Politically Motivated Violence (PMV) in Zimbabwe and the Role of Social Work

Munyaradzi Muchacha¹

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Abstract In this paper I discuss politically motivated violence (PMV) and the role of social work in addressing this social and political challenge. PMV is a gross human rights violation that receives limited attention in social work literature not only in Zimbabwe, the focus of this study, but worldwide. Since independence, Zimbabwe has experienced many cases of PMV, most of which can be considered to be state orchestrated. Here, I analyze and discuss in depth three major cases of PMV in Zimbabwe, namely, the 1980–1988 *Gukurahundi*, Operation Restore Order (forceful evictions and destruction of houses) and the pre- and post-2008 election PMV, respectively. The social work profession is conspicuously absent from the fight against PMV and other systematic human rights violations in Zimbabwe. I propose that this apathy is due to the fact that social work in Zimbabwe is predominantly an extension of the state, with social workers therefore having limited options to challenge state-orchestrated human rights violations. Furthermore, the dominant method of social work practiced in Zimbabwe, i.e. social case work, is not the ideal social work method to address structural injustices. I propose that social work does have the potential to play a major role in addressing PMV, such as facilitating the national healing dialogue and the process, advocacy and mainstreaming of human rights in everyday social work practice. I also suggest that educational programs on social work in Zimbabwe should incorporate human rights education.

Keywords Politically motivated violence · Social Work · Human rights · Social justice · Zimbabwe

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✉ Munyaradzi Muchacha
munyaradzimuchacha@gmail.com

¹ Department of Sociology and Social Work, Aalborg University, Fredrik Bajers Vej 5, 9100 Aalborg, Denmark

Introduction

The focus of this paper is a discussion on politically motivated violence (PMV) in Zimbabwe and proposals for the roles of social workers to address this social and political challenge. PMV is the use of force or violence against civilians for political ends (Moser and Clark 2001). It is a gross human rights violation and a common form of violence in Zimbabwe's political space. Several local scholars identify it as being state orchestrated in light of the prominent role the state plays in promoting and sustaining it (see for example, Du Plessis and Ford 2008; Machakanja 2010; Ndlovu-Gatsheni and Benyera 2015). However, not all cases of PMV in Zimbabwe can be attributed to the state. For example, it has also been alleged that the major opposition party Movement for Democratic Change (MDC) has engaged in violent political activities during electoral periods (Ploch 2010). The state has a moral and legal obligation to safeguard and guarantee all forms of human rights, including civil and political rights (Du Plessis and Ford 2008). However, evidence gathered from around the globe indicates that in many instances the state compromises this role to further its own interests. Murambadoro (2015) and Du Plessis and Ford (2008) argue that since independence the Zimbabwe state has perpetrated many human rights violations, such as torture, unlawful arrest and detention. Machakanja (2010, p.2) agrees, "Zimbabwe has been trapped in a complex and protracted political crisis that has seen rising levels of human-rights violations, including kidnappings, disappearances, arbitrary detentions, torture, sexual violence and the forced recruitment of youth by armed groups, to name just a few." Other vivid examples of abuse of civil liberties by the state across the globe include forced evictions and torture in the Darfur region of South Sudan, disappearance of political activists in Hong Kong, forced displacement of the Rohingya Muslims in Burma, killing of 44 protesting Marikana mine

workers in South Africa and torture at Guantanamo Bay by the USA (Human Rights Watch 2015).

