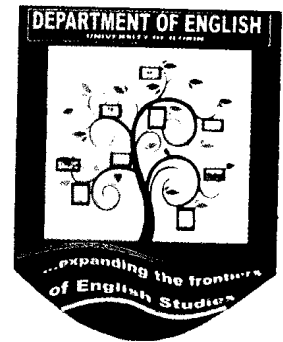


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From Physical Assault to Emotional Agony: Migration as Social Protest in No Violet Bulawayo's We Need New Names.

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Abstract

This paper focuses on migration as a social protest in Bulawayo's *We Need New Names* with a view to studying the dialectics of agony at home and in exile. The specific objectives are to analyse how Bulawayo captures the uneasiness that torment the characters at home and even on arrival in exile. It also illuminates how the character's reinvention of self in a new place confronts the protective memories of the way things were back home. The essay studies the thematic transcendence that takes the story beyond its gratuitous dark concerns to other levels of meaning. It x-rays the melancholic, funny, ferocious, joyful and defiant characterization in Bulawayo's first person narrator in her trenchant observation of human behaviour. To achieve these objectives, the essay deploys the postcolonial theory to account for several issues raised by the novelist. The study concludes that many African Diasporas are not necessarily better in exile as mostly earlier anticipated. The finding of the study shows clearly that voluntary migration is mostly necessitated by the growing emotional trauma that most African government unleashes on her citizenry and thus making exile the painful option.

Key words: Migration, Diaspora, Identity, Travail, Emotion

Introduction

Discourse in postcolonial politics constitutes a serious debate among African writers of the Diaspora. No Violet Bulawayo, Sefi Attah, Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie, Arman Darko and host of others have given considerable attention to various issues in the crowded field of postcolonial literature. Given the spate of the political, social, economic and educational challenges in African countries today, writers have expressed displeasure and disappointment over the agony and trauma being experienced by the masses. Moyo,(2014, p. 5), postulates that writers "capture the vicissitudes, vagaries and failures of society in which they live". The writer of the text, *We Need New Names*, uses it to reflect about the historical as well as the contemporary socio-economic and political conditions of Zimbabwe. Ashcroft et al (1998, p. 177), state that the "concepts of place and displacement demonstrate the very complex interaction of language, history and environment in the experienced of colonized people and the importance of space and location in the process of identity formation".

Committed writers have brought to the fore the ineptitude of the postcolonial leaders in providing effective leadership. As many leaders subject the people to poverty and deprivations, writers such as No Violet Bulawayo expose readers to the life of the children in the poverty ridden Zimbabwe and reflect how some of them exiled overseas. *We Need New Names* depicts a group of teenagers living in tin shacks in Zimbabwe after their family homes have been

demolished by the country's paramilitary police on the order of president Robert Mugabe. The novel gives a juvenile narrative of a society where chaos and deprivation become everyday reality. It portrays a community where death and illness and even the threat of violence lurk in a shanty town which is ironically named "paradise". The children spend their idle time stealing guavas, committing a series of mischief in the neighbourhood known as Budapest. The novel's technical brilliance in creating resilient characters that enchant readers with their antics as with poignancy is remarkable.

Bulawayo tells the story of a traumatised nation. The novel does this by forming a cast of characters who are physically assaulted and emotionally agonised such that many readers are enticed by their antics and at the same time longing to know more about Zimbabwe's predicament. Toivanen (2015, p. 1) maintains that "individuals from postcolonial states become victims of modernity, weakened by capitalism's upward mobility, and deprived of the securities and customs of national belonging". It is a yearning for growth and a sense of disenchantment that motivates migration. The *World Literature Today* (2015) recommends that Bulawayo's novel, written with kinetic energy that crackles with life, should constantly interest any scholar who is passionate about emerging voices in world literature. The first half of the novel, points to the gross mismanagement which leads the narrator to refer to Zimbabwe as a 'kaka' country. This dejection shows the economic and social downturn gripping the country, making Darling, the main character, to imagine a happy and pleasurable life in America, where her aunt lives as a migrant worker. Generations of post-independence African youths are hard hit by inept and corrupt leadership. As a result of disenchantment and hopelessness, a massive number of youths from Africa throng towards the greener pastures of Europe and America in a utopian search for a better life. Darling thus depicts the desperation compelling her countrymen to migrate as reflected in the excerpt below:

Look at them leaving in droves, the children of the land, just look at them living in droves ... When things fall apart, the children of the land scurry and scatter like birds escaping a burning sky. They flee their own wretched land so their anger may be pacified in foreign lands, their tears wiped away in strange lands, blistered prayers muttered in the darkness of queer lands. (Pp. 147-148)

A few studies on Bulawayo's *We Need New Names* available in online journals and critical essays are reviewed. Omotayo (2018), for instance, examines the role of globalisation and technology on identity construction and alteration of black's identity in America. This study examines the history of the novelist's country. It assesses how the change of environment and exposure to new technologies has affected the lives of the youths caught in the act of cross-cultural influence. This study advances an argument that the world has been rendered a global village. With the protagonist's migration to America, travels distances in seconds and faces the reality of life as a subaltern and an illegal migrant, she struggles to carve a new identity in a racially hostile society. The transformation in Darling's life is both psychological and social when one considers her transition from a child in Zimbabwe to the adolescent in America. Omotayo concludes that the major outcome of the impact of globalisation on many cultures is hybridisation.

In a similar study by Ngom (2020) entitled "A postcolonial rendering of No Violet Bulawayo's *We Need New Name*", the manifold discontents that attended the event of migration is critically examined. The emphasis centred more on the act of migration being underpinned by hope for betterment, though, usually turns out disappointing.

Also in *Politics, Utopia and Disillusionment in No Violet Bulawayo's We Need New Name*, Diakhate (2020) explicates the political disillusionment in Zimbabwe. This article focuses on the protagonist and other hapless characters who are victims of Operation Murambatsiva. They flee Zimbabwe for a better life in America. The government of Zimbabwe embarked on demolishing derelict houses that were inhabited by people of the lower class. The operation wrecked havoc on many hapless citizens. Bulawayo portrays the betrayal of the masses by Mugabe's government reflecting on how the houses of the masses were mercilessly demolished. The study compares the government's onslaught with the antics of the white imperialists whom Mugabe accused of stealing the land of the people and wonders why the postcolonial African government does the same.

In contrast to a few existing researches mentioned here, this paper divergently approach the study of the text. It focuses more on how migration constitutes a form of social protest. It studies the dialectics of emotional trauma and physical assault that make migration a burden and not comfort as perceived by many. The primary objectives are to analyse how Bulawayo captures the uneasiness that obsess the characters at home and even on arrival in exile. It also illuminates how the character's reinvention of self in a new place confronts the protective memories of the way things were back home. To achieve these objectives, the essay deploys the postcolonial theory to account for several issues raised by the novelist.

Theoretical Framework

Postcolonialism is often a self-conscious literature of otherness and resistance developed out of the specific local experience. This perspective of literary interpretation becomes part of the critical tool box in the 1970s as many critics agree that the relationship between the centre and periphery is the founding thesis. As a literary theory, Dobie (2012) says postcolonialism deals with the literature produced by the people who were once in the colonies of the European imperial powers. Postcolonial criticism majorly studies the literature written by the colonized, of which the subject matter includes the portraits of the colonised people and their lives as imperial subjects. Postcolonialism, by virtue of its scope, accounts for a wide range of experiences and all kinds of response to the structures and institutions of imperialism everywhere in the world where colonial contact had occurred. Aschroft et al (1995) define the postcolonialism as involving a field of critical and intellectual inquiry which investigates the tensioned interactions between the imperial experiences and local responses in all its practicalities and significations. The critics go further to describe the postcolonial theory as "writing by those people formerly colonised and all the cultures affected by the imperial process from the moment of colonisation to the present day (1995, p.2). Postcolonialism stands as a descriptor for an aggregate of contrapunctual tempers of intellectual responses to the processes, institutions, and implications of colonialism on the colonised culture and society. The ideas behind postcolonial discourse is the feeling that modern civilization, which hitherto seen as a progressive force, had become a regressive agent. The strategies of reading the critical specifics of postcolonial theory are glaringly spelt out in Aschroft, et al's *The Empire Writes Back* (1998).

