

Memories of Gukurahundi Massacre and the Challenge of Reconciliation

Isheanesu Gusha

<https://orcid.org/0000-0002-7246-4205>

University of Pretoria

ishegusha2@gmail.com

Abstract

When Zimbabwe attained her independence from colonial powers in 1980, prospects of a peaceful nation were high, especially following the pledge made by the Prime Minister Elect in his victory speech. Isaiah 2:4b was quoted as a metaphor of peace, but things did not turn out as expected in the following years. The vicious cycle of violence that was inherited from the colonial legacy continued and the worse phase of that cycle was the Midlands and Matabeleland crisis, commonly known as Gukurahundi. Approximately 20 000 people died in the state-sanctioned violence (genocide). Using Cue-Dependent Forgetting Theory, this paper critically appraises possible reasons why the promised bliss through reconciliation did not materialise. Among the reasons cited in this paper are the lack of a serious Truth and Reconciliation Commission, and also the phenomenon of amnesia as the major contributory factors to this cycle of violence.

Keywords: Gukurahundi; violence; memory; reconciliation; Zimbabwe

Introduction

Zimbabwe gained her independence in 1980, after almost two decades of armed struggle between the freedom fighters and the colonial regime under leadership of Ian Douglas Smith. On 4 March 1980—soon after Robert Mugabe, the candidate of Zimbabwe African National Union (hereafter ZANU) was declared the winner of the first multi-racial democratic elections—Mugabe gave his victory speech as the Prime Minister Elect on national radio and television. In the speech, the Prime Minister Elect went on



Studia Historiae Ecclesiasticae

<https://upjournals.co.za/index.php/SHE>

Volume 45 | Number 1 | 2019 | #3707 | 14 pages

<https://doi.org/10.25159/2412-4265/3707>

ISSN 2412-4265 (Online)

© The Author(s) 2019



Published by The Church History Society and Unisa Press. This is an Open Access article distributed under the terms of the Creative Commons Attribution-ShareAlike 4.0 International License (<https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-sa/4.0/>)

to pronounce the famous reconciliation statement, where the passage of Isaiah 2:4b was quoted:

He will judge between the nations and will settle disputes for many peoples. They will beat their swords into ploughshares and their spears into pruning hooks. Nation will not take up sword against nation, nor will they train for war anymore.

The text was followed by his subsequent remarks: “I urge you, whether you are black or white to join me in a new pledge to forget our grim past, forgive others and forget, join hands in a new amity, and together as Zimbabweans, trample upon racism and regionalism, and work hard to reconstruct and rehabilitate our society as we reinvigorate our economic machinery” (Mugabe 1980). It is in light of the Mugabe speech that this paper seeks to discuss the events that unfolded hereafter in an independent Zimbabwe. The paper commences with a brief account of the Cue-Dependent Forgetting Theory, utilising this as a framework to explain the recurring violence in an independent Zimbabwe. It is followed by an exploration of the Prime Minister Elect’s speech; an exegesis of Isaiah 2:4b—the text cited by the Prime Minister Elect—and a correlation of Isaiah 2:4b to the speech. The paper continues with an appropriation of the Cue-Dependent Forgetting Theory to Zimbabwe’s post-independence realities; a discussion of what went wrong in the fulfilment of Isaiah 2:4b, and concludes with thoughts on dealing with the collective amnesia.

What is Cue-Dependent Forgetting Theory?

The Cue-Dependent Forgetting Theory, also known as Retrieval Failure, is a psychological theory that attempts to explain the human mind in recalling information. The theory differentiates the human mind from computer memory, which when searching for files will rely on certain words (cues). In a computer search, any file containing any words given as a cue, will show up. However, the human memory does not work that way. Endel Tulving argues that:

... memory for an event is always a product of information from two sources. 1) The first is conceptualized as the memory trace. Information laid down and retained in a person’s memory store as a result of the original perception of the event. 2) The other source is the retrieval cue. Information present in the individual’s cognitive environment at the time retrieval occurs. (Tulving 1974, 74)

1 A “cue” is a sensory signal used to identify experiences, facilitate memory, or organise responses.
2 Forgetting is the inability to recall something now (in the present), that could be recalled on an earlier occasion (Tulving 1974, 74).