PMV mostly transpires in the context of struggles for political power and space where it serves as a political strategy to consolidate power and suppress dissenting voices (Ndlovu-Gatsheni and Benyera 2015). Moser and Clark (2001, p. 29) contend that PMV is “motivated by a desire, conscious or unconscious, to obtain or maintain political power”. In this milieu, citizens who disagree with or question the actions of the state are considered to be enemies by the people who hold political power. This state of political affairs is especially evident in states where leaders are authoritarian and political power is kept as a possession and tool for dominance. This political space is characterised by the “leader being the centre or source of political power rather than the citizens driving the governance agenda” (Dussel 2003 cited in Ndlovu-Gatsheni and Benyera 2015, p. 15). Dussel (2003) further adds, “when the political is corrupted, power is understood as a ‘thing, an object at hand, or a well-bound package’ that has to be conquered, taken and then retained by all means necessary” (Ndlovu-Gatsheni and Benyera 2015, p. 15). In most authoritarian states political leaders neglect the socio-economic agenda while prioritising the consolidation of power through more unconventional ways, such as patronage, corruption and PMV. Such priorities and bad governance contribute to the growth of structural socio-political challenges, including unemployment, limited access to social services, inequality and poverty (Machakanja 2010). These structural challenges contribute to discontentment among citizens and the growth of strong political movements and resistance. In most instances, states respond to such political developments through yet increased repression (Human Rights Watch 2015). Such repression and human rights violations transpire despite the state having human rights legislation. For example, Zimbabwe has a progressive constitution that guarantees such political rights as freedom of association and assembly. Furthermore, Zimbabwe has ratified crucial international human rights treaties, such as the African Charter on Human and Peoples’ Rights, the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights and the Convention on the Political Rights of Women. The subversion of the law by the state is an indication that in some instances political actions supersede the rule of law (Ndlovu-Gatsheni and Benyera 2015). Moreover, this subversion also indicates that it is not sufficient to have human rights legislation, but what is equally important is their full implementation.

Several social work scholars argue that there is a close and natural affinity between social work and human rights (see, for example, Healy 2008; Ife 2016; Nadkarni and Sinha 2016). Healy (2008) goes further and identifies the social work profession as a human rights profession, stating both share the same values, such as social justice, worth and dignity of a person,

liberty and freedom. Healy (2008) also states that social work has a long history and tradition of defending human rights and supporting restorative justice, peace and reconciliation across the world. This author uses the example of South Africa where many social workers were actively involved in the activism and struggle against the apartheid regime (Healy 2008). Ife (2016) similarly views social workers as human rights workers, using the example of Australia, where social workers are actively involved in activism against the Australian government refugees’ policy (Ife 2016). Equally important, as part of reconciliation and national healing efforts, social workers in South Africa have made a public apology for the role they have played in supporting apartheid socio-economic policies (Lombard 2000). Similarly, social workers in Australia have apologised for their negative treatment of indigenous communities. The social work profession across the globe has a number of roles to play in the defence of human rights, such as advocacy, civic education, political action and activism, linking service users to resource systems, brokering and liaison and social research (Lombard 2000; Ife 2001; Healy 2008). Despite this background, the social work profession is conspicuously absent from the fight against PMV and other systematic human rights violations in Zimbabwe. I propose that this apathy is due to the fact that social work in Zimbabwe, especially that provided by the government sector, is predominantly an extension of the state and that case work, the prominent social work method in Zimbabwe, is not positioned to address structural injustices. The silence maintained by the social work profession in the wake of PMV and other human rights abuses casts doubt on whether this profession is a human rights profession at all (Mtetwa and Muchacha 2013). I argue that PMV is a major structural challenge in Zimbabwe (Ndlovu-Gatsheni and Benyera 2015) and should be part and parcel of the social work agenda. As such, in this article, I am calling on the social work profession to address not only PMV, but all forms of abuse of civil and political rights. This is not saying that other human rights are not important, rather that civil and political rights are a neglected aspect of the social work literature and practice that deserves increased attention.