According to Mills (1995, p.22) "postcolonial theory aims to analyse and theorise the enduring impact of nineteenth century European writing, both in those countries such as India, Africa, which were colonised and in those, such as Britain and France which colonised". Mills further posits that the "postcolonial theory focuses not only on the analysis of political and economic structures, it also borders on the examination of the development of particular structures of behaviour". The postcolonial theory is an interdisciplinary field that provides

critical reflections about colonialism and Western Imperialism. Some literary scholars such as Ngugi wa Thiong'o, Edward Said, Homi K. Bhabha, Chinua Achebe, Frantz Fanon and others employ the postcolonial as a concept to describe the emergence of critical interpretation of the effects of colonialism.

Kehinde cited in Okunoye (2010), postulates that the postcolonial literature is a veritable weapon used to dismantle the hegemonic boundaries and the determinants that create unequal relations of power, based on binary oppositions such as "Us' and "Them'; "First world' and "Third world'; 'White' and ' Black' 'Coloniser' and 'Colonised'. In a similar vein, Irobi (2008), opines that post colonialism is:

a reaction to Western imperialist history and intellectual ideology ... It seeks to dismantle the epistemologies of intellectual hegemony cultivated by the west via its academics as well as confront the ex-colonised with the options available for their critical redemption via alternative mode of discourse which may be different from those traditions of discourse fashioned by the west.

Post-colonialism is a methodology used in several disciplines. Edward Said in *Orientalism* (1978) and *Culture and Imperialism* (1993) respectively argues that "in order to bolster its claim of superiority, there is a condescending zeal by the West to inferiorise, marginalise and stereotype other history and cultures which it does not understand or which it knows very little about. For Said, the West has a limited and oversimplified concept of the East and believes in the supremacy of its values and cultures of others as uncivilized". Bhabha (1994) in *The Location of Culture* also opines that colonial ideology rests upon a "Manichean structure" that divides the world into dichotomous identity categories of the "civil" and "barbaric", the "us" and the "them". He further stresses that "the objective of colonialist discourse is to construe the colonised as a population of degenerate types on the basis of racial origin, in order to justify conquest and to establish systems of administration and instruction". Hence, postcolonial theory is deployed to understanding the intricacies of racial prejudice and identity crisis that metamorphosed characters in Bulawayo's novel from physical agony to emotional trauma.

Migration as Social Protest in No Violet's We Need New Names

Migration as social protest links to a kind of condition engendered by cultural difference and conceived of the subjective space in the territory where identity structures are formed between the mother country and its former colony. Migration emerges as a traumatic experience in the wake of several racial challenges in exile among the 'subaltern' as coined by Bhabha . "The concepts of migration "intertwined with geopolitics, trade, cultural exchange and provide opportunities to states, businesses and communities to benefit enormously" (2015). To understand international migration is to consider differences "in disciplinary and paradigmatic orientation", and this level of analysis has led to widespread controversies concerning the causes and consequences of international migration". Haas, (2007, p. 9) argues that:

Many demographers, economists, and geographers presume that individual decisions to migrate are made in perfect information of market situations, involving comparison of the relative costs and benefits of migration. This means that people move and seek for higher incomes and good living conditions.

