

THEATRE AS GRIEVING: A THEATRICAL RESPONSE TO THE MATABELELAND AND MIDLANDS DISTURBANCES OF THE 1980s (A.K.A. GUKURAHUNDI) IN ZIMBABWE

By

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**Submitted in fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy
in the Drama and Performance Studies Department, University of KwaZulu-Natal,
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Durban

2023

Declaration

I**Cetus Moyo**..... **Student number: (216077088)**..... declare that

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.....
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February 2023

Supervisors' Declaration

As the candidate's supervisor, I agree to the submission of this dissertation.



.....

Dr Miranda Young-Jahangeer (Supervisor)

Ethical Clearance Letter



23 March 2018

Mr Cletus Moyo 216077088
School of Arts
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Dear Mr Moyo

Protocol reference number: HSS/0078/018D

Project title: Theatre as Grieving: A theatrical Response to Matabeleland and Midlands Disturbances of the 1980's (a.k.a Gukurahundi) in Zimbabwe

Full Approval – Expedited Application

In response to your application received on 30 January 2018 the Humanities & Social Sciences Research Ethics Committee has considered the abovementioned application and the protocol has been granted **FULL APPROVAL**.

Any alteration/s to the approved research protocol i.e. Questionnaire/Interview Schedule, Informed Consent Form, Title of the Project, Location of the Study, Research Approach and Methods must be reviewed and approved through the amendment /modification prior to its implementation. In case you have further queries, please quote the above reference number.

PLEASE NOTE: Research data should be securely stored in the discipline/department for a period of 5 years.

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I take this opportunity of wishing you everything of the best with your study.

Yours faithfully

.....
Professor Shenuka Singh (Chair)
Humanities & Social Sciences Research Ethics Committee

/pm

cc Supervisor: Dr Miranda Young-Jahangeer
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100 YEARS OF ACADEMIC EXCELLENCE

Founding Campuses:  Edgewood  Howard College  Medical School  Pietermaritzburg  Westville

Acknowledgements

To begin with, I thank God Almighty who has granted me grace to complete this research.

I thank all the participants of this research – the *Speak Out!* team. Thank you for your time and commitment. By taking part in devising and staging the *Speak Out!* plays, you made this research possible. *Ngiyabonga bakwethu*. I also thank the audience members who came to watch the performances and also shared their stories during the post-performance discussions. I also thank all those who assisted me in various ways during this research – those who assisted with venues for rehearsals and performances, the videographers and photographers, and all those I have not named.

I thank my principal Supervisor, Dr Miranda Young-Jahangeer for the excellent academic guidance and mentorship she offered me – thank you. Thank you also for encouraging me to go beyond the comfort zone. I thank the co-supervisor of my research, Professor Salim Washington for his role in the fine tuning of the writing process of this research – thank you. Thanks to Professor Samuel Ravengai who gave me helpful feedback during the conception of this research.

I thank my beloved wife, Nolitha, for her support and understanding during the journey of this research. I also thank my children who endured long periods of my absence during the time of this research and who also kept me company during writing breaks when I was working from home. I thank Mr C. and Mrs S. Dube who welcomed me into their home when I got to Durban. Thanks to family members, relatives, friends, colleagues and brethren who offered me diverse kinds of support during the time of this research. I acknowledge and thank Lupane State University for the support given to me during the time of this research.

With a thankful heart, I acknowledge the following sources of funding that made this research possible:

1. Canon Collins Legal and Educational Trust Sol Plaatje Scholarship (2018 – 2020).
2. Next Generation of Social Sciences in Africa Dissertation Completion Fellowship, with funding coming from the Carnegie Corporation of New York (2020 – 2021).
3. UKZN Humanities Bursary (2017)
4. UKZN Fee Remission

The funders did not influence the findings of this research.

Dedication

To God be the glory.

Abstract

This research explores devised theatre, in the form of Popular Participatory Theatre (PPT) as a way of encouraging the victims and survivors of the Gukurahundi and their community members to speak out on this issue to create what I term a *langalezo* experience, which is a grieving experience as envisioned in the Ndebele culture. As a strategy to dismantle the Patriotic Front – Zimbabwe African People’s Union (PF ZAPU) and to address the dissident problem, the newly elected Zimbabwe African National Union–Patriotic Front (ZANU PF) government deployed the 5 Brigade in the Midlands and Matabeleland provinces, resulting in the massacre of about 20,000 unarmed civilians in what has become known as the Gukurahundi. The atrocities started in 1983 and ended with the signing of the Unity Accord in 1987. Following this violence, the government muted dialogue around the issue. The silencing of public discussions on the Gukurahundi by the government has blocked the grieving process of the victims and their children. To explore ways of speaking about this issue and of aiding the grieving process for the second-generation sufferers (and by extension the first-generation sufferers), I worked with a group of young people from Bulawayo to collectively devise and stage theatre on this emotive subject. *Speak Out!* Phase one and two plays were created and performed in Bulawayo, followed by post-performance discussions. Decolonial theory (Mignolo and Vazquez 2013; Mignolo 2018; Gaztambide-Fernández 2014; Quijano 2000, 2007; Ndlovu-Gatsheni 2013a, 2013b), Postcolonial Feminist theories (Mohanty 1988; 2003; hooks 1989; Spivak 1988), Popular Memory (Dawson 2015) and the concept of the Generation of Postmemory (Hirsch 2008) were used to frame the research as part of a body of artistic research that engages the African context in the era of so-called ‘liberation’. This qualitative research deployed Participatory Action Research (PAR) as a methodology within the emancipatory paradigm because of its emphasis on doing research *with* the people and not simply *for* the people. Since the study was participatory and carried out with participants from my cultural and linguistic community, I also used autoethnography (Cresswell 2013) and community autoethnography (Toyosaki et al. 2009) as part of the methodology within the interpretive paradigm.

Findings of the research show that while the Gukurahundi ended in 1987, its effects have continued to exist in the form of difficulties for victims to obtain identity documents, economic problems, fractured families and trauma for the victims, and unhealed psychological wounds, among others. The study reveals that victims of the atrocities are frustrated that their pain and suffering are not publicly acknowledged and public discussions of the issue are being silenced. For closure and healing of emotional and psychological wounds of the Gukurahundi to take place, people should be free to talk about this issue and to grieve the way they want. I argue that PPT is rich with the potential to create democratic spaces that can give a platform for telling stories of pain and suffering that have been marginalised. I observe that techniques such as improvisation, storytelling, and the use of songs, when deployed during the devising process, assisted in creating a social and aesthetic space to speak about the Gukurahundi issues, creating a potential for helping those who are grieving. I conclude that participating in the processes of this research (interviews, focus group discussions, devising and staging theatre and post-performance discussions) encouraged the participants and audience members to speak out on the Gukurahundi, a move that presents a potential for aiding grieving and also documenting and archiving stories of the atrocities. The research shows that though fear is still present, survivors are willing to speak up and desire to see the Gukurahundi issue being addressed. Closure is necessary for the sake of the victims and the sake of unity, peace, and progress in Zimbabwe as a country.

Abbreviations and Acronyms

CBD	:	Central Business District
CCCS	:	Centre for Contemporary Cultural Studies
CCJP	:	Catholic Commission for Justice and Peace
CIO	:	Central Intelligence Organisation
CTL	:	Colonnades Theatre Laboratory
ECD	:	Early Childhood Development
LRF	:	Legal Resources Foundation
NGOs	:	Non-Governmental Organisations
NPRC	:	National Peace and Reconciliation Commission
O' Level	:	Ordinary Level
OPC	:	Office of the President and Cabinet
PISI	:	Police Internal Security Intelligence unit
PAR	:	Participatory Action Research
PF ZAPU	:	Patriotic Front - Zimbabwe African People's Union
PPT	:	Popular Participatory Theatre
PTSD	:	Post-traumatic stress disorder
SRANC	:	Southern Rhodesia African National Congress
SU	:	Support Unit (Police)
TFD	:	Theatre for Development
TO	:	Theatre of the Oppressed
TRC	:	Truth and Reconciliation Commission
UN	:	United Nations
ZANU	:	Zimbabwe African National Union
ZANU PF	:	Zimbabwe African National Union - Patriotic Front
ZANLA	:	Zimbabwe African National Liberation Army
ZAPU	:	Zimbabwe African People's Union
ZHRC	:	Zimbabwe Human Rights Commission
ZIPRA	:	Zimbabwe People's Revolutionary Army
ZNA	:	Zimbabwe National Army
ZPRA	:	Zimbabwe People's Revolutionary Army
ZRP	:	Zimbabwe Republic Police

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CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND TO THE STUDY



Photo: Five Brigade troops arrive in Matabeleland, January 1983 (Source: CCJP & LRF 1997: 47)

1.1 Introduction

This study is an exploration of how theatre can aid the process of addressing the pain and trauma arising from or associated with the government military operation known as the Gukurahundi in Matabeleland and Midlands provinces of Zimbabwe, particularly among second-generation sufferers. After Zimbabwe gained independence from Britain in 1980 there arose suspicion and mistrust between Robert Mugabe's Zimbabwe African National Union – Patriotic Front (ZANU PF¹) political party and Joshua Nkomo's Patriotic Front - Zimbabwe African People's Union (PF ZAPU²) political party (that had more support in Midlands and Matabeleland provinces to the West of the country). This suspicion was largely based on political differences but ethnicity has also been pointed out as a factor. Against the backdrop of this tension, a dissident problem emerged in the years following independence resulting in the government,

¹In this research ZANU PF and ZANU refer to the same party. The party is currently led by Emmerson D. Mnangagwa.

² PF ZAPU is commonly referred to as ZAPU. In this research PF ZAPU and ZAPU therefore refer to the same party.

under the then Prime Minister of Zimbabwe Robert Mugabe, deploying 5 Brigade³ to deal with the dissidents that were operating in the areas of Matabeleland and Midlands. Civilians became the biggest casualties of this operation that became known as the Gukurahundi which started in 1983 and ended in 1987. As noted in the Catholic Commission for Justice and Peace & Legal Resources Foundation (CCJP & LRF (1997)) report⁴ of 1997, “it is clear that thousands of innocent civilians in Matabeleland were killed or beaten and had their houses burnt during these years, mostly at the hands of Government forces” (1997:5).

Gukurahundi is a Shona term that means “the rain that washes away the chaff from the last harvest, before the spring rains” (Werbner 1991; CCJP & LRF 1997; Kostelac 2010). Kostelac, quoting Richard Werbner says the term;

was used by Robert Mugabe during Zimbabwe’s first democratic election campaign to signify the dawn of a new era for the country’s liberated citizens. Under the increasingly authoritarian discourses adopted by ZANU after their electoral victory, the term likened the indiscriminate killing of “dissidents” to the spring rains that renew the land and “sweep away the rubbish”. (Kostelac 2010: 86)

Werbner (1991: 152) gives an account of how villagers in Chief Bango’s area in Matabeleland South saw themselves as the “rubbish” which the Gukurahundi soldiers were intent on sweeping away or ploughing under (See also CCJP & LRF 1997: 47). The people of Matabeleland and Midlands largely use this term to refer to the atrocities that were committed by the 5 Brigade on the civilians of Matabeleland and Midlands provinces. The government seems to have launched this operation to destabilise ZAPU by attacking its civilian support base. Since ZAPU’s support base was composed of largely Ndebele people, the massacres took on a tribal aspect, which remains a point of tension in the country. In this research I use Samukele Hadebe’s (2001: 16) broad definition of the term Ndebele, which he observes, is today used “firstly to refer to all Ndebele speaking people once under the rule of Ndebele kings and assumed Ndebele identity. Secondly, the term has been used loosely to refer to the inhabitants of Matabeleland and parts of the Midlands provinces of Zimbabwe, regardless of their ethnicity or language”. The term

³ The 5 Brigade is an army unit that was specifically put together and trained for the Gukurahundi operation. It is also commonly referred to as the 5th Brigade. This army unit was a standalone unit separate from other Zimbabwe National Army structures. At the end of the Gukurahundi operation this army unit was disbanded and its members integrated into other Zimbabwe National Army structures.