PMV in Zimbabwe: The Cases of the 1980–1988 *Gukurahundi*, Operation Restore Order and the Pre- and Post-2008 Election Violence

The prevalence of PMV in political space in Zimbabwe can be traced back to the precolonial era when it was used to defend or grab chieftainships, raid other communities and increase territories. During the colonial era, PMV was associated with the suppression of native social and liberation movements by the colonial regime. Currently, it plays a role in the struggle for political space and hegemony (Research and Advocacy Unit 2011). It can be argued that violence has become a culture and common way of addressing conflicts and disagreements in

Zimbabwe (Du Plessis and Ford 2008). For example, Machakanja (2010) maintains that violence is general, widespread and deep-seated in a wide range of social institutions and spheres other than politics, such as family, schools and law enforcement. In past years, Zimbabwe has witnessed many cases of PMV, including the recent case in 2015 of the abduction and disappearance of the prominent political activist Itai Dzamara whose whereabouts is still unknown (Du Plessis and Ford 2008; Machakanja 2010; Human Rights Watch 2015). Currently, the country is experiencing many demonstrations, most of which are peaceful, against the state in protest against bad governance and the ailing economy. The state is largely responding through heavy-handed repressions, unlawful arrests and detentions. Due to limited space, I have elected to focus only on three major case studies for in-depth discussion, namely, the 1980–1988 *Gukurahundi*, Operation Restore Order (forceful evictions and destruction of houses) and the pre- and post-2008 election PMV, respectively. These three cases were selected because they were large scale and represent different dimensions of PMV, with *Gukurahundi* representing PMV with ethnic dimensions, Operation Restore Order demonstrating forceful evictions and the destruction of houses belonging to persons considered to be opponents and threats to the government and the pre- and post-2008 election violence illustrating PMV during an election period in Zimbabwe.

The 1980–1988 *Gukurahundi*

According to Ngwenya (2014), between 1980 and 1988, the Zimbabwe African National Union Patriotic Front (ZANU PF) party-led government conducted acts of vicious brutality, such as torture, murders and intimidation, against people resident in Matebeleland and Midlands provinces. DuPlessis and Ford (2008) and Ploch (2010) concluded that these actions amounted to gross human rights violations and crimes against humanity. This violent exercise was code-named *Gukurahundi*, a Shona language word which refers to the spring rain that gets rid of the chaff from the last season (Ngwenya and Harris 2015). In this context, the chaff referred to political opponents. It is important to highlight that the two provinces which were the focus of this directed violence, especially Matebeleland, were and are still largely domiciled by the second largest ethnic group in Zimbabwe, the *Ndebele* people, while ZANU PF is dominated by politicians belonging to the largest ethnic group, the *Shona* people (Du Plessis and Ford 2008). This ethnic distinction led Doran (2015) to suggest that *Gukurahundi* was a move to stamp ZANU PF authority over the *Ndebele* people. Doran (2015) also highlights that during this era ZANU PF sought a one-party state and wanted to rid itself of the Zimbabwe African People's Union (ZAPU), an opposition party which had also participated in the liberation struggle and enjoyed popularity in

Matabeleland and Midlands provinces. Ngwenya (2014) in his PhD thesis demonstrates that as a justification for *Gukurahundi*, the government accused ZAPU of dissident and banditry activities. Using North Korean-trained special forces, the state responded by violence not only against supporters of ZAPU but indiscriminately against residents in Matebeleland and Midlands who came in contact with the security forces (Vambe 2012). It has been estimated that over 10,000 people were killed by state agents, such as the intelligence agency and the army (Ngwenya 2014).

Ngwenya (2014) admits to the existence of some banditry activities in these provinces, but in his opinion they did not in any way warrant a heavy-handed military force that indiscriminately targeted civilians. Robert Mugabe, the then Prime Minister (current president), was quoted pointing out the indiscriminate nature of the violence, “we have to deal with this problem quite ruthlessly. Don't cry if your relatives get killed in the process ... Where men and women provide food for the dissidents, when we get there we eradicate them. We don't differentiate when we fight, because we can't tell who is a dissident and who is not.” (Zimbabwe Human Rights Non-Governmental Forum 2007, p. 15). A report by the Catholic Commission for Justice and Peace and the Legal Resources Foundation (1997) reported various forms of human rights violations, such as beatings, torture, extrajudicial executions and arbitrary detentions. To date, the state has not offered any official apology and/or compensation or provided a reconciliation and justice recourse to the people affected (Machakanja 2010; Ngwenya and Harris 2015). Furthermore, no opportunity or platform has been provided to the survivors to share their experiences or get relief for their pain. Ngwenya and Harris (2015) contend that some of the affected individuals are bitter and angry about their *Gukurahundi* experience and were interested in seeking revenge. As one of the respondents noted, “we need revenge”, “given a chance, I would also inflict the same pain” and “the best is to do the worst to them” (Ngwenya and Harris 2015, p. 45).