The suggestion here is that forgotten information is still stored, but may be temporarily inaccessible. The first question is: What causes forgetting? There are two major hypotheses to explain the phenomenon of forgetting:

1. Forgetting is a trace-dependent phenomenon which occurs because certain changes take place in the specific traces of events. The traces decay, or deteriorate, or are somehow lost from the store, and the information they originally may have contained becomes unavailable.
2. The other theory is that forgetting is a cue-dependent phenomenon, reflecting the failure of retrieval of perfectly intact trace information. A person's cognitive environment will change over time, the relevant retrieval information is absent, and as a consequence the trace information available in the store becomes inaccessible. (Tulving 1974, 74)

For the purpose of this discussion, we pursue the theory that the trace information does not decay but only becomes inaccessible. Smith (1970) conducted a tested recall of a word list in the original learning context and in a different room. In the same room, 18/80 words were recalled. Thereafter in a different room, 12/80 words were recalled. Those who imagined themselves back in the original room recalled on average 17/80 words (Smith 1970). In support of this theory, Goodwin, Powell, Bremer, Hoine and Stern (1969) argue that “heavy drinkers often forgot where they had put things when sober, but remembered once they had drunk sufficient alcohol” (Goodwin et al. 1969, 1358–59). Eich (1980) made similar findings with heavy marijuana users. There is strong evidence for the positive role of context cues in retrieval. If context cues decay, then how will information be retrieved some time later? What are the tenets of the theory?

- a) Forgetting happens when the right cue is not available for retrieving the memory.
- b) In the encoding of a memory, it leaves a memory trace which also stores information about the way we felt or the place we were at the time of encoding.
- c) In the event of accessing this memory again, a retrieval cue is needed.
- d) Finally, the greater the similarity between the encoding event, the greater the likelihood of recalling the original memory.

In keeping with the above four basic tenets of the theory, the author has observed that retrieval cues are similar to “memory aids.” One may ask the question: What are these retrieval cues? Basically, there are two main types of retrieval cues. The first are the “context cues.” These are external cues such as an examination room, certain people, a football field, driving, or weather conditions—like a rainy day. This means that if someone is not in the same context as he/she was when learning, the memory may not be accessible. The second group are called “state cues.” These are internal cues such as

being happy, sad, tired, drunk, sober, alert, and afraid. These are physical and emotional states during learning. The conclusion is that remembering will be better when state and context are the same as at the time of learning. How is this theory related to the current research? This theory is being applied in a heuristic manner, that is, as an approach to problem solving or learning by employing practical methods not guaranteed to be optimal or perfect, but sufficient for the immediate goals.

Robert Mugabe's Address to the Nation, 4 March 1980

The speech was given on the national radio and television on 4 March 1980 after Robert Mugabe had been declared the winner of the first multi-racial democratic elections. There were 100 contested seats and the results were as follows: ZANU PF–57; ZAPU PF–20; Rhodesian Front–20; United African National Council–3. Other parties such as ZANU Ndonga, Zimbabwe Democratic Party, National Front of Zimbabwe, and the National Democratic Union failed to secure a single seat. There were 14 unopposed seats. This means that Mugabe had the majority representation in parliament and had the privilege of forming the government. The speech by the Prime Minister Elect has 16 paragraphs printed on four pages.

Mugabe began by greeting the nation in the name of freedom and had to acknowledge that he was both overwhelmed and humbled by the support he had received from voters. The first paragraph is an acknowledgement where he thanked his supporters for voting ZANU PF into power. In the acknowledgement, the organisers and election offers were also thanked for their work. In the second paragraph, Mugabe introduced the themes of peace and stability as key and first priority for nation building. In the third paragraph, Mugabe expounded the type of peace the nation needed, and this was stated as individual and communal peace. This peace was already enshrined in the Lancaster House agreement of 1979.³ The Prime Minister Elect swore that the country was not going to experience another armed conflict. In paragraph six, Mugabe cited Isaiah 2:4b as the foundation for the new government's quest for peace. This paper will exegete the text (Isaiah 2:4b) later as a way of demonstrating the significance of the Bible in Zimbabwean politics. In paragraph seven, Mugabe reiterated the significance of national interests above party interests.