⁴ The Catholic Commission for Justice and Peace report is the only comprehensive report based on research that has been made public on the Gukurahundi. It is a document held in high authority in Zimbabwe. In the report it is explained, regarding CCJP & LRF, that “The Commission was formed by the national Catholic Bishop’s Conference in March 1972 and was tasked with among other things, education in human rights, research into areas of institutionalized violations, monitoring, recording and reporting on violations and action in the protection of the violated. The Commission works through Church structures in seven dioceses, a national and two regional offices. It is affiliated to the Pontifical Council *Justitia et Pax* and has active contacts with commissions in other countries. The Commission publishes research findings, legal and political rights, information and reports on human rights violations” (CCJP & LRF 1997: xiii).

Ndebele people or Ndebele speakers in this research, therefore, includes, among others, the Kalanga, Sotho, and Xhosa. The Ndebele people form the second largest group in Zimbabwe while the largest group is that of the Shona people.

This chapter will provide background to the study, a statement of the problem, rationale/motivation for the research, a word of caution, research objectives, and research questions. Terms that are key for the study are explained. The chapter ends with a thesis layout/ chapter breakdown.

1.2 Background to the Study – The Gukurahundi

Answering the question of what happened during the Gukurahundi is not an easy thing, largely due to the absence of dialogue and an enabling environment to share experiences of what happened. However, the CCJP & LRF report and other academic and non-academic works give a glimpse into this historical period. Many of those who grew up in affected areas would concur with me that simply the mention of the term Gukurahundi is taboo in many circles. It is a term associated with fear, pain, and silence. Despite this, accounts of what transpired have been shared (largely privately) by those who witnessed this period. The fear and pain that usually accompanies these accounts is a cause for concern. Many in Matabeleland and Midlands provinces view the Gukurahundi as an independence fracture with the potential to affect unity, peace, and national development.

An analysis of the CCJP & LRF report and other works (e.g. Ndlovu-Gatsheni and Willem 2010) show that the genesis of differences between ZAPU and ZANU PF go back to the pre-independence period during a time when the indigenous people of Zimbabwe (then known as Rhodesia under the leadership of Ian Smith) were resisting and fighting against the colonial settler regime. Ndlovu-Gatsheni and Willems (2010) argue that when ZANU split from the ZAPU led by Joshua Mqabuko Nyongolo Nkomo in 1963 tribalism had a lot to do with it despite ZANU intellectuals' efforts to downplay this and magnifying other factors such as ideological differences instead. Nkomo (1984) singles out tribalism as the major cause of the 1963 split. However, as the CCJP & LRF report notes

ZAPU and ZANU, and their military wings, ZIPRA and ZANLA were not tribalistic by policy, and both Shona-speakers and Ndebele-speakers could be found in both groups, but increasingly regional recruitment, together with mutual antagonism, led to a growing association between ZAPU and Ndebele-speakers. (CCJP & LRF 1997: 27)

ZIPRA⁵ and ZANLA⁶ fought the war of liberation side by side. Both military wings contributed immensely to the liberation of Zimbabwe from colonial rule; however, animosity continued between ZAPU and its military wing ZIPRA versus ZANU and its military wing ZANLA. Sporadic incidences of armed conflict between ZIPRA and ZANLA during Zimbabwe's liberation war are reported to have taken place at training camps both outside and inside Zimbabwean borders. It is not insignificant that ZIPRA had training from the Russians while ZANLA had Chinese training. This entrenched the separate identities of the two groups as well as their approach to mobilising (CCJP & LRF 1997: 27).

During the run-up period to Zimbabwean independence, at the Lancaster House Conference of 1979, ZAPU and ZANU negotiated as a united Patriotic Front (PF). Despite this, their antagonism continued to exist (Gatsheni-Ndlovu and Willems 2010). It is further noted that the PF had been formed in 1976, mainly as a strategy to counter a move by Ian Smith and moderate 'internal' nationalists led by Abel Muzorewa and Ndabaningi Sithole from executing a negotiated internal settlement that excluded ZAPU and ZANU. Gatsheni-Ndlovu and Willems (2010: 5) note that when the 1980 elections came, ZAPU and ZANU participated as separate political entities "with the former adopting the Patriotic Front-ZAPU (PF-ZAPU) and the latter adopted ZANU-Patriotic Front (ZANU-PF)" (See also Sithole 1986; Shaw 1986; Kriger 2005).

At independence, ZANU PF won 57 seats out of 100 in the 1980 election. Robert Gabriel Mugabe of ZANU PF assumed leadership of the nation as Prime Minister. Ndlovu-Gatsheni and Willems (2010) point out that exigencies of nation-building forced ZANU PF to form a government of national unity (GNU). In this GNU, Joshua M. N. Nkomo became the Minister of Home Affairs. Nkomo and ZAPU supported the government of national unity and worked hard to unite the people of Zimbabwe. Gatsheni-Ndlovu and Willems further add that despite this, ZANU PF continued to exclude Nkomo and ZAPU from the process of nation-building. Nkomo's efforts of nation-building were met with non-cooperation because of official suspicion of his aims and bitter relations between ZAPU and ZANU (Msindo 2004).

The differences between ZAPU and ZANU and their outlook complicated the situation after independence. Integrating members of the ZIPRA forces and the ZANLA forces into the Zimbabwe National Army became a big challenge. Major outbreaks between ZIPRA and ZANLA are reported to have taken place near Bulawayo while ZIPRA and ZANLA were awaiting integration into the National Army. November 1980 witnessed the first of these outbreaks followed by a more serious uprising in 1981. The November 1980 clash at Entumbane saw ZIPRA and ZANLA fighting a pitched battle for two days before their respective commanders called them to order. Following this outbreak of violence, Joshua Nkomo was demoted from

⁵ZIPRA - Zimbabwe People's Revolutionary Army (This was the armed wing of ZAPU).

⁶ZANLA -Zimbabwe African National Liberation Army (This was the armed wing of ZANU)

being Minister of Home Affairs to Minister Without Portfolio. This angered ex-ZIPRAs and many in the ZAPU rank and file (Ndlovu-Gatsheni and Willems 2010).

The second major violent outbreak in Entumbane spilled over to Ntabazinduna and Connemara. As a result of such instability and mistrust, some members of the ZIPRA defected back to the bush. Before entering into assembly points ZIPRA and ZANLA had concealed arms as a safeguard to fall back on in case independence failed or the 1980 elections were not won by one of the main external parties (CCJP & LRF 1997). The hostilities between ZANU and ZAPU continued to grow. In Matabeleland and Midlands provinces although there were many 'tribal' groups and linguistic backgrounds represented in 1980, the people there were mainly Ndebele speakers and the commonly observed feature was that historically, and in the 1980 elections, people from this area mainly supported ZAPU (CCJP & LRF 1997).

The government of GNU of Zimbabwe that was formed in 1980 did not last beyond two years (CCJP & LRF 1997; Ndlovu-Gatsheni and Willems 2010). In February 1982 there was a 'discovery' of arms caches in ZAPU-owned properties in Matabeleland which led to Nkomo and other ZAPU leaders being expelled from the cabinet (Gatsheni-Ndlovu 2003). ZAPU leadership later denied knowledge of these arms and harboring any intent to fight against the ruling government of the day (CCJP & LRF 1997). Members of the ZIPRA high command were arrested. Former military heads of ZIPRA, Lookout Masuku and Dumiso Dabengwa were detained and accused of treason (CCJP & LRF 1997; Gatsheni-Ndlovu and Willems 2010). Ex-ZIPRAs defected in large numbers and banditry increased (CCJP & LRF 1997). Those who defected took their arms with them. Tensions simmered. The CCJP & LRF report goes further to argue that these ex-ZIPRA members defected mainly for two reasons; disgruntlement with the unfolding of things in the 1980s and as a way of preserving their lives since they were facing severe persecution in the Zimbabwe National Army.

One cannot present a proper perspective of the Gukurahundi without referring to the dissident issue. Understanding who these dissidents were and where they came from is not straightforward. The CCJP & LRF report noted that:

Dissidents were not a homogenous group. In addition to ex-ZIPRA members, there were young men with no previous military training who were on the run from 5 Brigade, the South African backed Super ZAPU dissidents, and also common criminals capitalizing on the situation to commit armed robberies and other crimes. (CCJP & LRF 1997: 40)

Factors relating to the rise of dissidents are complex. CCJP & LRF (1997: 30) gives some explanations as to why dissidents became an entity as follows;

- The view of the Government and ZANU PF that the dissidents were actively sponsored by ZAPU leaders, who were hoping to gain through renewed fighting what they had failed to gain through elections.
- ZAPU's view, that the heavy-handed Government's reaction to the dissident issue, and its targeting of ZAPU as solely responsible, expressed a long-held desire either to punish ZAPU or crush ZAPU totally and create a one-party state.
- The well-established view that South Africa, as an apartheid state, exacerbated events by training and funding dissidents, known as Super ZAPU, intending to disrupt the newly Independent Zimbabwe.
- The dissidents' view, that they were driven to desert the National Army by the persecution of ex-ZIPRA members within its ranks, and that once outside the Army, they found themselves further persecuted and on the run.

The CCJP & LRF report goes on to dispute the allegations leveled against ZAPU by the government especially the way the ZANU PF government created an impression that the dissidents were supported by ZAPU. The report notes:

While there is evidence to support the last three views, at least in part, to date there is no documentary or material evidence to support the contention that ZAPU leadership concretely supported or instructed the dissidents, apart from an abundance of Government rhetoric at the time, insisting on links between ZAPU and dissidents. Two lengthy treason trials, one in 1982 and one in 1986, both failed to prove ZAPU-dissident collusion (CCJP & LRF 1997: 30-31).

Dissidents were not many in number. CCJP & LRF (1997: 31) puts their number at “no more than 400 at their peak”. The CCJP & LRF (1997: 40) report shows that the dissidents portrayed themselves as a small group but an organised force on the run from the authorities. They were leaderless. The ex-ZIPRA dissidents attempted to remain loyal to ZIPRA ideals but they had no clear policy or aims. They just concentrated on sabotaging targets they saw as a threat or hostile. They also focused on staying ahead of the authorities and staying alive.

By mid-1982 the government had a serious security problem on its hands and responded to the dissident problem by deploying the 5 Brigade, an army unit trained⁷ by North Korean instructors to deal with the dissidents (Ndlovu-Gatsheni and Willems 2010; CCJP & LRF 1997). This military intervention resulted in

⁷ Training for the 5 Brigade began in the last months of 1981 and continued to September 1982, having their pass out parade in December 1982 (CCJP & LRF 1997).

a massacre of civilians in Matabeleland and Midlands provinces claiming the lives of thousands of Ndebele-speaking people (CCJP & LRF 1997; Ndlovu-Gatsheni and Willems 2010; Alexander et al. 2000; Werbner 1991; Worby 1998; Ndlovu-Gatsheni 2003).

Although both government agents and dissidents were responsible for the deaths and disappearances of people during the Gukurahundi, the government agents were responsible for 98% of the atrocities while the dissidents were responsible for 2% (CCJP & LRF 1997; Ndlovu-Gatsheni and Willems 2010). Ndlovu-Gatsheni and Willems (2010: 8) further argue that “the Gukurahundi campaign was less concerned with military engagement with the so-called dissidents but ultimately sought to de-legitimise Nkomo and ZAPU”. Notably, there were attempts to assassinate Nkomo leading him to escape via Botswana to the United Kingdom (Nkomo 1984). The government’s response to the so-called ‘dissident problem’ has been criticised. Not for the use of military force to stabilise the country but that the destabilisation was seen as an opportunity to eliminate a more substantial (ZAPU) opposition. The CCJP & LRF report notes that:

The situation needed a military response but, unfortunately, the Government launched a “double-edged conflict” in Matabeleland. The first offensive was against the dissidents, and involved the use of various ZNA units and the Police Support Unit. However, the Government also launched an offensive against the ordinary civilians of Matabeleland, through 5 Brigade. This served both to increase dissident numbers and to exacerbate the plight of those most vulnerable to the dissidents. (CCJP & LRF 1997: 31)

It is therefore clear that the Gukurahundi period affected the vulnerable civilians who were defenseless targets. “Far from being random, the violence against the civilian population was well organised and widespread” (CCJP & LRF 1997: 50).