Operation Restore Order (Forceful Evictions and Destruction of Houses)

In 2005, through an operation termed *Operation Restore Order*, the state embarked on actions of forceful evictions and home destruction in urban areas (United Nations 2005). An estimated 700,000 people lost their homes and livelihoods or both (Ploch 2010). A report of the fact-finding mission to Zimbabwe to assess the Scope and Impact of Operation Restore Order by United Nations Special envoy on human settlement issues in Zimbabwe Anna Kajumulo Tibaijuka described the operation as follows,

“On 19 May 2005, with little or no warning, a military-style “clean-up” operation started in the Zimbabwe capital, Harare. It quickly developed into a deliberate

nationwide campaign, destroying what the Government termed illegal vending sites, structures, other informal business premises and homes, literally displacing hundreds of thousands of people” (United Nations 2005, p. 12).

The state argued this exercise was to create order and bring sanity as these houses were illegal. However, Ploch (2010) suggests the motivation of operation was not necessarily to create order and stability as claimed, but to compel urban dwellers to move to rural areas as the ruling party was losing popularity in urban areas. The United Nations (2005, p. 12) report notes “it was an act of retribution against areas known by the Government to have voted for the opposition during the last few presidential and parliamentary elections.” The affected people were told to go back to rural areas even though most of the people affected had lived their whole lives in urban areas and had no connections to rural areas (United Nations 2005). Another possible motivation for the operation by the state was to divert attention of the general public from the protracted economic woes (United Nations 2005). The operation witnessed enormous humanitarian effects, such as homelessness, hunger, starvation, loss of property and livelihoods. Like other human rights crises, women and children were disproportionately affected. A 19-year-old girl affected by the operation narrated her ordeal:

“I was living in a cottage with my younger sister and my disabled brother. My parents had already passed away. Then the clean-up operation came and destroyed the cottage. Now we have nowhere to go and we are sleeping outside. Our blankets and our other property were stolen. We are not going to school because we have no place to stay. We are sleeping outside with my disabled brother in a cold place” (United Nations 2005, p. 12).

Anna Kajumulo Tibaijuka concluded that the operation “was carried out in an indiscriminate and unjustified manner, with indifference to human suffering, and, in repeated cases, with disregard to several provisions of national and international legal frameworks” (United Nations 2005, p. 7). *Operation Restore Order* is arguably biggest mass eviction and destruction of houses exercise in Zimbabwe history, but there are other many similar cases in Zimbabwe (Ploch 2010). Almost each year many houses are destroyed in urban areas and urban dwellers receive threats and intimidation to support a certain political party (Ploch 2010).

Pre- and Post-2008 Election PMV

It is worth noting that PMV, particularly during elections, has increased in recent years with the declining popularity of the ZANU PF-led government. This has led to allegations that the

government uses PMV as a tool to instil fear and consolidate its power (Ndlovu-Gatsheni and Benyera 2015). There are many examples of pre- and post-2008 election PMV, including torture, disappearances, intimidation, sexual violence and seizure and destruction of property. Ploch (2010, p. 4) notes that “in 2007, there were 603 reported incidents of torture, 865 incidents of assault, and 2766 reports of arrest and detention. In the months directly preceding the elections, from November 2007 to March 2008, there were 1775 reported incidents of political violence”. Human Rights Watch (2008) records the experience of one individual affected by this PMV: “they surrounded my place around midnight on April 13. They were 30 ZANU-PF youth and war veterans. They broke down the door and tied my hands and took me. I was beaten with logs until 8 a.m. I was accused of being a MDC member and a sell-out.” He is one of the many people affected by PMV during this period. It is important to note that most of the affected people were also denied access to medical care and treatment (Human Rights Watch 2008). Some of the survivors, especially those in the rural areas where the violence was more serious, fled to urban areas and to neighbouring countries where they sought asylum (Human Rights Watch 2008).