Exile occurs for different reasons. For instance, home can sometimes be a place of danger where people are prone to attack in many ambivalent ways. Many individuals sometimes realise that their homes are no longer safe socially and politically. Apparently, these are the major issues that Bulawayo narrates about safety, environment and socio-political crisis. Kehinde in Okunoye (2010, p. 63) further argues that:

The degree of voluntariness to migrate to foreign lands can be weighed against the backdrop of the absence of an environment capable of offering its citizenry the opportunity for a meaningful existence. As a result, what may, therefore, be described as "voluntary" may betray a good degree of compulsion, since people are compelled to make choices under the pressure of the absence of basic amenities, security and probable sources of livelihood.

The major cause of displacement suffered by characters is "Operation Murambatsvina". From Bulawayo's novel under study, Murambatsvina refers to discarding the filth. It also refers to a form of demolition and mass displacement targeted the poor individuals. This displacement majorly resulted in worsened urban poverty. Operation Murambatsvina was carried out without proper legal procedures, resettlement, relocation and/or compensation as revealed by the narrator. An approximately 74, 165 residents were affected by Operation Murambatsvina in Bulawayo, with entire communities livelihood destroyed. This demolition is further described by the narrator as follows:

The men driving the bulldozers are laughing. I hear the adults saying, why, why, why, what have we done, what have we done, what have we done? Then the Lorries come carrying the police with guns and baton sticks and we run inside the houses, but it's no use hiding because the bulldozers start bulldozing and we were screaming and screaming. The fathers are throwing hands in the air like women and saying angry things and kicking stones. The women are screaming the names of the children to see where we are and they are grabbing things from the houses: plates, clothes, a Bible, food, just grabbing whatever they can grab. And there is dust all over from the crumbling walls; it gets into our hair and mouths and noses and makes us cough and cough (p. 66).

The scenario above captures the compelling irony of the Socialist-Zimbabwean government for unleashing violence, destruction, horror, wreckage, devastation and loss of possessions. The innocent and helpless people cannot salvage the situation as they watch in disbelief as the bulldozers dismantling the houses and property. The African men are defenseless, the women are attempting to save their hard-earned belongings by grabbing whatever they could, while the imagery of dust denotes the finality of the destruction as the citizens cannot undo the damage. A police official hits a woman on the head with a gun for trying to protect her house and belongings. During the demolition, a baby was killed as he was sleeping, while everything was damaged and the people are left destitute and homeless. Benyena and Nyere (2015, p. 24), state that:

The ferocity of the Operation Murambatsvina left the most vulnerable groups of the Zimbabwean societies, particularly women and children, even more vulnerable. The timing of the operation was not a coincidence given that it was executed in the middle of a bitter winter leaving room for asserting that this was a move meant to inflict the maximum damage and loss and suffering on the victims.

The dividends which the people expect from the liberated Zimbabwe were thus dashed. The government could not provide protection but destruction. Apparently, the post-liberated Zimbabwe is characterised by violence, social unrest and dejection. Benyera and Nyere (2015) opine that most people who were evicted from their urban dwellings were forcibly taken and dumped in open spaces without water, electricity, housing and health facilities. The food security was compromised and they faced starvation. The consequences of such evictions and displacement include an increase in vulnerability to HIV/AIDS and a disruption of HIV/AIDS services particularly the administration of Anti Retro Viral (ARV) treatment for home-based care and prevention.

We Need New Names, thus, recounts the harrowing experience of the teenagers. Darling and her friends survive by stealing guavas in an elegant and stylish district of Budapest where the occupiers are majorly the whites. The narrator describes Budapest as a place that is not like Paradise, because it abounds with valuable resources. Darling and her friends namely: God knows, Bastard, Stina, Chipo and Bornfree, survive starvation through stealing and other mischief. The expensive part of Budapest serves as an attraction for Darling and her friends. Darling shows the importance of Budapest as a trough of sorts: "There are guavas to steal in Budapest, and right now I'd rather die for guavas. We didn't eat this morning and my stomach feels like somebody just took a shovel and dug everything out" (P. 3). There are many reasons why the characters visit Budapest than mere guava stealing. In extravagant houses in the district of Budapest, black folks work as security guards. The expensive district of Budapest acts as a foil to Paradise where the people eke out a living in the face of difficulties. The white Zimbabweans are bent on living off the sweat of their black counterparts.