But how was the Gukurahundi operation justified by the government? As mentioned earlier, dissidents were not sponsored or supported by ZAPU. However, the ZANU-led government insisted that they were. According to the CCJP & LRF (1997: 40) report “5 Brigade themselves offered the explanation that all “Ndebeles” supported/parented/were dissidents as justification for their actions”. The government also continued to churn out rhetoric that cast ZAPU and its leadership in a negative light. Support for ZAPU became conflated with support for the dissidents (CCJP & LRF 1997). Then, the line between dissidents and civilians became blurred. How could one tell the difference? Torture (physical and psychological) became the modus operandi. In one account, villagers were forced to sing songs that praise ZANU PF while dancing on the mass graves of their family members and fellow villagers who were killed some minutes earlier.

Joshua Nkomo was in obvious opposition to the formation of 5 Brigade suspecting that it would be used to impose a one-party state in the country. However, his concerns were ignored. CCJP & LRF (1997: 46) notes that the 5 Brigade was made up “mostly of Shona speaking ZANLA forces, loyal to the Prime Minister...there were, in the early stages at least, a few ZIPRA combatants. However, most of these were withdrawn by the end of the training, and replaced with ZANLA members”. To emphasise the aspect of the 5 Brigade being a separate unit from the Zimbabwe National Army, it is further observed;

The 5 Brigade soldiers themselves made it clear once they were deployed that they should be regarded as above the law, and those from the Zimbabwe Republic Police or other army units who queried their actions were frequently told – whether rightly or wrongly – that 5 Brigade was answerable to “nobody but Mugabe”. It is clear that 5 Brigade was not an integrated part of the Zimbabwean National Army, but was an extraneous unit which was not answerable to the normal ZNA Command structure. (CCJP & LRF 1997: 46)

The 5 Brigade had received training both in military aspects and in “politics” (CCJP & LRF 1997). They used different equipment of Korean origin. They used AK 47s with bayonets and curved magazines. They used different communication procedures which saw them using codes and radios that were not compatible with those of other army units. Their uniforms were also different, commonly identified by their “*red berets*” (CCJP & LRF 1997: 46).

The 5 Brigade was deployed in Matabeleland North on 26 January 1983 and atrocities began within days (CCJP & LRF 1997). The arrival of the 5 Brigade in Matabeleland North is captured in the CCJP & LRF report as follows;

Within the space of six weeks, more than 2000 civilians had died, hundreds of homesteads had been burnt, and thousands of civilians had been beaten. Most of the dead were killed in public executions, involving between 1 and 12 people at a time. The largest number dead in a single incident so far on record was in Lupane, where 62 men and women were shot on the banks of the Cewale River on 5 March. By pretending to be dead, 7 survived with gunshot wounds, while the other 55 died (CCJP & LRF 1997: 48).

According to the CCJP & LRF (1997) report atrocities committed during the Gukurahundi period include; killings, mass physical torture, burning (of people and property), beating, rape, bayoneting, shootings, executions, abductions, people disappearing, detentions and interrogations. Bhalagwe in Matabeleland South being one of the detention and interrogation centres. Property loss was severe with huts, household property, granaries and at times entire villages being burnt down. The report also notes that the attacks coincided with a curfew and food embargo that was imposed during that time. Starvation therefore exacerbated the situation. The CCJP & LRF (1997) report also fingers some government agents within the security sector and ZANU PF youths, besides the 5 Brigade that committed atrocities

during the Gukurahundi. These were the CIO and PISI. As mentioned earlier, dissidents also contributed to the offensive.

Many people from Matabeleland and Midlands view the Gukurahundi as an operation executed by a predominantly Shona-speaking government on a predominantly Ndebele-speaking population. This is probably not a farfetched thought as the CCJP & LRF report has also pointed out that:

ZAPU, in turn, has expressed its belief that ZANU-PF used the pretext of the disturbances as a long-awaited opportunity to crush ZAPU once and for all. There is no denying the political nature of events as they unfolded in the 1980s, as the Shona-speaking, ZANU-PF-supporting 5 Brigade ruthlessly persecuted the Ndebele-speaking, ZAPU-supporting residents of Matabeleland. (CCJP & LRF 2007: 39)

Ranger (1992: 701) referred to this period as “post-independence clashes in which 'the Shona' seemed to be seeking to eliminate 'the Ndebele’”. One of the Gukurahundi survivors narrated how a commander of the soldiers operating in Matabeleland during the Gukurahundi period told gathered villagers that “they had come to this place to kill, not to play. They had come to kill the *Mandebele* because the dissidents were found only in their area and not in Mashonaland” (CCJP & LRF 1997: 96). However, the dynamics of party politics between ZANU PF and ZAPU were part of the matrix forming the backdrop of the Gukurahundi and so the Gukurahundi issue is both political and tribal (See Werbner 1991).

The CCJP & LRF (1997) report notes that two conflicts were going on at the same time. The first conflict was that which involved the government forces versus the dissidents. The second conflict:

involved government agencies and all those who were thought to support ZAPU. This was carried out mainly against unarmed civilians in those rural areas which traditionally supported ZAPU; it was also at times carried out against ZAPU supporters in urban areas. The Government agencies which were involved in this second conflict were primarily 5 Brigade, the CIO, PISI and the ZANU-PF Youth Brigades. These units committed many human rights violations, which compounded the plight of civilians who were once more caught in the middle of a problem not their own making. (CCJP & LRF 1997: 3)

The Gukurahundi ended in 1987 with the signing of the Unity Accord between ZAPU represented by Joshua M. Nkomo and ZANU PF represented by Robert G. Mugabe.

1.3 Statement of the Problem

For years, the government has denied any serious culpability in the Gukurahundi matter and has muted dialogue and debate around the issue (CCJP & LRF 1997). It was only in 2019 that the government made a decision and a public announcement saying that people can now discuss their Gukurahundi experiences without any repression or criminalisation⁸. Until 2019, the government has repressed discussions on this issue through arrests and detentions among other strategies. As a result, victims of these atrocities and their relatives and children have been blocked from publicly speaking about the Gukurahundi and sharing their experiences relating to it. Rather than wipe away the past, this silencing has kept the past alive. There has been no closure. It is therefore important for the Gukurahundi issue to be addressed so that there may be closure for the victims and national healing in Zimbabwe, something important for peace and unity to prevail.

This research was started in 2017 when it was still taboo and risky to talk about the Gukurahundi. The data gathering process of this research ended at the end of 2019, several months after the government had announced that people could now share their Gukurahundi experiences without any repression. However, in 2019 some people were not aware of such developments and those who were aware were not sure what they meant while others still expressed fear of publicly speaking about the Gukurahundi.

The victims and their children need two things in order to put the past in the ground: First, people must be able to grieve through processing the experiences and second, they must be heard by the government. They must be able to challenge the government to take action towards addressing the Gukurahundi. The term grieving is used in this study to refer to expressive ways of dealing with the painful emotions associated with the Gukurahundi to find closure. The term is used in this study to refer to both the internal individual feelings of loss, sadness, and pain and the public expression of grief as part of the mourning

⁸ An announcement from the Office of the President and Cabinet (OPC) that appears on kubatana.net titled *Office of the President and Cabinet (OPC) Announces Implementation Matrix for Matabeleland Issues* states that "The Matabeleland Collective, an association of Civic Society Organisations in Matabeleland, met the Permanent Secretary of Justice, Legal and Parliamentary Affairs Virginia Mabikwa. The meeting was a follow up on a dialogue with the President Emmerson Mnangagwa which happened at the State House in Bulawayo on the 21st of March 2019". The referred to meeting in Bulawayo is the one that marked a significant shift of position as President Mnangagwa declared that people can now openly share their Gukurahundi experiences. In line with this, the announcement on kubatana.net states that "Mabikwa presented an implementation matrix which includes the following: ...The government will come up with protection mechanisms to allow those who were affected by Gukurahundi to freely discuss their experiences. Freedom of expression is part of the healing process as "Pain not transformed is pain transmitted."" Accessed from <https://kubatana.net/2019/04/09/office-of-the-president-and-cabinet-opc-announces-implementation-matrix-for-matabeleland-issues/> on 29 March 2022.

process in an African context. It is envisioned as a *langalezo* experience whose participation in it is centred on speaking out on traumatic events as a way of processing loss and the trauma associated with it. In this study this includes creating dialogue around the Gukurahundi issue, seeking to dismantle silencing and oppressive structures, reflecting on experiences of the Gukurahundi stories, and sharing of stories from the Gukurahundi period. Grieving among the Ndebele people, at a communal level constitutes the *langalezo* experience.

Traditionally, Ndebele grieving rituals or processes are centred on discussions about the traumatic events and sharing of experiences, what I refer to as *langalezo*. In the government's efforts to silence those who publicly spoke about the Gukurahundi, these rituals were outlawed. This research therefore seeks to explore the potential of community-based performance to create a *langalezo* experience for second-generation sufferers of Matabeleland⁹ and Midlands¹⁰ disturbances (a.k.a. Gukurahundi) in Zimbabwe. As mentioned, a *langalezo* experience is an experience provided for in the Ndebele culture for showing solidarity and offering support to each other during times of bereavement or extreme difficulty and is a key concept explored in the thesis. Among the Ndebele people, when a beloved one passes on people gather to express condolences in support of the bereaved (Moyo 2018; Ndlovu, Ndlovu and Ncube 1995). This is not only limited to bereavement but is also extended to other difficult happenings such as loss of property and injury. In the context of death, this solidarity and sharing of condolence messages is done both immediately and even after a long period. The *langalezo* remains pending as long as the bereaved and the one offering comfort have not met or spoken to each other. The *langalezo* concept will be further engaged later in the thesis. It is described here as a way of introducing it. It will be engaged further in chapter 5 and chapter 7.

Drawing from the tradition of applied theatre (Prentki 2015), this research deployed Popular Participatory Theatre (PPT) (Young-Jahangeer 2020) to address the Gukurahundi issue. Central to PPT is the participation of the affected community in the theatre-making process. It is therefore part of community-based art. According to Jan Cohen-Cruz (2005: 1), "community-based art is a field in which artists, collaborating with people whose lives directly inform the subject matter, express collective meaning". For this research, this community-based art manifests as Devised theatre. Defining devised theatre, Alexandra Felseghi (2017: 62) notes that "in a simple form, the concept can be defined as an original production, generated by a creative collective working process". Through devising and staging theatre, the research sought to assess the extent to which this form encouraged a *langalezo* experience for

⁹ Matabeleland is used in this research collectively to refer to all the three Matabeleland provinces, namely Bulawayo metropolitan province, Matabeleland South and Matabeleland North. Zimbabwe has 10 provinces in total.

¹⁰ This is one of Zimbabwe's provinces. It has a considerable number of Ndebele people.

second-generation sufferers of the Gukurahundi to grieve and process inherited trauma so as to chart a course to manoeuvre through the pain associated with the Gukurahundi experiences. The research envisioned a *langalezo* experience that would allow for the sharing of experiences, dialogue, and documentation of history for the second-generation sufferers of the Gukurahundi. The victimhood of the second-generation sufferers of the Gukurahundi is by identification and association (Rothberg 2019). Since the *langalezo* experience is centred on speaking out, this research sought to find out how participating in the devising, staging of the play, and post-performance discussions encouraged the second-generation (and first-generation sufferers) of the Gukurahundi to speak out on the Gukurahundi and share their experiences associated with this period.

As a starting point, this research acknowledges the plight of the first-generation sufferers of the Gukurahundi who, for decades, have had to live with the government's denialism which possibly has delayed the healing process for the victims and survivors of the Gukurahundi and deepened the trauma. With the prolonged existence of this trauma and delayed healing, the ground becomes fertile for the transference of this trauma to the following generations. Thus without deliberate intervention efforts aimed at the second-generation sufferers of the Gukurahundi, there is a likelihood for the Gukurahundi trauma to continue for generations to come.

This research is therefore primarily concerned with the predicament of the second-generation sufferers of the Gukurahundi. This is a generation of people who were either too young during the Gukurahundi period to comprehend what was happening around them or those who were born after that period. These young people did not directly experience the Gukurahundi episode but experience transgenerational trauma (Braga et al. 2012) and intergenerational trauma (Bombay et al. 2009) in part through the gruelling accounts of this period as told by their parents, relatives, and community members. This is a generation that has inherited paradoxical and difficult memories of an experience that has not been lived but transmitted (Di Castro 2008), thus inheriting what Claudio Neri (1982:38) calls "memories without experience" (See also; Connolly 2011: 612). The process of this research however was not focussing on individual pathologies (psycho-drama) but rather on the collective experiences (socio-drama) of living in a community shrouded in silence. It is an experience and a form that is "one step removed" (Baim, Brookes and Mountford 2002: 31). However, psychological trauma was addressed though not from a therapeutic approach but from a standpoint that views psychological trauma as something that cannot be avoided in socio-drama.