In an attempt to establish reconciliation, the coalition of ZANU PF and Patriotic Front Zimbabwe African People's Union (hereafter PF ZAPU) in the government was the chief priority for Mugabe. In an attempt to ensure a smooth transition, pension rights and accrued benefits for civil servants were not to be interfered with. A shocking issue

3 The Lancaster House Agreement was a political settlement that was agreed upon on 21 December 1979. The conference started on 10 September and ended on 14 December with a total of 47 plenary sessions. The conference was chaired by Lord Carrington, who was the secretary for foreign and commonwealth affairs. On the agenda was the road map to democratic elections, ceasefire agreement and smooth transition of power.

dealt with in the speech, was the protection of property rights. This was contrary to the liberation discourse where the war was meant to reverse the unfair acquisition of land by the colonial settlers. Mugabe's position was that there was not going to be unconstitutional interference with the property rights of individuals—and this included farms. Paragraph 13 is also of great significance for this paper, as Mugabe made the following pledge:

I urge you, whether you are black or white, to join me in a new pledge to forget our grim past, forgive others and forget, join hands in a new amity, and together, as Zimbabweans, trample upon racism, tribalism and regionalism, and work hard to reconstruct and rehabilitate our society as we reinvigorate our economic machinery. (Mugabe 1980, 3)

The paragraph was pregnant with a reconciliation message and the message was received by the people with great excitement. The Prime Minister Elect condemned racism, tribalism, and regionalism. The question that arises now, is: How successful was Mugabe's government in fulfilling the pledge? In the last paragraph of his speech the Prime Minister Elect reiterated the need for oneness and common sense of belonging.

Having summarised the Prime Minister Elect's speech, we continue to exegete the quoted text (Isaiah 2:4b) before examining the political events that unfolded after such a promising speech.

Exegesis of Isaiah 2:4b

Isaiah shares this oracle with Micah, which raises the question of sources or dependence. Who borrowed from whom, or was there a common source for the two prophets? There are different views in response to these two questions and it is not the scope of this paper to explore these views. However, this paper concurs with Widyapranawa's view that the sharing of a common oracle between the two texts might have been because of "a floating poem known already to both Isaiah and Micah" (Widyapranawa 1990, 11). It is an oracle of hope, restoration and redemption. In the oracle, there are clear promises that the city will be redeemed. This redemption comes with justice and righteousness. John Watts argues that "verses 2–4 look at Jerusalem beyond the battles" (Watts 2005, 49). "He will judge between the nations and will settle disputes for many peoples. They will beat their swords into ploughshares and their spears into pruning hooks. Nation will not take up sword against nation, nor will they train for war anymore" (Isaiah 2:4 NIV). The verse pictures a universal world peace where all nations will be subjected to God's judgement. According to Otto Kaiser, such a universal world peace comes with the universal recognition of God (Kaiser 1983, 55). How can the world achieve such peace? Such peace was achieved when God confronted his people on Mt Zion. According to Isaiah, people will turn their swords into ploughshares and their spears into pruning hooks. Hans Wildberger argues that "the Piel of כרת is normally translated 'recast'; meaning, according to 2 Kings 18:4; Zechariah 11:6, and 2 Chronicles 34:7, 'batter into

pieces” (Wildberger 1991, 93). This means the breaking of weapons of war into pieces. A similar metaphor is also used in Psalm 46:10: “He breaks the bow and shatters the spear; he burns the shields with fire.” Instead of war, people will be focusing on production. Weapons of war will be turned into agricultural implements. Wildberger argues that “there will be no longer any place for a spirit among them which seeks war” (Wildberger 1991, 93). Why would people convert war implements into farming ones? Why not just keep the war implements and manufacture new farming ones? I would like to argue that by converting war implements into farming ones, YHWH was asking for the destruction of context retrieval cues for war that will always bring memories of war. Such a consistent reminder of war would not bring about the desired peace.