Another element of the pre- and post-2008 election PMV which is important to highlight is the sexual violence which took place, particularly against women. Hodzi (2012) argues that sexual violence was also employed as a PMV strategy to repress and instil fear. He notes:

“Faced with general mass discontent, socio-political opposition and heightened prospects of losing the 2008 general election, the Zimbabwe African National Union-Patriotic Front (ZANU-PF) used sexual violence to re-establish political dominance. Sexual violence was seen to be effective in spreading fear and terror among Zimbabweans, dissuading thousands of potential voters from joining the Movement for Democratic Change” (Hodzi 2012, p. 2).

At the front line of this form of PMV were the militias, war veterans and the secret agents (Research and Advocacy Unit 2011). Such practice is a violation of United Nations Resolution 1820 that “recognized sexual violence as a weapon of war and a threat to international security [... used] to humiliate, instil fear in, disperse and/or forcibly relocate civilian members of a community or ethnic group” (Research and Advocacy Unit 2011, p. 2). Sexual violence provides clearly illustrates how women are disproportionately affected by systematic human rights violations. It should be also understood that this PMV against women is part of broader structural violence that women encounter in day to day living which is promoted and sustained by cultures, norms and social and

political institutions that legitimise the domination of men (Machakanja 2010).

The Response of the Social Work Profession to PMV in Zimbabwe

There is no available evidence which demonstrates that the social work profession plays a role in addressing PMV in Zimbabwe. Similar observations were made by Mtetwa and Muchacha (2013) who reported that there is limited social work action against various forms of human rights violations in Zimbabwe. As social work is a human rights profession, one would expect it to intervene in situations involving PMV. Conversely, allied professions such as medicine and law actively do respond to PMV in various ways. For example, Doctors for Human Rights [nongovernment organisation (NGO)] provides medical assistance to survivors of PMV, and during the 2008 violent elections this organisation established nation-wide mobile medical centres (Human Rights Watch 2008). This service was extremely relevant as survivors of this PMV were denied access to health care in public health centres run by the state (Human Rights Watch 2008). Similarly, Zimbabwe Lawyers for Human Rights (NGO) provides free legal assistance to victims of PMV, being one of the more prominent human rights organisation in Zimbabwe. In addition, the teachers' trade union Progressive Teachers Union provides support to teachers who are at risk or have been affected by PMV, especially in rural areas where PMV tend to be acute.

I suggest that the limited response to PMV by the social work profession has its origins in the social work method practiced in Zimbabwe, i.e. social case work, and the influence of the state on social work practices. Case work is the most prominent social work method in Zimbabwe, especially within the government social welfare department and to some extent in NGOs and charity organisations. This social work method has drawn harsh criticism from several scholars not only for its residual and curative nature but primarily for its irrelevance and ineffectiveness in addressing structural social problems. Ankara (1986, p. 183) argues, "the residual model is a deficient vehicle, not only to change the material welfare of the poor rural people, but to address the larger issues of social development". Case work is primarily centred on enhancing the psycho-social functioning of an individual person, hence it gives little or no room to social workers to address broader structural social challenges and oppressions (Midgley 1981). As such, case work is not equipped to handle pressing structural challenges, such as bad governance, subversion of the rule of law, PMV and other forms of political repression and limited access to social services, such as water and sanitation, education and health. As Laird (2008, p. 183) argues "the predominant

Anglo American psychosocial remedial casework model does not fit the cultural or socio-economic circumstances which characterize most lives in sub-Saharan Africa."