Choosing to focus this research primarily on the second-generation sufferers of the Gukurahundi was influenced by several factors. First, unlike the first-generation sufferers who experienced the Gukurahundi trauma directly, the second-generation sufferers experience this trauma indirectly. This lowered the risk

of re-traumatisation in this experimental research. Secondly, focusing the research on the second generation is critical for such intervention to stop the transference of this trauma from generation to generation. Thirdly, I have noticed that many interventions that seek to address the Gukurahundi are focused on first-generation sufferers. There is therefore a risk of second-generation sufferers being overlooked – the Gukurahundi did and does affect them as well. The fourth reason is a personal one. Having been born in 1984 in Matabeleland South province in Zimbabwe, I was born during the height of the Gukurahundi which lasted from 1983 to 1987 (CCJP & LRF 1997); however, I did not realise what was going on around me as a child until later in life. Growing up in Matabeleland where the Gukurahundi happened, I have encountered first-hand the accounts of the Gukurahundi spoken in whispers for fear of government repression. During childhood years up to when we entered university, for many of us born during the 1980s, speaking about the Gukurahundi was taboo. This has been the case even for adults from many areas of Matabeleland and Midlands provinces. When the Gukurahundi stories are told, they are usually told with fear and uneasiness.

For this reason, I felt a strong need to research the issues that affect my generation. Focusing primarily on the second-generation sufferers does not mean that the first-generation sufferers have completely been left out. Some aspects of this research touch both the first-generation and the second-generation sufferers, for example, they were involved as part of the audience members.

This research also seeks to document and archive the Gukurahundi experiences. This is important considering that these are not adequately documented. The historical trauma and memories of the communities affected by the Gukurahundi need to be archived as a way of addressing this painful past. Archiving has been done, for example, with the Holocaust¹¹ (See Shenker 2016) and this has certainly assisted in dealing with it and its aftermath. For the Gukurahundi this has been lacking. Data gathered during this research could contribute towards archiving the Gukurahundi experiences and memorialising this history.

This research deployed performance as a way of transferring experiences, knowledge, and memories of the Gukurahundi among members of the affected community. While Peggy Phelan (1993: 146) considers the life of the performance as limited to the present and therefore concludes that it “becomes itself through disappearance”, in this study I took the view that is articulated by Joseph Roach (1996) who views

¹¹ “The word “Holocaust,” from the Greek words “holos” (whole) and “kaustos” (burned), was historically used to describe a sacrificial offering burned on an altar. Since 1945, the word has taken on a new and horrible meaning: the ideological and systematic state-sponsored persecution and mass murder of millions of European Jews (as well as millions of others, including Romani people, the intellectually disabled, dissidents and homosexuals) by the German Nazi regime between 1933 and 1945” (<https://www.history.com/topics/world-war-ii/the-holocaust> accessed online on 28 April 2022).

performance as interlinked with memory and history in that it participates in the transfer and continuance of knowledge. As Diana Taylor (2003: 35) puts it, “The telling is as important as the writing, the doing as central as the recording, the memory passed down through bodies and mnemonic practices”. Taylor (2003) further argues that performance, through being involved in acts of transfer, transmits memories and social identity.

Further, Rebecca Scheider (2001) posits that performance can function as a way of keeping memory alive. In this way performance makes sure memory does not disappear, thereby aiding the “body-to-body transmission of enactment–evidence, across generations, of impact” (Scheider 2001: 103). With limited avenues to keep the Gukurahundi memory alive, this research therefore deployed theatre as one of the alternative ways of doing so. Scheider observes that:

As theories of trauma and repetition might also instruct us, it is not presence that appears in performance but precisely the missed encounter – the reverberations of the overlooked, the missed, the repressed, the seemingly forgotten. Taken from this perspective, performance does not disappear though its remains are immaterial – the set of acts and spectral meanings which haunt material in constant collective interaction, in constellation. (Scheider 2001: 104)

Through performance, the research seeks in some sense to memorialise the Gukurahundi experiences that have been suppressed, particularly in public circles. In doing this, it is hoped, that grieving will be aided for both the second-generation and first-generation sufferers of the atrocities. This research locates itself within the broader category of subaltern theatre that seeks to create a space and an alternative platform to speak for people who find themselves in situations where mainstream channels are closed to them (Spivak 1988; Ravengai 2011).

1.4 The Necessity to Grieve

Choosing to remain silent about the Gukurahundi pain is, for the survivors and victims, similar to what Christopher Bigsby (2006: 6), referring to the Holocaust, terms “committing suicide”. Grieving for the second-generation sufferers of the Gukurahundi is not only befitting, it is necessary. Many of these young men and women have rehearsed silence to the extent that it has become ‘normal’ to just be silent and suffer quietly. I believe it is important for second-generation sufferers to start practising speaking out or bearing witness. With the shift in leadership, I believe that now is the time to speak out and explore the possibilities¹². It is a critical time to speak and dismantle the ‘culture of silence’ (Freire 1971) that

¹² In 2017 Robert G. Mugabe was replaced by Emmerson D. Mnangagwa as President of Zimbabwe. Mugabe later died in September 2019. The new era that was ushered in by President E. D. Mnangagwa raised hopes

characterises 'the oppressed' and to engage in the speaking that is central to any liberation. Extending the Freirean logic, theatre offers possibilities to rehearse action for real-life circumstances (Boal 2006). Performance encourages the participants to practise change. Such possibilities need to be explored in the face of what Patsy Rodenburg (2001) observes as a growing belief in young people that their voices don't make a difference. She observes and cautions:

Over the last fifteen years, for example, I have noticed my own students grow quieter, less willing to challenge and more willing to submit, precisely at a moment in history when voices need to be raised against the new perils that assault us each day. And yet voices are retreating into silence. The response to famine or war, for instance, seems to be 'What can you say? What weight does my voice carry?' (Rodenburg 2001: 25)

It is hard to feel powerful in a world that seems so gripped with challenges, particularly at the present, but for the second-generation sufferers, it is the silencing structures that have militated against speaking out and in particular against grieving. It is this silence that has pushed them into a position of subalternity. The question that begs for an answer is: Can the subaltern grieve?

1.5 Can the Subaltern Grieve? Motivation for the Research

Being fully aware of the silence around the Gukurahundi issue, I have found myself wondering how the victims of the Gukurahundi have been able to grieve and deal with their emotional pain so privately. To adapt Gayatri Spivaki's question "Can the subaltern speak?" I have found myself wondering "Can the subaltern grieve?" Culturally, the Ndebele people make use of a *langalezo* experience to grieve. In the context of the Gukurahundi, the *langalezo* experience remains necessary.

Encouraging the sufferers of the Gukurahundi to speak out and share their experiences has the potential to contribute towards the process of healing for the individual and the nation. Dialogue at the national level is what is needed to aid healing and unity in Zimbabwe. Addressing the Gukurahundi issue at that level offers the Zimbabwean nation an opportunity to officially acknowledge it and to reflect on its failures so that we can avoid a repeat of such an atrocity in the future. This is in line with Daniel L. Schacter and Michael Welker's (2016: 241) observation that "collective memories of past events may be shaped to serve the needs of the present" and may also shape the way communities envision the future. This is

among the people of Matabeleland and Midlands provinces in particular, and Zimbabwe in general, that change needed to happen – it presented an opportunity to break the silence and address issues like the Gukurahundi. E. D. Mhangagwa seems to be more open to breaking the silence than R. G. Mugabe probably because he wants to prove a point – that his leadership has ushered in a new dispensation that does things in ways that are different from the Mugabe administration.

very important for the Zimbabwean nation. On the other hand, by ignoring this issue the nation runs the risk of possibly repeating these things in the future. I recall the words from the character, Miss Masombuka, a teacher in the film *Sarafina*, an anti-apartheid film depicting the struggles in South Africa, (1992): We need to “tell the truth about what we got wrong and learn from it. Otherwise, what’s the use of tomorrow if you don’t learn?”

The necessity for the victims and survivors of the Gukurahundi and their children to grieve is undeniable and well-established in the literature. One just needs to visit online interactive platforms of newspapers like the *Chronicle*, *The Sunday News*, *The Sunday Mail*, *Bulawayo24*, *ZimEye*, and others to read comments laced with wounds, injury, and pain. Even when commenting on subjects that do not relate to the Gukurahundi, readers frequently reference it. As an insider of the community that was affected by the Gukurahundi, I have personally observed that the Gukurahundi scars may still be unhealed in the hearts and souls of many young people who belong to second-generation sufferers. Below are excerpts from online newspaper platforms to buttress the point I have made here. In many respects this dissertation is a response to their call:

Bones from the liberation struggle? What a way of putting it. Why are we fooling ourselves people? Is it politically incorrect to say these bones are probably victims of gukurahundi? Come on Chronicle, you can do better than that. If we don't confront this monster rest assured it's not going to go away. This gukurahundi issue needs to be tabled and closure found for the victims. Sweeping it under the carpet is not helping anyone, both the perpetrator and the victim. (DeTroy, 30 May 2017, Chronicle)

Couldn't agree with you more. This issue [the Gukurahundi] needs to be confronted head-on and dealt with once and for all. Closure is needed for the sake of the future generations. Let the truth be told, let us cry but with it let us close the chapter and move on. Hide not what happened. Let it be openly discussed so that we find closure. (DeTroy, 30 May 2020, Chronicle)

Just waiting for the lying idiot, [...] to write one of his stupid comments denouncing the genocide! Come Seke give us some of your usual bullshit!! (Foster Sibanda, 23 August 2020, Bulawayo24)

Say that again...This time coherently! Are you denying Gukurahundi happened? And that it was an atrocity? (Loud Speaker, 09 October 2020, New Zimbabwe)

As has been discussed, for the most part, the Gukurahundi issues have been shrouded in silence, fear, and unanswered questions. The silence around this historical incident and its range of atrocities and their lingering effects on the present generation has meant that the sufferers of the Gukurahundi have been denied a space to grieve and deal with their emotional wounds. Silence has also hindered the memorialisation of the Gukurahundi experiences and the transfer of knowledge on this subject.

The silence around the Gukurahundi issue is viewed by many in Matabeleland as a “conspiracy” (Connolly 1999). Conspiracy creates an environment in which people believe that there is a hidden plot, a secret underhanded agenda, or a motive that is being orchestrated by a few powerful entities to work against them (Tuckett 2004). In national and socio-political contexts this conspiracy erodes trust in the government, government officials, and government programmes. This has the effect of hampering development in a nation, fuelling suspicion and mistrust of anything that is being done by the government. This breeds apathy when it comes to participating in national and governmental programmes. To build a healthy, prosperous, and peaceful nation trust is important. As Vesselin Popovski observes:

Trust is a must in government, and not only for democratic government...Trust in government is the central element of good governance – it can be built up with sound policies enhancing people’s welfare and safety. But it can also be lost. It is not something a priori given...Governments need citizens for economic reasons – to collect taxes – and for political reasons – to be elected and re-elected. Citizens also need governments for economic and political purposes – to ensure jobs, laws, regulations, safety, education, healthcare, and public services. (Popovski 2010: 234)

Given such a symbiotic relationship between the government and the citizens, the Gukurahundi issue needs to be addressed so that the interaction between the government and the people of Matabeleland and Midlands provinces is not toxic. Addressing the Gukurahundi issue also increases the chances of reconciliation in Zimbabwe, both between the Ndebele and Shona and between ZANU PF members and ZAPU (or ex-ZAPU) members. Commenting on the Gukurahundi, Luc Huyse (2003: 39) argues that “a stable democracy in Zimbabwe will remain a distant dream as long as the sad legacy of violence and discrimination against an ethnic/regional minority is not dealt with in a genuine and thorough process of reconciliation”.

While conspiracy theories are generally dismissed as irrational, at times they need to be taken seriously. Matthew R. Dentith (2014: 5–6) argues that “even if there is some general argument that justifies taking a dim view of conspiracy theories, this does not give us grounds for dismissing the possibility that some particular conspiracy theory can be warranted...it is sometimes rational to believe particular conspiracy theories”. Without fully addressing the Gukurahundi issue, the government will find it difficult to dismiss some of the conspiracy theories that have been associated with this issue. For example, sentiments have been going around in Matabeleland that the government has been deliberately marginalising and underdeveloping Matabeleland since the days of the Gukurahundi. I believe this belief arises from the reality that the government is not doing much to reduce the aftereffects of the Gukurahundi in the communities affected.