How feasible was such peace in a world that was characterised by invasions and wars between the super powers of the day? How feasible is such peace in the contemporary world characterised by racism, ethnicity, tribalism, terrorism, xenophobia and religious extremism? Was such peace realistic or idealistic? When Mugabe cited Isaiah 2:4 for his vision of a new Zimbabwe, was he realistic or it was just a political statement aimed at consolidating power? To a certain degree I am tempted to agree with Widyapranawa’s view of it being an eschatological peace (Widyapranawa 1990, 11). Such a peace proposal is too beautiful to be attained in this world or the world of Isaiah. To take this metaphor literally would be committing a form of hyperbolism. It is a peace that is realisable at the Eschaton, when God has finally subdued all creation under his feet. Kaiser postulates that “such peace is achieved in a living society of men and women, brought about by God himself, in which there are no more barriers of language, race, and class” (Kaiser 1983, 55). Such a world remains an idealistic one until the Eschaton. This was the type of living society that Mugabe dreamt of in 1980 when he urged Zimbabweans to “trample upon racism, tribalism and regionalism” (Mugabe 1980). In summary, Mugabe was advocating for the elimination of identity boundaries such as white, black, Ndebele, Karanga, Manyika, Korekore, Ndau, and Zezuru. These were the identity boundaries that had separated people for a long time. How successful was Mugabe’s call for such reconciliation? What we see later are the echoes of Joel 3:10, “beat your ploughshares into swords and your pruning hooks into spears, let the weakening say, I am strong.” What happened later in the new Zimbabwe was a complete opposite of what the Prime Minister Elect had pledged. Instead of turning spears into pruning hooks and swords into ploughshares, they were sharpened and hidden in the arms cache ready for future use.

In the next section, we engage the Cue-Dependent Forgetting Theory in highlighting the post-independence realities of Zimbabwe.

Cue-Dependent Forgetting Theory and Post-Independence Realities

The chronicle of events from 1980 to the signing of the unity accord in 1987 shows that there was never prolonged peace at all in Mugabe's government. Jacqueline A. Kalley, Elna Schoeman, and L.E. Andor's book (*Southern African Political History: A Chronology of Key Political Events from Independence to Mid-1997*) reviews some astonishing events. On 6 August 1980, Edgar Tekere was arrested for killing a white farm manager; he was later acquitted in November (Kalley, Schoeman and Andor 1999, 711). This shows that there was still animosity between some whites and Africans. That very year Robert Mugabe threatened Lieutenant General Walls with deportation when he asked the Queen to nullify the elections which he considered fraudulent (Kalley et al. 1999, 712). The whites were migrating from the country every month at an average of a thousand people. Ian Smith had to intervene by encouraging fellow whites to stay and give the new country a chance to develop. In November 1980, fighting erupted in the streets of Bulawayo between the forces of the Zimbabwe People's Revolutionary Army (hereafter ZIPRA) and the Zimbabwe African National Liberation Army (hereafter ZANLA).⁴ Fifteen people died and approximately 200 were wounded (Kalley et al. 1999, 712). All these events occurred within a year after the election, showing that the country was never stable.

In all these events Joshua Nkomo and Robert Mugabe were accusing one another of sabotaging the country's peace initiatives. As early as January 1981 Joshua Nkomo was demoted from his ministerial post (Home Affairs) and was appointed to a less security threatening ministry of Public Affairs (Kalley et al. 1999, 714). This did not please PF ZAPU members who responded by petitioning Mugabe to involve them in the security of the state. Mugabe responded by further demoting Nkomo to be the minister without portfolio, but with assignments to form a unified national army. That same year in February another fight broke out in Bulawayo among national army members in which approximately 300 soldiers died. The major cause of such fights was ethnicity. Matters intensified when two senior army generals, Lookout Masuku and Dumiso Dabengwa, were arrested on accusation of keeping an arms cache in the ZIPRA farms (Kalley et al. 1999, 718). As the situation deteriorated, in 1983 Joshua Nkomo and all other PF ZAPU ministers were fired from the cabinet on the accusation of attempting to destabilise the new government. They were arrested and sacked from government. Terrence Mashingaidze proffers that "the war was a spill-over from the nationalist politics of the 1960s and 1970s" (Mashingaidze 2010, 83). The reaction of former ZIPRA forces was to go back into the bush and operate as dissidents. The promising unity broke down and Zimbabwe had to go through another dark phase in the next six years in the form of

4 ZANLA and ZIPRA were the military wings for Zimbabwe African National Union and Zimbabwe African People's Union. Both military wings were fighting the Rhodesian forces, though from different fronts. ZANLA's base was in Mozambique, while ZIPRA's base was in Zambia.