The society does not support children due to the mismanagement and corruption that pervade all the strata. The government was unable to pay civil servants as illustrated by the doctors on strike. Young students drop out of school because many teachers abandon their post for better opportunities. Darling admits "that I do not go school anymore because all teachers left to teach in South Africa and Botswana where there is better money" (p. 30). The novel shows how political instability makes the hopeless people to think of exile to Western countries for greener pastures. The hardship being experienced in Paradise makes Darling and all her friends depart to different destinations. They undertake journeys to unknown countries in order to escape poverty in Paradise. The quest for a better life plunges Darling and her friends into a utopian consciousness. Darling dreams of leaving for America where she hopes life will be okay. Bastard also nurtures a utopia vision when he arrives in Budapest. He says "I'll make a lot of money and come back and make a house in this very Budapest" (p. 15). Before leaving their homes, the migrants thought their lives in the West would change but the author deconstructs the notion that African youth have for the West. The narrator, thus, offers the reader an insight into the tedious existence of many indigent parents who live their children to the crude ways of surviving the socio-economic debacle. Getting out of Paradise is not so hard since the mothers are busy with hair and talk, which is the only thing they ever do. Darling says:

They just glance at us when we file past the shacks and then look away. We don't have to worry about the men under the jacaranda either since their eyes never lift from the draughts. It's only the little kids who see us and try to follow, but Bastard just wallops the naked one at the front with a fist on his big head and they all turn back (Pp. 3-4).

Early on, the reader learns that Darling is to join her Aunt Fostalina in America sometime soon. This hope, in fact, is nursed by many people in Zimbabwe, especially as the country suffers from violent demolition of property and miserable living condition. The conditions of things in Zimbabwe are compounded by incest, rape, murder, suicide, AIDS, and displacement. When Darling moves to America, she sees America of her dreams that clashes with her reality as an immigrant in a foreign and hostile land. Themes of loss, identity, struggle, sacrifice and violence all flesh out the pages of this sobering yet necessary novel. Darling's humour also adds to the novel's appeal, a humour that helps to digest some of the weightier topics.

The narratives of the main chapters are interspersed through an omniscient perspective. The pattern of narrativity allows a transit from one narrative to another. The transition in the setting comes to live through the following narratives, namely: "How They Appeared, How They Arrived and How They Lived". The movements describe the process of displacement as well as the overall transition from optimistic dreams to sobering reality. When Darling arrives, she finds that it is not the America of her dreams. Her childlike concept of America as the land of plenty is both true and false. She is able to go without being hungry, yet she also finds that her dreams of, say, a Lamborghini, or simply living without worry or concern, is indeed just unrealistic. She works as a menial labour at a young age to help her aunt. Though, she wants to return home on visit, she realises that, like many other immigrants, she does not possess the valid paper to get back into the US if she leaves. As such, she is a little more than a prisoner in this new country of her dreams.

In America, Darling contends with several forms of violence ranging from cultural conflict, homesickness and alienation as she strives to cope with unanticipated challenges that make her longing for home severe. She also feels like she has missed her emotional attachment to her home. Darling also describes America's hostile weather that threatens many African migrants. Darling feels that, "It is the cold to stop life, to cut you open and blaze your bones. Nobody told me of this cold when I was coming here" (p.156). Parts of the hurdles that Darling also confronts are the predicaments of racism, integration and adaptation. The narrator reveals this when Darling says "When I first arrived at Washington Academy I just wanted to die. The other kids teased me about my name, my accent, my hair, and the way I talked or said things, the way I dressed, the way I laughed (p.167). Darling further says:

The Americans asked us where we were from; we exchanged glances and smiled with the shyness of child brides. They said, Africa? We nodded yes. What part of Africa? Is it that part where vultures wait for famished children to die? We smiled ... Is it dissidents shove AK-47's between women's legs? We smiled. Where people run about naked? ... Is it where the old president rigged the election and people were tortured and killed and a whole bunch of them put in prison and all, there where they are dying of cholera and they -oh my God, yes, we've seen your country; been on the news. (P. 239-240).

