gratifying for all involved, it is very important to acknowledge that this study discussed the process undertaken in exploring traditional dances and games as an HIV/AIDS intervention. This creative research study does not in anyway claim to have established an intervention that uses traditional dances and games in raising HIV/AIDS issues. The need for refinements of some of the arguments is infinite. The gravity and complexity of factors surrounding the exploration of traditional dances and games as an HIV/AIDS intervention clearly points to the need for further research in this area. As Warren Nebe said in one of his lectures in the Performance Laboratory Course for the Masters in Dramatic Art, "It is not about finding an individual voice but finding the truth with many voices" (Nebe – 2009).

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Participant Information/Informed Consent Form.

A Cultural response: The exploration of traditional dance and games as an HIV/AIDS Intervention: A Zimbabwean Case Study

A creative and written research project

TO WHOM IT MAY CONCERN

I _____ of Khaya African Arts traditional dance ensemble in signing this consent form, agree to volunteer in the Research Project being conducted by **Clayton Mboneli Ndlovu**, a Master of Art in Dramatic Arts Student (407599) between 1 November to 15 February 2010.

I understand that the research being conducted relates to Drama for Life - a Capacity Development Program in HIV & Aids Education through Applied Drama and Theatre that is aimed to empower young people to take personal responsibility for the quality of their own lives. I also understand that Drama for Life is being hosted by the University of the Witwatersrand under the Division of Dramatic Art within Wits School of Arts.

I understand that information; tape-recorded, video recorded, verbal interviews and any other form of information shared with the researcher will be studied and may be quoted in his Research Reports and in future papers, journals, articles and books that will be written by the researcher.

I grant authorization for the use of the above information with the full understanding that my anonymity and confidentiality will be preserved at all times. I understand that my full name or other identifying information will never be disclosed or referenced in any way in any written or verbal context without being consulted.

My participation is entirely voluntary and I may withdraw my permission to participate in this study without explanation or penalty. I grant permission to use one of the following:

……My first name only ……Only a pseudonym

…… ……

Signature Date

…… ……

Signature of Researcher Date

PARTICIPANT VIDEO TAPING AND AUDIO RECORDING CONSENT FORM

Title of Research: A Cultural Response: The Exploration of Traditional Dances and games as an HIV/AIDS Intervention. A Zimbabwean Case Study.

I …….... (Name)……. (Surname) by signing this form do give my consent to be video taped and audio taped during the performance of the Traditional Dance workshops/ rehearsals and performances being conducted by Clayton Mboneli Ndlovu, a Master of Art in Dramatic Art student at Wits University. My consent is given in my capacity as a participant in performance traditional dance workshops that form part of this research.

I understand that the video taped and audio taped material shall be used as reference for this research and it shall not be used in any way outside the scope of this research without my consent.

My participation in this Research is voluntary and I understand that I will not be paid for my participation and I shall not be prejudiced for taking part in this research.

I understand that I may withdraw my participation in this research project without explanation or penalty.

Signed

Name of Participant: ……

Sex: ……

Age: ……..

Signature: …… Date: ……..