Gukurahundi.⁵ In December 1982, the Korean-trained Fifth Brigade had its first pass-out and was ready for the mission. A month later, on 26 January 1983, the Fifth Brigade was deployed in the northern part of the Matabeleland province and the massacre of people began within a few days. Joshua Nkomo, who was fired from government and placed under house arrest, fled to Botswana by night for safety. The Catholic Commission on Justice and Peace (CCJP) report narrates in detail how people were murdered, mutilated and raped. In 1986 unity talks began and on 22 December 1987 the Unity Accord was signed by Joshua Nkomo and Robert Mugabe, marking an end to the Gukurahundi atrocities. According to the CCJP report, “in April 1988 amnesty was announced for all dissidents, and 122 surrendered” (CCJP 1997, 10).

The period between 1989 and 1991 was peaceful and it appeared as if the 1980 Prime Minister Elect’s pledge for a violence-free country was on the verge of being fulfilled. However, from 1991 to 1998 the country began to experience instability in different ways, with the climax being 2000. In 2000, a referendum to change the constitution of the country was carried out. The opposition party, Movement for Democratic Party (hereafter MDC), with the help of civil organisations successfully campaigned for a “no” vote. This angered the ZANU PF government and the response was the unleashing of fresh forms of violence in what was to be termed the “land reform.” Violence was used to reclaim these farms from whites and some people died in the process while several were injured. Others fled from the country while their property was either destroyed or looted. The whole process was politically referred to as the “Third Chimurenga.”⁶ The international community responded by imposing economic sanctions against Robert Mugabe’s government. Conflict had taken a new twist again, this time in the form of racism; but this did not mean that tribalism had ceased. The 2000 general elections were marred by violence with the opposition party winning influential seats in urban centres, the Midlands and Matabeleland provinces. “Political violence and intimidation of the electorate is said to be ZANU PF’s winning card” (Ndlovu-Gatsheni 2008, 1). The voting pattern was characterised by a protest vote. The people from Midlands and Matabeleland provinces were dissatisfied by the unity agreement of 1987. The time had come for them to demonstrate their dissatisfaction. At the same time, in the urban centres, people were not happy with the economic conditions. This is further supported by Sabelo when he writes that “the MDC is banking on popular anger rather than on its mobilisation prowess” (Ndlovu-Gatsheni 2008, 1). Hope for the oppressed and suffering was now in the new political dispensation of the MDC. ZANU PF narrowly won the elections with the aid of intimidation and violence, especially in their rural strongholds. Therefore, from the year 2000 to the signing of the

5 Gukurahundi is a Shona term for the first rains that cleanse all the dirt; and in this context it is used to refer to ethnic cleansing (genocide).

6 Chimurenga is the Shona term for war/fight or struggle. Culturally, Chimurenga is a fight in which everyone should participate. The word’s modern interpretation has been extended to describe a struggle for human rights, political dignity and social justice.

Global Political Agreement (hereafter GPA) violence was now more political than tribal or racial. Several things happened within the political arena. The height of political violence was in the 2006 run-off elections, where thousands of people were killed due to political violence; and this was now in the ZANU PF rural stronghold where ZANU PF had lost their traditional seats to MDC. The economic and political situations facilitated for a political settlement between the country's strongest parties (ZANU PF, MDC-T, and MDC-M⁷). The GPA helped the country by temporarily stabilising the economy. The agreement ushered in a phase during which the coalition government adopted the multi-currency system economy. This helped to stabilise the country's hyperinflation. Political tension was also minimised through the creation of the coalition government, which brought about some form of tolerance, though it was minimal. Though the agreement was between the leaders, the parties saw the need to engage people by setting up the Organ on National Healing Reconciliation and Integration (hereafter ONHRI). The agreement did not settle political, economic, social, ethnic, racial, and regional tensions, but they recognised the need for an organ to consider these issues.