African migrants face racial prejudice as a result of the skin pigmentation. America appears to the characters as a symbol of opportunity and freedom. Darling believes that America is a land of hope and so she leaves her home in search of opportunities. She is however disenchanted when she realises that America is also a dysfunctional country. The pain of disillusionment is evident in *We Need New Names* as the migrants regarded outsiders. Barry (2016, p. 81) posits that "the foreigner becomes rootless, a wanderer in exile, living different

personas in a life of the mask". Darling is viewed with suspicion wherever she goes. She is scared to run when police are around because "the police will shoot you for doing a little thing like that if you are black" (p. 219). Darling's experience in America is that of disillusionment. Migrants live like prisoners and lose identity as they are called by the names of their countries. The mood painted about Darling is that of nostalgia and total abnegation. Darling is classified as a reject of a failed state since Africa is regarded as backward. As a result of migration, Darling struggles to adjust to American ways and culture which are in contrast to those of Africa, thereby leading to cultural tensions and ethnic conflicts.

Darling arrives America shortly after the 2008 general elections in Zimbabwe. Darling left her economically weak Zimbabwe for America that was in an economic downfall due great recession. Detroit Michigan was crippled by the Great Depression. Destroyed Michigan is usually the name Darling uses to qualify the city. This factor demonstrates how Darling's view of America begins to crumble as she sails along through missing home and figuring out her identity. The novel echoes this feeling thus "Darling's entire being underwent a great shock from moving from Zimbabwe to Michigan. Her cousin T. K. explains it to her that this is America, you won't see none of that African shit up in this motherfucker" (p. 149).

The tone of the narrator is abashed in a way that reveals the speaker's resentment. Darling's journey brings her from Paradise to Michigan where snow and freezing weather pour down, destroying any understanding that she once had about America. The mood of the narrator is replete with anger as she scoffs at how the identity of Darling in America is reduced to assimilation by a number of wretched incidents going on in different-parts of Africa such as Congo, where "rapes and all those killings are taking place" (p. 175). While working at the supermarket, Darling is also associated with Africa when she panicked at the sight of a cockroach in an empty bottle which makes her manager to say, "You're just catching up, I know you've seen all sorts of crazy shit over there" (p. 253). In the image of the West, the narrator captures the mood of Africa as nothing but a spectacle of pain and hopelessness. This misrepresentation of her country affects her identity. It makes her begin to show intolerance towards some of this ridicule and prejudice like the way in which her boss at the supermarket, Jim "always speaks as if Africa is just one country, even though she has told him that it is a continent with fifty-some countries" (p. 253).

The area where Darling stays with her aunt is described as dark and grey. In her letters back home, Darling purposefully "left out these things, and a lot more, because they embarrassed me, because they made America not feel like My America, the one that I had always dreamed of back in Paradise" (p. 190). The true situation of America disrupts the dream that Darling has in mind about the country being she thinks was filled with dolls and Lamborghinis. Darling's notion of America as the land of wealth and opportunity is an idea the novel is challenging. Darling comes to realise that America is not what she imagined. Her sense of anticlimax over the disconnect between how she fancied life in America back home and what she saw upon arrival is evident. Darling comments that "when we got to America, we took our dreams, looked at them tenderly as if they were newly born children, and put them away; we would not be pursuing them. We would never be the things that we had wanted to be: doctors, lawyers, teachers, engineers. No school for us (p.243). Darling has a perfect picture of America, which she calls, "My America". Upon the realisation that America is not as glorious as she thought, Darling says "this place doesn't look like my America, doesn't even look real" (p. 148). In the end, Darling must settle for a version of America that is far less than she dreamt of, and the novel thus

templates if Darling, like others, is better off for her journey ab initio. Darling also contends with the ideas of loss and longing in a country that she will never be able to truly call her own.