Graduate and undergraduate programmes of professional social work education in Zimbabwe reflect and perpetuate the dominance of case work, as evidenced by the predominance of Western psychosocial theories, such as psychoanalytic, behavioural, systems and cognitive theories. The educational programmes do not adequately position social workers to challenge social injustices and/or to stand up against practices by the state or even to adopt alternative and independent approaches from those advocated by the state. This nature of social work training is not unique to Zimbabwe; rather, this approach to social work is common in developing countries where social work was imported from the West and implemented by colonial administrators. As a result, to a large extent this form of social work is designed to be deal with the major challenges in the West rather than those specific or pressing in the South (Mwansa 2011). Midgley (1981) refers to this wholesale importation as professional imperialism.

The state is the largest employer of social workers in Zimbabwe. Hence, to a large degree the social work agenda in Zimbabwe is set up by the state. The fact that social workers are agents of the state makes it difficult for them to challenge or speak out against their employer. For example, Operation Restore Order affected many children and was a serious child protection issue; however, social workers within the government department responsible for child protection did not provide any meaningful support to the affected children and their families as the state did not concede that this was a humanitarian catastrophe. Social work as a profession developed in Zimbabwe during the colonial era as a mechanism of social control to address challenges, such as juvenile delinquency, which were perceived by the government at the time as threats to order and stability. To date, social work in Zimbabwe is still focused on social control and traditional functions, such as statutory child protection, and unpopular functions, such as means testing of applicants for social safety nets. Mmatli (2008) argues that the social work agenda in many countries is set by the state and cannot operate outside the state's terms of reference. Hence, professional social workers have limited room and capacity to challenge structural injustices, especially those caused by the state.

The Role of Social Workers in Addressing and Dealing with PMV: A Discussion

Social workers have long been involved in the promotion of human rights, including the first generation of human rights. Healy (2008) identifies various prominent social workers who led the fight for civil and political rights. These include Jane

Addams, who was at the forefront of the human rights struggle in America and across the world in the 20th century, a struggle which earned her a Nobel Peace Prize, and Ellen Khazanov, the first black social worker who fought against the apartheid regime through the Young Women's Christian Association. In many countries of the world, social workers continue to play an active role in safeguarding human rights, fostering social justice and challenging state-orchestrated oppressions. Ife (2016) notes that social workers in Australia are engaged in social and political activism against the Australian migration policies and treatment of refugees. In Columbia, various social workers are involved in peace building, conflict resolution and advocacy for the end of the war. In Europe, underpinned by critical and radical social work, many social work movements, such as the New Approach (Hungary), Social Work Action Network (SWAN; UK) and Orange Tide (Spain) have emerged to challenge neoliberal policies, such as austerity (Ioakimidis et al. 2014; Ferguson 2016). Orange Tide, a social movement which is composed of social workers and service users, organises social action activities, such as protests and demonstrations. Rorry Truell, the Secretary General of the International Federation of Social Workers, has described Orange Tide as a best practice and singled it out as a great example of social work-led action (Ferguson 2016). While these social movements are largely focused on second-generation human rights, such as economic and social rights, they provide a leaf on how social workers in Zimbabwe can organise and challenge all forms of PMV and any other structural forms of oppression. In this section, I discuss various possible ways in which social work can address PMV and also recommend social work educational reforms.

Mmatli (2008) argues that the social work profession is not actively fighting against human rights violations in Africa due to lack of voice and power to influence the political space and proposes an alternative strategy, political activism, to attain political power and influence political processes. The political activism strategies proposed include political campaigns and demonstrations, supporting only political leaders who respect human rights and direct participation in politics by social workers. There is room and potential for social workers in Zimbabwe to utilise any of these proposed political activism ideas to address PMV and other structural injustices. For example, social workers in Zimbabwe, either as individual activists or as part of the professional body National Association of Social Workers Zimbabwe, may organise action-led activism, such as demonstrations, petitions and other creative forms of social and political engagement efforts, including the use of social media to challenge all forms of PMV. Equally important, Zimbabwe's new constitution provides various platforms for the pursuit of social justice, such as the Human Rights Commission (HRC), the Gender Commission and the Supreme Court, all of which are democratic institutions that can be accessed by social workers to pursue legal

recourse to defend human rights and resolve PMV. Social workers can petition the HRC to intervene and address all forms of PMV. By the same token, social workers can also approach the Supreme Court to seek justice for individuals who were victims of PMV or affected by it. Furthermore, social workers may research and compile evidence of PMV to support human rights cases under consideration by these various platforms.