ONHRI was formed by the inclusive government under the GPA agreement. According to Terence M. Mashingaidze, "many Zimbabweans considered the formation of ONHRI to be a watershed opportunity for stemming the nation's historically entrenched culture of state-sanctioned violence and impunity" (Mashingaidze 2010, 19). There was much hope from Zimbabweans and it was seen by the majority as the opportunity for healing scars caused by politically motivated violence since the pre-colonial era. The need for reconciliation and national healing was overdue and a necessary step towards economic development and peace. ONHRI was to be chaired by the three ministers who represented the three signatories of the GPA, namely John Nkomo (ZANU PF), Sekai Holland (MDC-T), and Gibson Sibanda (MDC-M). Two of them (John Nkomo and Gibson Sibanda) have since passed on. To show that this was a serious matter, 24 and 25 July 2009 were declared as days of peace with the intention of promoting national healing and reconciliation ideals. ONHRI started their consultation process by consulting the traditional leaders and this was meant to approach the whole exercise in a cultural rather than legalistic sense. ONHRI's mandate is meant to be an ongoing process rather a one-time event, so the process is still ongoing as I write this paper. However, despite the formation of ONHRI, violence is still alive in our country. We may well ask the questions: What has gone wrong with the country's peace initiatives? What happened to Mugabe's pledge for a peaceful country? Why are the memories on violence still alive in the people's minds?

7 MDC-T refers to Movement for Democratic Change-Tsvangirai, and MDC-M refers to Movement for Democratic Change-Mutambara. The MDC party split over the issue of participating in the senate elections and both parties fought over ownership of the name in court. They ended up using the same name but with the addition of the faction president's surname to the acronym.

What went wrong?

The 1980 reconciliation process was characterised by amnesia. Luc Huyse describes this amnesia as “an officially imposed form of forgetting and [it] was included as a constituent element in the Lancaster House Agreement” (Huyse 2003, 35). The premise for such an approach was to establish a new-born country. The fear was that an inquiry into the past would reopen 90-year-old wounds; hence it would be dangerous for the new political dispensation. Huyse further argues that “this strategy drew a veil over the human rights violations of the Rhodesian secret service, army and police” (Huyse 2003, 35). However, the questions remain: Is it possible to impose forgetting in the people’s memories? What did the new government do with both context and state cues related to colonialism and the liberation war? Frantz Fanon argues that “any decolonization is a success” (Fanon 1963, 2). This is a fact that any progressive African acknowledges.

First, let us consider the government’s efforts to erase the retrieval cues of colonialism and the liberation war. The name of the country was changed from Rhodesia to Zimbabwe. This was followed by the change of some city names; though in other cases some city names remained while for some only the spelling was changed. The changing of the names would enhance forgetting of racial oppression, as cues associated with it are erased. Second, the removal of racial restrictions such as: the prohibition of Africans in certain geographical spaces (streets, shops, schools, and residential areas); the prohibition—for Africans—of eating or drinking certain foods and drinks (beer and cigarettes); and the prohibition of Africans from being employed in certain jobs. As Fanon argues, colonialism had created a compartmentalised world (Fanon, 1963, 3). Again, this was another effort at erasing retrieval cues that could remind of racial discrimination. Third, the formation of an all-inclusive government by Prime Minister Mugabe was another effort aimed at erasing retrieval cues regarding the compartmentalisation of identities. In the free Zimbabwe, there was neither white nor black, neither Ndebele nor Shona; all were one in the name of nation building.

Regardless of all these efforts, why then did people return to memories of violence, hate and division? We have to consider that certain cues remained which later evoked memories of oppression, segregation and violence. First, in the cities most of the names of streets, public buildings and school names remained the same. The recurrence of racial language from the early 2000 onwards could probably have occurred because of the memories that are always activated by the presence of context cues in the form of these names. Second, by maintaining ethnic provincial names such as Mashonaland, Manicaland and Matabeleland, the government preserved cues that enhanced memories of tribalism. This probably explains the recurrence of ethnic clashes, particularly between the Ndebele and Shona people (Entumbane and Gukurahundi.) Third, the keeping of colonial property rights also preserved the memory cues of segregation and subjugation. The third Chimurenga (land reform) is a testimony of the failure by the government to deal with both context and state memory cues of land and economic imbalances. Mugabe’s administration also preserved the colonial administration

systems and one wonders why there was a liberation war in the first place. For example, “the State of Emergency, in place since 1965, renewed: it is further renewed every six months until July 1990” (CCJP Report 1997, 7). State-sanctioned violence that was part of the colonial administration system of governance was even further intensified by Mugabe’s administration. Oppressive laws reminiscent of the erstwhile Rhodesia were also enacted as part of Mugabe’s Zimbabwe administration. Such laws include: Public Order and Security Act (POSA); and Access to Information and Protection of Privacy Act (AIPPA). These oppressive laws serve as both state and context cues reminding us of the Rhodesian government system. In Mugabe’s administration people saw the incarnation and perfection of Ian Smith’s regime.