The necessity for a *langalezo* [grieving] experience has compelled me to make a choice to do this research, a difficult yet necessary choice (hooks 1989). I am reminded of Ngugi wa Thiong'o's account of how he came to do the now-famous community theatre project *Ngaahika Ndeenda* [I will marry when I want]. In his book *Decolonising the Mind*, he narrates the story of a woman who came to him early one morning and challenged him with firm words saying "We hear you have a lot of education and that you write books. Why don't you and others of your kind give some of that education to the village? We don't want the whole amount; just a little of it, and a little of your time" (wa Thiong'o 1986: 37). The woman went on and explained about a youth centre falling apart in the village and in need of a group effort to revive it. As the woman kept coming to request Ngugi to help, he decided to act and that was how he joined others "in what was later to be called Kamiriithu Community Education and Cultural Centre" (wa Thiong'o 1986: 37).

From Ngugi's action, together with that of the community, was born one of the finest community theatre projects. Handel K. Wright (1998) talks about this project as proof that cultural studies started in Africa. Wright challenges the widely held assumptions that cultural studies originated in Britain and that the Centre for Contemporary Cultural Studies (CCCS) at the University of Birmingham was the first site of organised cultural studies. Wright (1998: 33) is of the view that "various moments at various other locations, from the Folk Schools of Denmark in the 1920s to Highlander School in North America's Appalachia in the 1930s to the Kamiriithu project in Kenya in the 1970s could and should be identified as 'other' origins of cultural studies". My project overlaps with community theatre. Community theatre is born out of a need to respond to pressing issues affecting society. In most cases, as in Ngugi's case, and indeed in my case, this society is our society and so we are compelled to action. I, therefore, engage with cultural theory in examining how theatre can aid in encouraging ritualised grieving.

Those who have spoken out on the Gukurahundi issue in the past years have been labelled as people opening old wounds that have healed and that should be left to the past. Such people have been arrested and plays on this subject banned. Owen Maseko, a visual artist, produced paintings on the Gukurahundi in 2010. One of the paintings was titled *Sibathontisele* [Lets Drip on Them!] and another one was *Bamtshisela endlini umfowethu* [They burnt my brother inside the house]. I discuss Maseko's artworks further in chapter 4. These paintings captured the torture of civilians by 5 Brigade soldiers who dripped hot melted plastic on their flesh and also burnt some to death inside thatched huts. Such horrendous acts characterise the Gukurahundi. Maseko was arrested in March 2010 for his artworks and charged with undermining the authority of the President and the exhibition was later closed down (See Mpofo 2019). In 2007 Cont Mhlanga's play *The Good President* which had a scene of 5 Brigade soldiers killing an unarmed civilian by strangling him to death with a rope was banned. Mhlanga was accused of opening

old wounds. However, those who have spoken out on the Gukurahundi issue have also retorted saying these wounds have never healed in the first place and therefore they need cleaning.

The government has justified its actions of silencing the Gukurahundi issue as necessary for peace and national unity. However, those who have advocated for open discussion and dialogue on the issue have counter-argued that for peace and national healing to be a reality in Zimbabwe, the Gukurahundi issue has to be openly discussed and healing and closure pursued without government repression. It has been important to outline the key ideas of the concept of grieving (particularly through the use of creative ways) in the introduction but this will be engaged in more complexity in chapter 4.

The Unity Day celebrations are held annually in Zimbabwe on the 22nd of December. As a resident of Matabeleland, I have observed that many people from Matabeleland see these celebrations as meaningless and do not participate in them. When I discussed this issue with participants of my project some said they do not even know about the Unity Accord and, therefore, it does not make any sense for them to be celebrating. The reason why some young people from Matabeleland are not aware of what the Unity Day celebrations are about is that the government has deliberately focused on emphasising the celebration of the Unity Accord while at the same time silencing the background of events that led to the Unity Accord. The mainstream media that is controlled by the government has been observed to shy away from giving context to the Unity Accord or ignoring the narratives of the Gukurahundi victims. The silencing of the discussion of events that led to the signing of the Unity Accord has created a void around the Unity Accord and the Unity Day celebrations. Among the Zimbabwean citizens who were not the victims of the Gukurahundi, some have added their voices in calling for the need to address this issue, others prefer that it be left in the past while others show apathy.

More than 30 years after the end of the Gukurahundi and the signing of the Unity Accord, the emotional wounds of the Gukurahundi should have healed or at least begun to heal but it seems these wounds are still fresh. According to CCJP & LRF:

those who would rather that events of the 1980s remain shrouded in secrecy have claimed that discussing them will “reopen” old wounds. However, it was clear during the interviewing process that, for thousands of people, these wounds have never healed: people still suffer today, physically, psychologically and practically, as a result of what they experienced in the 1980s. (CCJP & LRF 1997: 4)

The continuing presence of the Gukurahundi comments on online newspaper platforms could be a sign that this issue has not been laid to rest. This research therefore set out to explore the process of devising and staging theatre as grieving for this younger generation to attempt to break the cycle of woundedness (Bombay et al. 2009; Connolly 2011; Eizerik 2010; Mandelstam 1999).

1.6 A Word of Caution

This study is important for Zimbabweans and humanity in general as well as for the Ndebele people of Zimbabwe in particular. Incidents of violence, pain, divisions, tribalism, animosity, and a fractured society are presented here not to celebrate them but to draw attention to them so as to explore ways of navigating past them. This study was driven by a need to create dialogue around the Gukurahundi issue, experimenting with transformational creative works aimed at enabling second-generation sufferers to raise their voices concerning the Gukurahundi experiences.

The CCJP & LRF (1997) report which this work builds on highlights a desire for reconciliation to take place but also points out that a report alone is not sufficient to achieve reconciliation. Other intervention projects will have to follow. My study is, in many ways, a response to this call.

This study acknowledges that the Gukurahundi, as part of the Zimbabwean history inflicted physical and emotional wounds on its victims. The necessity to heal emotional wounds has necessitated this study. The sensitivity around the issue of the Gukurahundi and the necessity to approach this issue with caution is one of the reasons for the choice of theatre as an alternative platform to encourage and enable dialogue on this subject in a 'safe space'. In my approach, I took into account that the idea of theatre creating a 'safe space' is contested. Speaking practically, such a 'safe space' cannot be guaranteed, in terms of the physical working space, virtual space, and metaphorical space (Low 2020). In the context of applied theatre, Low (2020: 139) argues, "No space can ever be safe, nor should it necessarily be". Cognisant of such complexities of a 'safe space', theatre nevertheless can create a metaphorical world that enables us to talk about sensitive issues that we would ordinarily not talk about in everyday life contexts (Boal 1982).

1.7 Research Objectives

The objectives of this study are:

- To inquire into how Devised theatre, through the creation process, staging, and post-performance discussions, can encourage the second-generation sufferers (and to a certain extent, the first-generation sufferers) of the Gukurahundi in Zimbabwe to speak about the Gukurahundi and share their experiences that relate to it.

- To examine the efficacy of the devising process, staging of the play, and post-performance discussions in encouraging sufferers of the Gukurahundi to speak out and share their experiences.
- To identify how the second-generation sufferers of the Gukurahundi identify with the Gukurahundi experiences of their parents and relatives.
- To record stories from this time and document how the second-generation sufferers (and the first-generation sufferers) of the Gukurahundi in Zimbabwe feel about its effects on them.

1.8 Research Questions

This research seeks to find out **whether participating in the process of devising and staging theatre can encourage the second generation to speak about the Gukurahundi and if so how and why?** Post-performance discussions were also analysed for their potential (realised or implied) for aiding a *langalezo* experience. Since the major part of a *langalezo* experience includes openly speaking about the traumatic events, it would be interesting to find out whether participating in devising and staging theatre and post-performance discussions encourages speaking out, and whether this can create an environment where participants feel comfortable speaking and I feel comfortable to listen (as a facilitator). The post-performance discussions involve audience members. **Can these discussions encourage audience members to share their experiences of this period?** Ways of facilitating were explored so that lessons learned can be of benefit to those seeking to do similar projects.

In the centre of inherited trauma, are the stories of pain and suffering and collective memories that have been passed down by parents and grandparents to their children and grandchildren. **How do the second-generation sufferers of the Gukurahundi identify with the Gukurahundi experiences of their parents and relatives?** This is another question that the research explores. Through the process of devising and staging theatre, I also seek to create a 'contained space' for the soliciting of these stories to document them. The sharing of stories of the Gukurahundi can become a way of filling gaps and writing in the stories that the 'official' narratives of the state have left out. It therefore carries the potential to document history and archive the Gukurahundi experiences and to encourage the sharing of personal testimonies. All these things are important considering that this history is silenced and side-lined. The sharing of personal testimonies has been suppressed by state censorship. There has also been self-censorship induced by the fear of state repression in various forms such as arrest and detention.

Post-performance discussions are also critical in the mapping of the way forward. The research is interested in the suggestions made by the participants and audience members regarding what *they* feel should happen as a way of addressing the Gukurahundi. The views of those who were affected by the Gukurahundi are important. In the past, it has been the state dictating how or if people should grieve, yet it is the grieving who should grieve in a way that suits them. While the scope of the research cannot follow up on the suggestions made, the research is interested in finding answers to the question; **Can participants and audience members use these democratic platforms to voice their suggestions and what are these suggestions?**

1.9 Theatre

In this study, theatre is viewed in the context of collectively devised theatre, which is part of the broad category of Applied Theatre. Theatre involves different forms such as drama, poetry, storytelling, music, and dance. The term theatre is therefore inclusively used in this research, being open to theatrical manifestations that the participants wanted to explore. However, the performances were centred on a play structure, though other forms such as poetry, dance, and music were welcome. In this study, I used theatre in general and devised theatre in particular, to speak to the issue of the Gukurahundi.

Devised theatre can simply be defined as an original production, generated by a creative collective working process (Felseghi 2017; Syssoyeva and Proudfit 2016). The central characteristic of devised theatre is innovation and experimentation. In my project devising involved a group of Ndebele Zimbabweans whose families (not all) had experienced the atrocities of the Gukurahundi.

On the other hand, applied theatre refers to theatre that addresses real-life issues. In its practice, drama techniques are used to engage issues of social concern with the aim of exploring, questioning, probing, and catalysing discussions around these issues as opposed to just presenting a performance. Applied theatre includes theatre in educational settings, prison theatre, community performance, theatre in conflict resolution and reconciliation, interventionist theatre, theatre for development (Prentki and Preston 2009), and popular participatory theatre (Young-Jahangeer 2020). The concepts of devised theatre and applied theatre will be engaged more in the methodology chapter.

1.10 Trauma

Without any doubt, the disturbances of the 1980s in the Matabeleland and Midlands provinces of Zimbabwe were traumatic for the victims, those who experienced them, and those who witnessed them. As explained earlier, civilians were the biggest casualties. Trauma refers to a wide range of distressing situations and the effects that are caused by such situations or circumstances (Ngwenya 2014; Saul 2000). Situations such as war, torture, illness, divorce, and accidents can be a source of trauma.

According to Caroline Garland (1998: 9) "Trauma is a kind of wound. When we call an event traumatic, we are borrowing the word from the Greek where it refers to a piercing of the skin, a breaking of the bodily envelope". Garland further explains that, like the body, the mind too, metaphorically speaking, can be pierced and wounded by events. The metaphor of a wound is important here because the Gukurahundi has been metaphorically referred to as a wound or wounds by both those who have advocated for it to be let alone and not discussed and those who have demanded that it be openly addressed. The former has argued that speaking about the Gukurahundi opens old wounds that have healed while the latter has argued that the wounds of the Gukurahundi have not healed. Gukurahundi was and still is a traumatic experience for its victims. As Alexander (2021: 771) observes, "On all sides, the most durable metaphor for Gukurahundi was a wound. For those who had borne its brunt, it was open and festering. For the leaders of the united ZANU (PF), it had been closed by the Unity Accord, and the danger now lay in re-opening it". Therefore, in this study, the events of the Gukurahundi are treated as traumatic (See also CCJP & LRF 1997: 7).