The fact that the characters idealised America as a golden place in the social media or television makes Darling's relatives request financial supports. She says "Our extended families sent request and we worked like madmen, When we hesitate, they said, you are in America where everybody has money, we see it all on TV, please don't deny us" (p. 247). In order to fulfill financial requests, migrants work madly as demonstrated by many characters." Instead of revealing the true situations in the foreign lands, migrants choose the most beautiful places to take pictures and send home. For instance, Darling reports that "We went to places and took pictures and sent them so they could see us in America. We took pictures outside the white house, we took pictures against the Lady Liberty as she were our grandmother, we took pictures at the Niagara Fall, at the Times Square, we took pictures with Dolphins in Florida ... we went everywhere and took picture and sent them home showing off a country that would never be ours" (p. 245). The pictures taken may be an incentive that attracts young Africans to travel in order to be in America.

The quest for a better life overseas usually turns out to be disappointing. It leads to disappointment and painful experience. Some of the harrowing experiences of the migrant is the strong feeling of sadness of departing from home whether forcefully or wittingly. As Stina says "leaving your country means inherently forsaking one's home"(P.122). The experience of migration gives a false representation of home as fixed and not affected by change. Migrants' misconception of home as stable is utterly difficult in their new environment. Darling illustrates the fate of a migrant compelled to have a rethink of her belief about home and identity. Darling confesses that she wishes to pass on because of her anger at other kids who " teased about my name, my accent, my hair, the way I talked or said things, the way I dressed, the way I laughed" (P. 167). The migrant is caught up in between two worlds, that is, his new setting where he is the butt of rejection due to the colour of the skin and his place of origin, where the harsh, social, economic and political issues make life unbearable. Darling's most painful ordeal in her society of adoption is language barrier. Darling's lack of English constitutes a wall of rejection that set migrant apart from the host country. With no prospect of abandoning their mother tongue, migrants feel a sense of loss. Since language is the bedrock to a person's identity, Darling is on the receiving end from some Native Americans.

In the face of home sickness, Darling nurses the hope that Aunty Fostalina will get her a ticket to visit home "I'll just go maybe for two weeks and then I'll come back, I say, even though Aunty Fostalina is still ignoring me" (p.191). Darling desires a permanent identity. In her attempt to achieve this, she seeks to visit home. In a dialogue between her and Aunty Fostalina, "Child, home costs money. Besides you came on a visitor's visa, and that's expired; you get out, you kiss this America bye-bye, Aunt Fostalina says ... But why can't I come back? I can just renew my visa, I say, I say ... Darling leave me alone, do I look like the immigration to you? She says (p. 191) "once you leave behind who and what you are, you just cannot be the same" (p.148) Govinden (2008, p. 54), avers that:

The question of selfhood and subjectivity has been important for black women generally as they have attempted to create and recreate new or alternative identities to counter suppression or obliteration of their identity as well as stereotypical constructions of themselves in oppressive contexts.

Human movement across places fuses the local and the global values. Through the movement of people, goods, capital, technology and services, the world invented technology like the internet that has great potentials to alter life styles. Darling begins her exposure to an American life style in drama seen on television. The exposure of Darling and her friends to American movies expose them to all manner of sexual indulgences. Darling recounts that "When we come from school, we fling our book bags by the door and head straight to the downstairs computer. Before we use to watch U Tube, but now we have discovered Red Tube which in a way classier and doesn't have many viruses" (p. 202). Darling and her friends always hurry home to watch phonograph on social media platforms. The new technology becomes their teacher and shapes their outlook in life. With the access to media, they forge new horizon that contradict the home culture.