It is encouraging that many civil rights movements have emerged in Zimbabwe in recent years, such as *Tajamuka* and *This Flag*, to challenge state-driven acts of oppressions. To a large extent, these movements have managed to successfully mobilise many people, especially young people, to stand up and speak against state oppression. Recently, these two movements successfully managed to mobilise and organise a national shutdown day across the country which involved people staying home from work in protest against social and political injustices. This shutdown sent a strong message of the desire and request of ordinary citizens for political and social reforms. Social workers need to support such progressive grassroots efforts to mobilise citizens to address oppressions such as PMV. They can mobilise communities at the grassroots level to join or form structures, such as social movements, to collectively challenge the state on social and political injustices. These structures or movements serve as an outlet for peoples' voices. Equally important, they provide a platform for people to participate in civic dialogue, engagement and action. It is imperative that social work facilitates or mainstreams the active participation of disadvantaged groups, such as the elderly, women, persons living with disabilities and service users, such as those affected by PMV.

National healing is cardinal in resolving past systematic human rights violations and building a culture of tolerance and non-violence (Ndlovu-Gatsheni and Benyera 2015). It is also crucial for preventing future human rights violations. The Church and Civil Society Forum (2012, p. 8), a civil society organisation in Zimbabwe argues, "healing is a process which begins when people confront the past, in the absence of collective response to violence victims are left with too much memory or too much forgetting and failure to deal with the past can lead to intergenerational transmission of trauma." Specifically, national healing is cardinal to address the systematic human rights violations that have occurred in Zimbabwe, such as Operation Restore Order and the 2008 election violence (Machakanja 2010). However, Zimbabwe has yet to undergo a comprehensive national healing process, despite the fact that the current new constitution provides for national healing, in recognition that the country truly needs such a process and experience. Ndlovu-Gatsheni and Benyera (2015, p. 183) observe, "Zimbabwe has never had meaningful and comprehensive programmes to provide justice in the many issues that cascade from conflict and violence in the nation. What has been done, amounts to armistices rather than

transitional justice mechanisms”. In light of this background, I propose that the social work profession in Zimbabwe should play an active role in the promotion and strengthening of the national healing process. National healing is a collective process that calls for the engagement and involvement of various stakeholders, such as the state, youth and their organisations, faith-based organisations, community and traditional leaders, women organisations and their constituencies, members of the community and any other civil society organisation. The role and capacity of the social work profession includes bringing these various stakeholders together for a dialogue on national healing and mapping strategies to prevent future violence. Social workers can also facilitate national healing dialogue through meetings at the grassroots level and by engaging and involving survivors of PMV in such dialogues to enable them to share their experiences and support opportunities for healing. Equally important, social workers can also conduct community sensitisation sessions on the importance of national healing and advocate the prioritisation of this process by the state. Social workers can also empower communities at the grassroots level to continue dialogue pertaining to peace and national healing, such as capacity building, which enhances the capacity of the communities to conduct sustainable dialogue and reflect on these issues.