1.11 Thesis Layout/ Chapter Breakdown

Below I give a breakdown of the chapters of the thesis.

In Chapter 1, I have introduced the study. I have laid out the statement of the problem, research objectives, research questions, and rationale/motivation. I have given a background of the subject of the Gukurahundi. I have also briefly explained what is meant by theatre, and briefly introduced devised theatre and applied theatre. I have explained the terms grieving and trauma as they are used in this study. I have also explained the *langalezo* experience/concept.

The methodology of the research is explained in Chapter 2. I explain that the research is arts-based and thus is located within the category of applied theatre. I also explain devised theatre (Oddey 1994) that I deployed as the broader methodology of the research (Gray 2003; Given 2008; Creswell 2013). In this

chapter, I describe in detail the steps that I followed in conducting my research: ethical issues, negotiating entry, interviews, group discussions, the devising process, staging the performances, post-performance discussions, and their facilitation and reflection sessions held toward the end of the data gathering process. In the chapter, I explain how the methodology of the research draws from Participatory Action Research (PAR) (McIntyre 2008; Freire 1971; Boal 1979) within the emancipatory paradigm and also from autoethnography (Creswell 2013) and community autoethnography (Toyosaki et al. 2009) within the interpretive paradigm.

Chapter 3 presents the theoretical framework that informs this research. The leading theory for this research is decoloniality, a praxis of decolonial theory (Mignolo and Vazquez 2013; Mignolo 2018; Gaztambide-Fernández 2014; Quijano 2000; Quijano 2007; and Ndlovu-Gatsheni 2013a, 2013b). In unpacking decoloniality I engage scholars, Paulo Freire (1971), Augusto Boal (1982), and Ngũgĩ wa Thiong'o (1986) whose writings have played a significant role in shaping theatre that seek to address oppressive conditions. Other theories used are postcolonial feminist theories (Mohanty 2003; hooks 1989; Spivak 1988), Popular Memory (Dawson 2015), and Marianne Hirsch (2008)'s concept of the postgeneration which she also refers to as the generation of postmemory.

Literature relevant to this study is reviewed in Chapter 4. In this chapter, I will first contextualise the way the Gukurahundi has been researched and also engage the terms that have been used to describe it. Perspectives on grieving are reviewed to gain an understanding of how creative expressions aid the processes of grieving. In the second section of the chapter, I examine the use of creative expression in dealing with the Holocaust (Plunka 2009; Bigsby 2006; Langer 1975; Skloot 1982), the Rwandan genocide (Dinesh 2015, Blair and Fletcher 2010) and traumatic events in South Africa (Cima 2018; Young-Jahangeer 2014; Shmukler 2014). This will aid in the understanding of creative expression's potential in addressing collective trauma. It will also help in understanding the challenges that arise from such approaches. I will conclude the chapter by reviewing two plays, *1983: Years Before and After* (2018) and *Talitha Koum – Someone Lied!* (2018), which address the issue of the Gukurahundi in Zimbabwe, to locate this study within the broader creative efforts that have sought to break the silence around the Gukurahundi.

Chapter 5 is a presentation and analysis of data from the process of devising and staging theatre as a way of encouraging participants to speak out on the issue of the Gukurahundi. I argue that research data indicates that theatricality in the form of devised theatre offers the potential to create a social and aesthetic space to speak to and about the issue of the Gukurahundi in Zimbabwe. Techniques such as improvisation, storytelling, the use of the Spect-Actor concept (Boal 1979) in rehearsal, the use of songs

as commentary, and using personal experiences as material for the creation of the play helped in achieving this.

I argue that the nature of devised theatre, which requires people to discuss and work together in creating a play, makes a *langalezo* space possible. Participating in the process of devising and staging theatre enhances the creation of a *langalezo* space which, within the Ndebele culture, is a grieving space. The data reveals that participating in both devising and performing theatre created a platform for the young people of Matabeleland to voice their frustrations, concerns, pain, and suffering from the Gukurahundi experiences. Most of these experiences were passed down to the young generation through stories told by their parents and other relatives, or by community members. This research targeted those between the ages of 18-35 years as they fit into the category of second-generation sufferers. I argue that in a repressive environment like that which has prevailed in Zimbabwe for many years, devised theatre offers an alternative platform to build democracy by providing alternative spaces for the subaltern to speak.

Reflection on the facilitation process of the research is done in chapter 6. Drawing from scholars Vidal (2006), Felseghi (2017), and Preston (2016), among others, the chapter demonstrates that facilitation plays an important role in devised theatre during the process of devising, during post-performance discussions, and during focus group discussions and interviews. It will be argued that a facilitator should have good facilitation skills and need to be available throughout the research. The facilitator is the leader of the group yet he should not impose his views on the group, but work on creating a conducive environment for the participants to creatively work towards the objectives of the research. It will emerge that it is important for the facilitator to steer the research process in line with the research objectives.

Data presentation and analysis continue in Chapter 7. The focus shifts to data from the post-performance discussions, the interviews, and focus group discussions held towards the end of the research project. I will seek to show that post-performance discussions played an important role in encouraging both the participants and audience members to speak out on the Gukurahundi. Through these discussions the audience members became co-creators and co-directors of the performances, thus shaping the narratives. Thus, the post-performance discussions, just like the performances themselves, act as ways of documenting and archiving the Gukurahundi stories. This aligns with the views of Postcolonial feminism, which is filling in gaps by writing into history those stories that have been marginalised by the dominant narratives.

These discussions also provided an opportunity to reflect on the research journey – through evaluation, identifying what worked and what could be improved in case a similar project is undertaken in the future. Discussions and interviews played a huge role in encouraging openness which is necessary in addressing issues that affect people like the Gukurahundi.

Chapter 8 is the conclusion of the thesis. It contains a summary of the findings and conclusion.

CHAPTER 2: RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

2.1 Introduction

This chapter details the methodology of this research. While the terms research methodology and research methods are usually used interchangeably, these refer to different dimensions of the research. According to Ann Gray (2003: 4), “method refers to those different techniques of research which any researcher employs in order to construct data and interrogate its sources, while methodology describes the overall epistemological approach adopted by the study”. This research is qualitative.

The positivist approach to knowledge creation that favours quantitative methods has sought to position itself as being ‘objective’ and equally sought to dismiss subjective and qualitative methods as ‘unscientific’. As Lisa M. Given observes:

Qualitative researchers have historically contended with the criticism that their ongoing and frequently close involvements with research participants render their studies unscientific and subjectively biased, as if the lack of social contact with participants—common in quantitative research—automatically yields objectivity. (Given 2008: 250)

This research disagrees with the position that subjectivity in qualitative research produces unscientific knowledge. The methodology of this research rejects the notion of detached objectivity which, in any case, is neither possible nor ethical (Young-Jahangeer 2008). As Jenna Ward and Harriet Shortt argue:

numbers and statistics are not the only way of knowing the world, in fact [numbers and statistics] are a poor way of knowing much at all about the people who inhabit it...images and stories speak much louder than statistics...what changes policy is not just statistical reports but a well-told story that engages our whole being and moves us emotionally. (Ward and Shortt 2020: vi)

The subjective realities of the people are also important in research and thus should also be accorded the attention they deserve.

This arts-based research was done within an applied theatre research approach, utilising the interpretive and emancipatory paradigms. The particular methodologies used were autoethnography and Participatory Action Research (PAR). Popular Participatory Theatre (PPT) was used as a method. Data was collected/generated through interviews, focus group discussions, processes of devising and staging theatre, and post-performance discussions. Thematic analysis of data was used in this research. All these aspects of the research, including ethical issues, are addressed in this chapter.

2.2 Research Approach – Qualitative Research

Qualitative research is centred on subjective meanings as opposed to objective meanings, and it is interested in people's experiences to understand what is important to them (Silverman 2021). Patricia Leavey explains that:

Qualitative research is generally characterized by inductive approaches to knowledge building aimed at generating meaning. Researchers use this approach to explore; to robustly investigate and learn about social phenomenon; to unpack the meanings people ascribe to activities, situations, events, or artifacts; or to build a depth of understanding about some dimension of social life. The values underlying qualitative research include the importance of people's subjective experiences and meaning-making processes and acquiring a depth of understanding (i.e., detailed information from a small sample). Qualitative research is generally appropriate when your primary purpose is to explore, describe, or explain. (Leavey 2017: 9)

I found qualitative research appropriate and appealing for my research that explored how devised participatory theatre could be used to create a *langalezo* [grieving] experience primarily for the second-generation sufferers of the Gukurahundi and, by extension, to the first-generation sufferers and the community at large. In line with what Leavy highlights in the above quotation, the knowledge of the Gukurahundi stories by the victims and survivors is subjective to them. This research therefore privileged these subjective experiences over the dominant 'official' narratives of this period. The research also privileged the meanings that the participants of the research attach to their memories of the Gukurahundi and the experiences of their participation in the research. As discussed, the Gukurahundi issue has been silenced in the Zimbabwean context and this research explored ways of using devised theatre to encourage the victims and survivors of the Gukurahundi and their communities to speak out and share their stories of this period and also explored ways of manoeuvring past the pain associated with their experiences.

The research envisaged processes focused on unpacking the way people of Matabeleland have experienced the Gukurahundi pain, the silencing of their voices and narratives, and how they desire to move forward.

Sonia Ospina (2004) proffers the following as advantages of qualitative research:

- flexibility to follow unexpected ideas during research and explore processes effectively;
- sensitivity to contextual factors;
- ability to study symbolic dimensions and social meaning;
- Increased opportunities
 - to develop empirically supported new ideas and theories;

- for in-depth and longitudinal explorations of [...] phenomena; and
- for more relevance and interest for practitioners. (Ospina 2004: no page)

According to Given (2008: xxix) “Qualitative research is designed to explore the human elements of a given topic, where specific methods are used to examine how individuals see and experience the world”. Given goes on to explain that it is important to understand the goals, intentions, and implications of the research paradigm that one is using in research. She further observes that qualitative methods are best suited for addressing the why question and are also suitable for exploring new phenomena to capture “individuals’ thoughts, feelings, or interpretations of meaning and process” (Given 2008: xxix). In this research, I was interested in the Gukurahundi stories of second-generation sufferers. These stories have been shared with them by parents, relatives, and community members. I was also interested in finding out the meanings that the young people make about their experiences of living in a society shrouded in silence regarding the pain and suffering of the Gukurahundi victims and their children. The research also had a strong interest in the process of using theatre (devised theatre—creation process; staging and post-performance discussions), to address the Gukurahundi issue.

In my research, I followed Ann Gray’s advice that methods should be developed throughout the project to allow for a reflective engagement with them rather than having them fixed at the beginning of the research. Gray posits that:

Questions of method, therefore, cannot be settled and resolved in the early stages, but will recur throughout the research engendering questions, not only about the ‘what’ of the research, but also about the ‘how?’ of it. This reflective approach to research is appropriate for studies that seek to explore the complexities of social and cultural process, meanings and practises.
(Gray 2003: 5)

I made room for the revising and refining of these methods as the research unfolded. However, such an approach offers its challenges. In my case, it slowed down my research process. As Alison Oddey (1994: 13) observes “Time is needed for the trying out of ideas, the experimentation of work, the development of a process, and subsequently to create deadlines out of that work”. Reflecting on the methods and revising some of their aspects or refining them demands time and energy.

2.3 Research Plan and Design: An Applied Theatre Approach

My research started with a plan and design that guided it. The elements of research, genre/design, methods/practices, theory, and methodology all fall under the praxis level (Leavy 2017). Leavy also points out that “[t]he praxis elements of research answer the question “What do we do?” (2017: 11). The plan is

the strategy of how the researcher intends to reach the goal of the research. Paul D. E. Leedy (1989) argues that research is not just a happy exploration journey that one undertakes randomly fondly hoping that facts that answer the research questions will somehow fortuitously turn up. On the contrary, research is a:

[...] carefully planned attack, a search-and-discover mission explicitly planned in advance...the overall research effort must be explicitly planned and logically designed...One must not wait until one is chin-deep in the project to plan and design one's strategy. In the formative stages of the project, there is much that can be decided. Where are the data? Are there, in fact, any existent data that address themselves to the research problem? Even if the data exist, is it reasonable that you can have access to them? Presuming that you have access to the data, what will you do with them after they are in your possession? (Leedy 1989: 6)

My research is arts-based. When one is carrying out an arts-based research it is important to take into account the points raised above. A research plan and strategy helped guide the researcher so that he did not create artworks for the sake of creating them but to answer the research questions. At the same time, in my research, there was a need to be flexible with the research plan and strategy to make room for modifications when it became necessary. There is a need to strike a balance between research strategies set out at the beginning and the demands of the research that arise during the process of generating data. This progression partly spoke to my research goal.