Chipo is raped and impregnated by her grandfather. This incest makes her become mute. Darling escapes to America which she describes as the "big baboon of the world" (p. 49). The characters' desire to move away from home to a more favourable place of opportunities is prominent in a society fraught with hazards and disenchantment. Many people in Zimbabwe are living in search of improved conditions. The children want places more desirable than Zimbabwe. They are "moving, running, emigrating, going, deserting, walking, quitting, flying and fleeing" to various countries (p.145). This reference indicates the motif of displacement that Africans are subjected to in the postcolonial epoch. Rodney (1972) contends that the true human development and liberation for the majority of the people was through the transformation of their own lives in a struggle to replace and reshape the new colonialist government that dominated their society.

Darling and her friends relish their suffering and pain coupled with the psychological torture and they find it hard to keep their predicament as the smile turns into cry. Darling says "Our smiles melted like dying shadows and we wept; wept for our blessed, wretched country. We wept and wept and they pitied us and said it's okay, you are in America now, and will still wept and they give us soft little thingies and said, here is some Kleenex, and we took the soft thingies and put them in our pockets to look at later and we wept still, wept like widows, wept like orphans". (P. 240). The dialectics of home and exile makes the migrants voice their contempt for the emerging predicaments in Africa. The migrants are exposed to various emotional traumas borne out of the disillusionment attendant upon the Utopian quest for a better life in Europe and America. The migrants start to harbour the idea to go back home when the high expectations of migration and the reality on ground seems elusive. As Darling buttressed, "we did not go back home because we did not have the papers for our return, and so we stayed, knowing that if we went we would not be able to reenter America" (P. 248-9).

Darling compares her country of adoption to a prison which far outweighs the warmth and protection she experiences back home. She says "we stayed like prisoners, only we choose to be prisoners and we loved our prison; it is not a bad prison. And when things only got worse in our country, we pulled our shackles even tighter and we are not living America, no, we are not living America" (P. 249). Despite the oppression faced by the migrants, they prefer to remain and stick it out in their host society rather than go down the path of uncertainty by their home return. Their preference for the society where they are targets of racist and xenophobic attacks is a strong indictment of African leaders. Darling and her friends prefer to remain in the hope of achieving the dream of a better life in America in the face of glaring uncertainty.

Conclusion

We Need New Names is a post-colonial text that explores the diasporic experiences of African subjects as they cross borders and come into contact with new locations as a result of socio-economic predicaments at home. In foreign lands, migrants are subjected to a series of challenges as a result of their identities. The text focuses on Darling's narrative first as a child then later as an adolescent. Darling resides in Paradise, a shantytown with her friends. Paradise is an imaginary slum where the citizens suffer from hunger, poverty and diseases. Voluntary migration is usually the outcomes of the socioeconomic factors which eventually necessitated the choice of the migrant to leave the homeland. Darling's first displacement was during the Operation Murambatsvina. Told in the third person narrative, the author vividly highlights the depth of the spade of destruction that becomes everyday phenomenon in her native country. Citizens were helpless as there no jobs. For this reason, many characters are forced into migration because of the unavailability of choice. In the homeland, Darling suffers from displacement due to the endless struggle for economic and social survival occasioned by poverty and corruption. As Darling migrates to America to live with her aunt, Fostalina, she suffers discrimination, oppression and marginalisation. She contends with many difficulties including an identity crisis. While in America, Darling longs for her homeland. She also remembers the happy times she spends with her friends while in Zimbabwe. This condition subjected her to feelings of exile and displacement.

Darling displays resilience and humanity in the midst of problems in Africa and American society. She also undermines stereotypical views about Africa, children and women generally. Hence *We Need New Names* like many other postcolonial African novels reveals an atmosphere of fear and humiliation. It highlights the oppressive tendencies of the imperialists and neo-colonial rulers in African nations. As a result of the political and socio-economic crisis, characters desire an escape from Zimbabwe and migrate overseas. In Zimbabwe, the people are dislocated by their own black post-colonial government.

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