The 1987 Unity agreement between ZANU PF and PF ZAPU was a milestone event towards dealing with context and state cues of memories of violence and ethnic clashes. Again, certain efforts were made to erase memory cues on violence and tribalism. First, the merging of the two political parties (PF ZAPU and ZANU PF) was an important step towards dealing with retrieval cues of ethnic divisions. This was followed by the inclusion of PF ZAPU leaders into government structures. The disbandment of the Fifth Brigade barracks at Guinea Fowl in Gweru—being converted into a high school—was a further step in dealing with context cues of ethnicity and violence. In 2000, ZAPU was reconstituted; this was after some prominent ZAPU leaders like Dumiso Dabengwa had defected from the unity government.

In recent years, ethnic clashes have been on the rise and one wonders what has gone wrong again. The unity government also made a series of blunders in keeping alive retrieval cues on violence. First, by returning Emerson Munangwa (who is accused of being the chief architect of Gukurahundi) in the government and appointing him to the post of Minister of Defence, the government is preserving an embodiment of retrieval cues of violence. This also applies to top government officials and army generals who were accused of playing an active role in the carrying out of state-sanctioned violence. Such officials were supposed to resign from public office. Second, by maintaining the name ZANU PF, the government has preserved the context cue of violence and tribalism.

In all these reconciliation efforts, amnesia remains one of the major approaches to facilitate reconciliation. However, the media is regarded as a major contributor of the retrieval of memory cues of past atrocities. Unfortunately the government continues to flash media clips of hate speech and past violent atrocities.

In conclusion, it must be emphasised that the perpetrators of violence against the masses never confessed their actions. The imbalances created by 90 years of oppressive rule were not addressed. Land acquired illegally was protected under land rights. As people became poorer and poorer they began to long for the colonial past with positive passion—even though it was oppressive. People began to behave like the Israelites in the wilderness who said to Moses: “If only we had died by the Lord’s hand in Egypt!

There we sat around pots of meat and ate all the food we wanted, but you have brought us out into this desert to starve this entire assembly to death” (Exodus 16:3). The chronicle of events that took place between 1980 and 1987, shows that the reconciliation model of 1980 was a failure. The metaphor of peace in Isaiah 2:4b was not fulfilled. It was perhaps fulfilled partially for a relatively short period between 1989 and 1991. Otherwise, for the past 37 years the country has gone through a vicious cycle of violence. To break this cycle, the nation should seriously consider an effective process of dealing with the collective amnesia.

Dealing with the Collective Amnesia

Collective amnesia is not effective in reconciliation or peace-building initiatives for as long as context and state cues of negative past events are activated every day. Effective dealing with collective amnesia requires serious efforts towards fading context and state cues on past evils. Is it possible to erase memory cues? According to the Cue-Dependent Forgetting Theory this is not possible, but the only option is not to provide a context or state that is similar to the context and state of the painful memories that are stored in the people’s minds. This can be done in many ways.

First, the colonial administration was conceived as an oppressive system that suppressed people’s rights. It was a period that was characterised by suffering of the Africans. Though the economy was good, it was accessible to a certain class of people while the general populace suffered. Suffering here is in the context of the suppression of human rights and not hunger. The government needs to do the following to deal with collective amnesia: promotion of human rights; changing of provincial names based on ethnic identities to ethnic neutral ones; outstanding perpetrators of state-sanctioned violence should leave public office and go into retirement, since they are an embodiment of context cues of violence; and there should be a process of confession of the evils of the past by the perpetrators through an established Truth and Reconciliation Commission.