At a broader level, this research was anchored on an applied theatre paradigm. Applied theatre refers to theatre that is used to address real-life issues affecting communities. It is often done in non-traditional theatre spaces. This kind of theatre appealed to my research which was aimed at dealing with the Gukurahundi issue that has affected communities in the Matabeleland and Midlands provinces of Zimbabwe. Defining applied theatre and distinguishing it from conventional theatre, Peter O'Connor and Briar O'Connor state that:

Applied theatre is an umbrella term that defines theatre which operates beyond the traditional and limiting scope of conventional Western theatre forms. It is often characterised by work which deliberately engages in spaces or with groups of people where mainstream theatre still fears to tread. The boundaries between actors and spectators are purposefully blurred as all participants are involved as active theatre makers. Frequently, applied theatre is constructed as a response to social or political challenges and is seen as a process where difference and change can be wrought through its making. (O'Connor and O'Connor 2009: 471)

The above definition captures several points that were attractive for my research. Firstly, there is an acknowledgment that applied theatre transcends the limitations of conventional theatre. I needed a kind of theatre approach that would give me leeway to experiment with fewer limitations. Applied theatre goes even to those contexts that are shunned by mainstream theatre. Applied theatre, therefore, resonates

with the aspirations of the marginalised. Secondly, in applied theatre there is a fluidity of boundaries between performers and audiences – everyone becomes a participant. Since my research sought to explore how a *langalezo* experience can be created through theatre, I was drawn to theatre that would afford space to the participants to create their own experiences and to tell their stories with agency as opposed to being passive observers. Thirdly, applied theatre often comes as a response to social or political challenges and seeks to cause change. In my research, applied theatre was deployed as a response to the Gukurahundi massacres and the silencing of dialogue on this matter by political players. The research sought to create change by breaking the silence by encouraging the victims and survivors (and their children) to speak out on the Gukurahundi issue.

While it can be noted that since the origins of theatre, there have been theatrical works that concern themselves with addressing contemporary issues of the time affecting humanity, it should also be noted that there are characteristics that define what is now known as applied theatre. As Tim Prentki, Michael Balfour, and Sheila Preston (2015: 8) put it, “There are, however, specific factors which have given rise to those practices labelled applied theatre in recent years”. Applied theatre was born in the context of progressive, radical people’s movements worldwide (Prentki and Preston 2009; O’Connor and O’Connor 2009). Monica Prendergast and Juliana Saxton (2009) concur with the fact that there has been a widespread occurrence of applied theatre and they acknowledge its engagement with social change and community transformation issues. They observe that “the range of applied theatre practice is vast; it happens all over the world as part of a grassroots movement involved in social change and community reflection” (Prendergast and Saxton 2009: vi).

As applied theatre continues to grow throughout the world, practitioners and scholars alike continue exploring the nurture of empowerment that derives from it and the purposes for this empowerment. O’Connor and O’Connor (2009: 471) posit that “the central questions facing applied theatre today go beyond the challenge of whether it empowers or transforms communities and must include investigations around what the political purpose of empowerment or transformation might be”. In this research, I deployed applied theatre in the form of Popular Participatory Theatre (PPT) (Young-Jahangeer 2020), collectively devised, with similar questions. This research explored how collectively devised theatre could create a *langalezo* experience for the second-generation sufferers of the Gukurahundi and by extension Gukurahundi victims and survivors in general. I argue that a *langalezo* experience is empowering to the victims who were and still are affected by the atrocities. I also argue that the *langalezo* experience is necessary for facilitating a process that contributes towards healing and closure for the victims. Participating in applied theatre presented the potential for the empowerment of the victims to share their stories of pain and suffering, encouraging victims to speak out on their Gukurahundi experiences and discussing ways of moving forward.

Applied theatre can be deployed in various contexts to address issues affecting members of the community or the wider society. Philip Taylor (2003) suggests several things that applied theatre is capable of doing. It can teach community members to teach others, it can help communities to process issues that directly affect them, it can heighten or raise awareness, it can pose alternatives, it can heal psychological wounds or barriers, it can challenge contemporary discourses and it can help in voicing the voices of the silent and marginal (Taylor 2003). According to Taylor:

The arts become an important experience as people attempt to deal with tragic events, such as September 11th. In applied theatre work, artists generate scenarios and create opportunities for the community to respond to their pain through the theatre work...The applied theatre becomes a medium through which the storytellers can step into the perspectives of others and gain entry points to different worldviews. (Taylor 2003: i)

In this research applied theatre became an experience of responding to the 1980s violence. The September 11th attacks on the USA that Taylor refers to reflect some level of similarity to the Gukurahundi in that both are regarded as tragic and traumatic, and both caused pain to victims, survivors, and their communities. In this research participants also used applied theatre in the form of devised theatre, to tell their stories of pain and suffering related to the Gukurahundi and also as an avenue to seek to understand what happened during the massacres. The participants also used theatre as an entry point for sharing the stories of the pain of the victims of the Gukurahundi.

One of the characteristics that make applied theatre different from conventional theatre is scripting. While conventional theatre is largely dominated by pre-scripted texts, for applied theatre the scripts are usually created during the process, usually collectively. We had two performances of theatre pieces whose scripts were generated through collective devising. The first performance, *Speak Out! Phase one* was staged on 29 March 2019 at Nkulumane Community Hall located at Sekusile within the Nkulumane high-density suburb of Bulawayo. The second performance, *Speak Out! Phase two* was staged on 28 September 2019 at Hope Centre located within the Bulawayo Central Business District (CBD), about 10km from the first performance venue. The first venue was chosen by default since there was an arts event there and we wanted to reach to the audience already organised for that event. The second venue was chosen for convenience since the CBD is easily accessible to audience members from different parts of the city. Collective devising sits well within the applied theatre tradition. Its participatory nature afforded the participants space and opportunity to tell their own stories. It privileged the voices of the community (through the participants) as opposed to the voice of the playwright as is the case in conventional theatre scripts.

It is important for theatre practitioners and researchers engaged in applied theatre work to understand the purpose of their work. Understanding the political and social context within which the work is being carried

out is also important. James Thompson (2009), drawing from Michael De Certeau's (1984) concepts of strategy and tactics, argues that there is a need for applied theatre to carefully consider the difference between tactical and strategic performance practices. A strategy works well for those who have power within a political and social context to intervene while a tactic works well for those with 'no power' to enable them to resist within the boundaries where they exist. This of course should be understood in terms of degrees of potential and not in absolute terms. Thompson observes and cautions that:

many participatory theatre projects, when working with marginalised, isolated or oppressed groups, hope they can generate strategic action with that community when in fact they can only operate at the level of tactics. Applied theatre projects might instil in participants rich and complex means of coping and subtly resisting the worst of a context, but rarely are they able to equip people to transcend it. In fact, in not noticing how many communities are held in cultural, physical and historical settings from which a strategic vision of change is very difficult to adopt, applied theatre may be raising dangerous expectations. (Thompson 2009: 35-36)

I had to grapple with the question of what my research would achieve, especially regarding the creation of a *langalezo* experience. I came to accept that while the research was resisting being silenced, it was rather more focused on encouraging the participants to speak out on the Gukurahundi issue as a way of negotiating past this pain and finding ways of moving forward. The simple act of speaking out and having discussions around this issue, sharing experiences and stories, raising questions, and expressing views, was considered a positive step. How this will impact the large Zimbabwean context, going forward, in terms of dealing with the Gukurahundi issue is something that only time can tell. What was important was to work within the range of safety through tactics. As Thompson accounts:

In not actively differentiating between tactical and strategic political action in an 'empowerment' agenda, for example, we may be encouraging attempts at strategic action which, particularly in conflict zones, are fatal. So the celebratory theatre workshop, the problem-solving role-play or the forum theatre session in most applied theatre circumstances are tactical performance practices that might provide immediate means of living through and dealing with the present, but cannot claim that they structurally alter it. (Thompson 2009: 35-36)

Thompson's argument helped me in keeping the expectations of my research within realistic levels. For example, I initially wanted to have, as participants, people who were direct victims of the Gukurahundi – those who experienced it firsthand, the first-generation sufferers. I hoped that their involvement in the project would become an emotional healing process from the trauma they experienced (and for some, the trauma they are still experiencing). However, I later realised that involving the first-generation participants carried a high risk of re-traumatisation. I did not have counselling mechanisms in place to deal with the situations that could arise in such scenarios. As a result, I 'climbed down' from that approach and decided to work with second-generation sufferers instead where the chances of re-traumatisation were low.

Another area where I had to be tactic is on the part of avoiding situations that could get participants (including myself) arrested. This was the case, especially during the first days of the project when the Gukurahundi issue was still highly regarded as taboo¹³. During the staging of our first performance, we had to present our theatre piece as guests in an event that had already been organised by a certain theatre company. If we had advertised our performance as a standalone show, the chances of the event being banned and participants arrested were high.

In seeking to explore how theatre could be deployed in the creation of a *langalezo* experience, the collectively devised popular participatory theatre became a form of choice. Similar to applied theatre, devised theatre does not refer to a specific style or genre but should be understood as a broad term. It refers to a process rather than a product. In Southern Africa, we often use the term Workshopped theatre when referring to devised theatre. According to Mia Perry:

Devised theatre is commonly traced back to the middle of the twentieth century. The genre of theatre relates to Western theatre practices, most commonly used in reference to European and Australian theatre, although the term seeped into American theatre discourse and is quickly becoming recognized throughout North American theatre practices. (Perry 2011: 64)

In Africa in general and Southern Africa in particular, devising is largely rooted in the oral performance culture. Noting its prevalence in South Africa, Gay Morris (2007: 172) observes that “it is a respected tradition arising out of the prevailing oral performance culture, global (e.g. Grotowskian) influences and the work of township groups”. As I will argue in chapter 4, devised theatre is more prevalent in South Africa than in Zimbabwe. I am not aware of any theatre work that has approached the issue of the Gukurahundi from an angle that this research takes. The few available plays that address this issue do not approach it from the perspective of Devised theatre.

The devising experience is unique to each group. The process followed and the product that comes from that process varies from group to group and from one context to another. Oddey posits that:

What identifies and defines devised theatre as a separate form worthy of consideration is the uniqueness of process and product for every group concerned. The significance of this form of theatre is in the emphasis it places on an eclectic process requiring innovation, invention, imagination, risk, and above all, an overall group commitment. However, it is the very nature and eclecticism of the devising experience that makes it impossible to articulate any single theory of how theatre is devised, when every professional company or group works in a unique way with different intentions, interests, and concerns. (Oddey 1994: 2-3)

¹³ It is only in March 2019 that the President of Zimbabwe made an address saying that victims of the Gukurahundi are free to share their experiences of this period. Before that, speaking about *the* Gukurahundi and doing dramatic works on the Gukurahundi theme carried a very high risk of arrests. Artistic works on the atrocities had been banned previously and artists arrested as I have explained in chapter 1.

It is the eclectic nature that attracted me to devised theatre. This quality also makes devised theatre fit well in applied theatre work. Eclecticism allows for freedom of experimenting and enables the group to approach the work from multiple angles. For research, this is a strength as data is generated from multiple angles. As a result devised theatre produces “more creative solutions than other forms of theatre, although this is fundamentally determined by group dynamics and interaction” (Oddey 1994: 3).

Devised theatre allows its creators to question the issue topic or ideology under exploration and it also offers new ways of thinking and building new forms and structures. These qualities of devised theatre lent themselves well to the issue of the Gukurahundi under study and the extent to which the form was able to do this is under scrutiny. According to Jess Thorpe (2014: 13) devising theatre “is essentially the process of creating something new from scratch. Its power is in its infinite possibility and the opportunity it offers individuals to experiment with ideas of content, form, structure, staging and new styles in order to ‘make’ a brand new piece of work”.