Most people are not aware of their rights, not just first-generation human rights, but all forms of human rights. They are also not aware of how they can claim these rights. I argue that the social work profession has a function in the education of human rights. Social workers in Zimbabwe play a significant role in raising community awareness pertaining to a wide range of issues, such as human immunodeficiency virus, gender-based violence, child rights and other social issues. The social work training they have received should empower social workers to engage and raise community awareness through various ways, such as campaigns and even dialogue. Social workers in Zimbabwe are exposed to Paulo Freire’s ideas of community consciousness, pedagogy, adult education and social dialogue to facilitate social change, but this expertise has not been utilised for human rights education. Hence, I argue that social workers in Zimbabwe need to provide human rights education by, for example, raising awareness about the new constitutions and its provisions, such as civil and political rights, how it protects citizens and the provisions that enable an individual to pursue justice. Such human rights knowledge is crucial in helping communities to desist from supporting or taking part in PMV and other forms of oppression. Equally important, such knowledge can assist communities to seek justice in situations where their rights have been violated. For example, there are several instances where survivors of PMV during the 2008 elections have taken the matter to the courts and successfully claimed compensation. An individual can only take this path to recourse if he/she is aware of his/her rights and procedures in situations of

violations. Also important is that human rights or civil education empowers citizens at all levels of the society, including the grassroots level, to continually engage the state to open up the political space and respect civil and political rights (Arora 2013).

Ife (2016) argues that social workers should mainstream and support human rights in their day-to-day social work practice. This perspective creates many opportunities for social workers to advance human rights in the various fields they work. For example, in the case of Operation Restore Order, social workers could have supported the affected children and their families to access temporary education and shelter while a suitable shelter was being sought. Similarly, social workers could have provided services, such as linking the survivors to available resource systems, assisting children to access temporary education and shelter and traditional social work tasks such as psychosocial support. These functions are only some of the roles that social workers play in their day to day work. The only difference is that in this instance these roles are being applied to address systematic human rights violations.

The importance of social work educational curricula in promoting the involvement of social workers in addressing human rights issues, such as PMV, cannot be understated (Nadkarni and Sinha 2016). As earlier noted, while the social work profession identifies itself as a human rights profession, human rights and social justice issues are given little attention in social work education programmes. This is not unique to Zimbabwe but occurs in many countries. For example, a study by Steen and Mathiesen (2005) which explored the extent to which Master’s in Social Work programmes in the USA were teaching human rights found that of the 135 schools queried, 91% had no courses on human rights. Nadkarni and Sinha (2016) also highlighted that there is limited human rights content and coverage in social work training programmes in India. As such, most social workers lack sufficient knowledge on human rights and the relevant skills to challenge structural forms of oppression. I argue for curriculum reforms in Zimbabwe to mainstream human rights and social and political action. My call is not new, as Chogugudza (2009) has already highlighted that social work training in Zimbabwe, which is dominated by case work and other psycho-social interventions, does not empower students to address structural social challenges in Zimbabwe. I agree with Chogugudza (2009) that the social work training in Zimbabwe has limitations in dealing with such oppressive activities as PMV. While the module on community work is very relevant to these issues, there is a missed opportunity of incorporating civil and political issues. As a way forward, I recommend the inclusion of various issues that enable social workers to be politically aware, defend human rights and foster social and political justice. These include feminism approaches, critical and radical social work, political action and advocacy, good governance and democracy and civil education. These various

concepts will empower social workers to raise awareness on human rights values with the aim to influence and promote a human rights culture in society and incorporate this into the prevailing societal values (Nadkarni and Sinha 2016). As part of the social work education reforms, the schools of social work in Zimbabwe also need to provide social work students with field work placements in human rights and civil society organisations so that they may gain practical training and experience on human rights. Such work placements will also provide these social work students with opportunities and room to join those human rights and civil society organisations.

Conclusion

In this paper I discuss PMV in Zimbabwe, a subject matter that receives limited attention in the local and global social work literature. I note that PMV is a gross human rights violation which is used as a political tool to consolidate power and suppress social movements, political parties and dissenting voices. Despite the high prevalence of PMV in Zimbabwe, the social work profession is still not addressing this social problem, possibly due to the fact that social work in Zimbabwe is predominantly an extension of the state and that case work, the prominent social work method in Zimbabwe, is not positioned to address structural injustices. I propose social work roles to address PMV, such as facilitation of the national healing dialogue and process, advocacy and mainstreaming of human rights in everyday social work practice. I also challenge those who are empowered to determine social work education curricula in Zimbabwe to incorporate human rights education.

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