To build a peaceful Zimbabwean family, we should not pretend that things are all right. We should not pretend as if the past did not happen, or turn a blind eye to the atrocities or wrong-doings of the past. Effective reconciliation cannot be achieved without exposing abuse and hurt. The challenge is, however, the composition of this commission. Bear in mind that even the church has sometimes been implicated in some of these scandals. Nevertheless, there are still some individuals in the churches, civic society and the judicial system without stain who can be nominated to do the job. It is better to let the public of Zimbabwe nominate names of their choice. Then we can have participants from the Southern African Development Community (SADC), African Union (AU), and United Nations (UN) helping with the healing process. People need more time to pour out their stories while the nation listens. What aggrieves people so much is that they are not being allowed to tell their stories, and if they tell them, no one is listening. People have more questions that no one is answering. They need to understand what happened to their relatives who just disappeared one night—never to

be seen again. They need their relatives who are in mass graves to have decent burials. The CCJP report made extensive recommendations on how the remains of the victims should be exhumed (with the help of international experts) and be given decent burial. Jesus, after his crucifixion, was even accorded a decent burial by Joseph of Arimathea. If possible, restitution should be made where the victims and offenders are identified. Therefore, this paper contends that truth, justice and restitution are three important elements for reconciliation.

Conclusion

This research has demonstrated how the Cue-Dependent Forgetting theory explains the continuation of violence in Zimbabwe, regardless of the 1980 collective amnesia. People cannot forget the violence and other evils of the past, as long the current socio-political and economic situation reproduces the context and state cues of the past. Acquired information of what happened in the past cannot be erased, but is forgotten. This paper has argued in support of the Cue Dependent Forgetting Theory's proposition that information does not decay but is stored in the mind—waiting for cues to activate it. This means all the information on the suffering that people went through is still alive in their minds and every time it is activated whenever the situation reproduces similar cues. The paper therefore concludes that collective amnesia is not the solution to the country's cycle of violence but the fading of context and state cues (Cue-Dependent Forgetting) through which that violence information was produced. This fading of retrieval cues regarding negative past information is possible through an intensive production of positive information.

References

- CCJP. 1997. Report on the 1980s Disturbances in Matabeleland and the Midlands. Harare: CCJP.
- Eich, James, Eric. 1980. "The Cue-Dependent Nature of State-Dependent Retrieval." *Memory and Cognition* 8 (2): 157–73.
- Fanon, Frantz. 1963. *The Wretched of the Earth*. New York: Grove Press.
- Goodwin, Donald W., Barbara Powell, David Bremer, Haskel Hoine and John Stern. 1969. "Alcohol and Recall: State-Dependent Effects in Man." *Science* No. 163: 1358–60.
- Huysse, L. 2003. "Zimbabwe: Why Reconciliation Failed." In *After Violent Conflict*, edited by David Bloomfield. Stockholm: International IDEA Publications, 33–39.
- Kalley, Jacqueline A., Elna Schoeman, and L. E. Andor. 1999. *Southern African Political History: A Chronology of Key Political Events from Independence to Mid-1997*. London: Greenwood Press.

- Kaiser, Otto. 1983. *Isaiah 1–12*. The Old Testament Library, second edition. Philadelphia: The Westminster Press.
- Mashingaidze, T. M. 2010. “Zimbabwe’s Illusive National Healing and Reconciliation Processes: From Independence to the Inclusive Government 1980–2009.” *Conflict Trends* No. 1: 19–27.
- Mugabe, Robert. 1980. “Robert Mugabe Speech to the Nation of Zimbabwe, 4 March 1980.” Accessed 2 February 2016. <http://adamwelz.wordpress.com>.
- Ndlovu-Gatsheni, S. J. 2008. “Nation Building in Zimbabwe and the Challenges of Ndebele Particularism.” *African Journal in Conflict Resolution* 8 (3): 27–56.
- Smith. 1970. www.psychotron.org.uk.
- Tulving, Endel. 1974. “Cue-Dependent Forgetting: When we forget something we once knew, it does not necessarily mean that the memory trace has been lost; it may only be inaccessible.” *American Scientist* 62 (1): 74–82.
- Watts, John D. W. 2005. *Isaiah 1–33*. Word Biblical Commentary 24, revised edition. Nashville: Thomas Nelson.
- Widyapranawa, S. H. 1990. “Isaiah 1–39. The Lord Is Savior: Faith in National Crisis.” *International Theological Commentary*. Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans.
- Wildberger, Hans. 1991. *Isaiah 1-12*. A Continental Commentary. Minneapolis: Augsburg Fortress.