Alison Oddey (1994) is of the view that devising usually starts without a pre-written script. This characteristic offered hope for my project where the aim was to have the participants write their own story – their script. On the other hand, devised theatre can draw inspiration from a written script which is then put aside as artists create a new work inspired by the written script. Devised theatre refers to theatre that is created by the group itself. It is theatrical work created through a collective process. The script is not imposed on the group but it emerges from a collective process where members of the group are involved so that the product is a group product. Rather than having a play that is individually authored by one person, the whole group of participants collectively take part in coming up with the play. Since our devised project sought to speak to the Ndebele-speaking community we were alive to the advice given by John Bull (2005) that theatre that serves a particular community cannot be in outright antagonism to that community. The issues that formed the basis of our devising were those that affect our community – the issues of the Gukurahundi.

Devised theatre offers some flexibility in terms of how artists want to work and the content they want to create. Devising begins with an idea and then the devisers work together through several processes until they have a complete production ready for staging. Because of its flexibility, devising provides a democratic way of creating theatre. Such qualities were attractive for our theatre work on a subject like the Gukurahundi. A pre-written script would have been limiting – already imposing a particular narrative when this research aimed to create a space within which participants can feel free to express themselves – both on and off stage. Tessa W. Carr (2015: 8) argues that “over the years, devised productions have opened dialogues in communities, given performance access to many voices that are not represented in theatrical literature, created new structures for performance, and have even served as a means of conflict resolution”. Such qualities found in devised theatre influenced my choice when considering the kind of

theatre to use. While traditional theatre usually centres on the playwright, devising centres on the performers, who are invariably the creators.

The theatrical approach employed in this research also leaned on social drama. Social drama refers to drama that is anchored on people and their social contexts. It deals with the issues or challenges that people face in life. Dealing with the Gukurahundi, this research was concerned with the challenges faced by the victims and survivors of this traumatic period.

This study also employs Cultural Studies. Cultural studies as a field of inquiry is concerned with “the cultures of everyday life. In addition, it insists on the materiality of culture” (Gray 2003: 12). This resonates well with the *langalezo* experience which is part of the Ndebele people’s culture, an experience situated within the everyday life of the people. Gray goes on to explain that in this context:

Culture is not a set of free-floating ideas or beliefs, nor is it exemplified only by a canon of great works of art or literature. The meanings, processes and artefacts of culture are produced, distributed and consumed within particular material circumstances. In other words, texts and practices are both products of and constitutive of the social world. This is made up of a whole lot of organisations, from, for example, institutions of the media and other cultural producers, the family, education and various agencies of civil society to everyday practices within specific social groups. (Gray 2003: 12)

In seeking to understand culture and cultural processes it is therefore important to consider these complexities (Gray 2003). Leaning on cultural studies, this research explored how a *langalezo* experience could be created using processes of devising and staging theatre and post-performance discussions. The theatre pieces that were created during this research drew largely from the Ndebele oral culture. Cultural artefacts such as songs from the Ndebele culture were used to address the Gukurahundi issue. The *langalezo* experience is part of the Ndebele people’s everyday life.

Though popular culture is central to the cultural studies project, cultural studies cannot and should not be reduced to the study of popular culture (Storey 2006). Culture is seen as important in constituting the structure and shaping of history. An interesting point for this struggle is how cultural studies grapple with societal divisions, inequality, and at the same time act as a site of struggle to resist domination and acts of silencing. John Storey posits that:

Cultural studies assumes that capitalist industrial societies are societies divided unequally along, for example, ethnic, gender and class lines. It is argued that culture is one of the principal sites where these divisions are established and contested: culture is a terrain on which there takes place a continued struggle over meaning(s), in which subordinate groups attempt to resist the impositions of meanings that bear the interests of dominant groups. (Storey 2006: xvi-xvii)

In this research, I embraced cultural studies as a site conducive to creating artistic works that resist the silencing of Gukurahundi narratives. Not only that, the research deployed the processes of creating and staging artistic works and the post-performance discussions as avenues through which the second-generation sufferers (and first-generation sufferers) of the atrocities can shape history by telling their stories of pain and suffering that relate to this period. I was, therefore, interested in exploring how this could happen. The *langalezo* experience was central to this research. How can art be deployed to create a *langalezo* space within the cultural setting of the Ndebele people? What are some of the stories that are shared during this process that relate to the Gukurahundi? Does participating in theatre-making and staging assist in the process of grieving for the victims of the Gukurahundi? Cultural processes are shaped by many forces. What is important, however, for this research is the realisation that “people can and do engage actively in their uses of cultural artefacts in making sense of their own and others’ lives” (Gray 2003: 12).

The Gukurahundi issue is entangled in both the political and ethnic dimensions. As I explained in Chapter 1, the issue of the 1980s massacres is complex. There are vested political interests in silencing the Gukurahundi narrative. On the other hand, from a cultural perspective, the victims and survivors of the Gukurahundi must have a *langalezo* experience which is a grieving experience. Central to this experience, according to the Ndebele culture, is speaking out about what happened. *Ukukhalelana* [showing solidarity to the bereaved] cannot happen in silence. People have to speak about what happened and how they feel about it. *Ukukhalelana* is part of the *langalezo*.

2.4 Arts-Based Research

As already mentioned, this research is arts-based. At the centre of this research was the process of devising and staging theatre on the issue of the Gukurahundi. The focus was on understanding how participating in this process could create a *langalezo* experience for second-generation sufferers and for the first-generation sufferers who attend the performances and post-performance discussions. In this research, a *langalezo* experience is to be taken to refer to grieving as understood within the Ndebele society. It also refers to speaking out on the issues of the Gukurahundi. This involves both sharing experiences related to the Gukurahundi and resisting being silenced by the hegemonic government and other players. It also involves discussions on the way forward. Therefore, the post-performance discussions also played an important role in this research. The theatre pieces produced were also analysed in their rights as artistic products to understand the issues that were raised through them. Devising and staging theatre therefore formed the overall methodology of this research.

Arts-based research refers to social research or human inquiry that uses tenets of creative arts as part of its methodology. The arts may be deployed during data collection/generation, data analysis, data interpretation, and even dissemination (Van der Vaart, G., Hoven, B. & Huigen, P. P.P. 2018; Jones and Leavey 2004). According to Caroline Lenette:

The term 'arts-based research' encompasses a range of different methods of inquiry for interpretation, meaning-making, and representation of lived experiences. The approach involves the use of any art form, at any point in the research process, to generate, interpret, or communicate new knowledge. (Lenette 2019: 27)

To gain an understanding of lived experiences, arts-based research integrates artistic practices with the research process. In this research, the process of devising and staging theatre was deployed as the main methodology. The subject of the devised theatre was the Gukurahundi – the experiences of the second-generation sufferers. The theatrical pieces devised consisted of drama, poetry, song, and dance as components.

Arts-based research emerges from the worldview of interpretivism. Arts-based research emerged as a new methodological genre in the 1990s (Leavy 2015; Lenette 2019). The major characteristics of arts-based research approaches are that they are highly participatory and collaborative (Matarasso 2019; Lenette 2019). As Lenette (2019: 28) aptly puts it, arts-based research “favour the co-production and dissemination of enriching and novel perspectives that have their roots in creativity and storytelling”. In keeping in line with the dictates of arts-based research and seeking to maximise its attributes, I settled for collectively devising theatre instead of having one person write the script. This resonates well with the participatory and collaborative nature of this methodology. All the participants participated as equals in creating the theatre pieces that we then staged for audiences in Bulawayo, Zimbabwe.

Van der Vaart Gwenda, Hoven Bettina van & Huigen Paulus P.P. (2018) proffer reasons as to why researchers could be interested in the use of creative and arts-based research methods. Firstly, these methods offer the potential for fresh approaches and different perspectives. It is also interesting that in the practice of arts-based research in community settings novel ideas emerge (Lenette 2019). These ideas can even emerge from popular culture. Secondly, creative or arts-based research methods are viable ways of addressing research questions that cannot be fully answered using traditional methods such as interviews and questionnaires. Things like emotions and symbols can be accessed through the arts and also expressed. Thirdly, creative or arts-based research methods are a good fit for a study that is doing participatory, community-based, and action research. Because of their openness to different ways of understanding, “the use of arts-based methods in community-based settings can seem a natural fit...these methods can be used to overcome power imbalances between the researcher and those

researched by conducting research with the participants rather than on them” (Van der Vaart et al. 2018: no page).

Acknowledging this reality, I would like to point out that the aspect of conducting research with participants instead of on participants was effective. I participated in the process of the research. I facilitated the devising process, games, and exercises, as well as post-performance discussions. I also facilitated group discussions. During the group discussions, I also shared my experiences regarding the Gukurahundi. I was not a passive observer during the process; I was involved, in doing the research with the participants.

Caroline Linette (2019) examined the relevance of arts-based research to refugee studies in the context of conveying realities of conflict and displacement and came up with attributes of arts-based research that I found to be relevant to my research since the often traumatic experiences of refugees have some similarities with the traumatic experiences of the 1980s violence. Below are some of the attributes that she points out:

1. Because of the relevance of the arts to Knowledge Holders’ cultural experiences and memories, arts-based methods can access and communicate sensuous, affective, tacit, and embodied aspects of lived experiences that may otherwise be difficult (or not always possible) to convey using methods like surveys and interviews.
2. By deploying innovative arts-based approaches, it becomes possible to draw on cultural experiences and creativity to convey the nuances of how Knowledge Holders with lived experiences are navigating around the challenges that face them. (Paraphrased)
3. Arts-based tools offer new ways of considering tensions from different angles, by honouring the diverse ways that Knowledge Holders may use to express, co-create and disseminate representations of their lived realities via culturally safe research approaches. (Lenette 2019: 41-42)

What stands out from the above points is the emphasis on creating an environment where Knowledge Holders, the participants, can draw from their lived experiences and cultural contexts and creatively communicate these through arts-based research. The arts offer a conducive environment to do so. By privileging the participants’ lived experiences, the participants are empowered to tell their own stories from their perspectives. According to Lenette (2019: 35), “Arts-based methods are conducive to maintaining the human or storytelling elements of research”. This research centred on the desire to speak out on the Gukurahundi issue and to share experiences of this period, acknowledges that the Gukurahundi is an issue that is continuing to affect humanity in Matabeleland and that storytelling is a crucial element of speaking out. In the Ndebele culture, storytelling is at the centre of the *langalezo* practice.

The participatory nature inherent in participatory arts-based research methods is very important for this research because it is considered emancipatory. This research is anchored on the emancipatory paradigm that will be discussed later in this chapter. Ward and Shortt argue that:

Research should be participative and generative. Research should be done for people and with people...Let people loose with the materials or the technology or the story prompt and off they will go, no matter what you want them to talk about...Arts-based research, because so much of it is improvised, shows how knowledge moves, and how much it is embedded in its context. It embraces and encourages and goes out of its way to produce and celebrate the protean.
(Ward and Shortt 2020: vi)

Arts-based research, therefore, encourages adaptability to suit the context of the research. The participants are positioned at the centre of the research. This empowers them to share their subjective experiences and to seek to transform their circumstances. Its adaptability makes it malleable for creativity.

Arts-based research creates more opportunities for collaborating with the marginalised to pursue agendas in a manner considered emancipatory (Lenette 2019). The victims and survivors of the Gukurahundi consider themselves marginalised concerning sharing their stories of this period. Participating in devising and publicly staging theatre on the subject offered possibilities for the participants' marginalised voices to be amplified. This is emancipatory. It increases agency for the participants who become co-creators or co-producers of narratives that seek to transform their society – aiming for social change. In line with Leavy's (2017: 20, italics are from the source) observations, "with [participants] creating the data, may serve as an empowering experience for them, affording them the opportunity to express themselves without preconceived notions of what is expected or wanted, and *insights that would otherwise be unavailable may emerge*".

2.5 Research Paradigms

This research is anchored mainly on two paradigms: the interpretive and the emancipatory paradigm. Within the elements of research, a research paradigm element falls under the philosophical category alongside ontology and epistemology. As Leavy (2017: 11) explains, "the philosophical elements of research answer the question "What do we believe?". Philosophical elements of research should not be taken for granted as they shape our research in great ways. John W. Creswell (2013:15) posits that "whether we are aware of it or not, we always bring certain beliefs and philosophical assumptions to our research...Often, at a less abstract level, these philosophical assumptions inform our choice of theories that guide our research". What we believe influences the way we practise research, how we view the

social world, the things we believe can be known about social life, the way research should proceed, who can be a knower, the kind of knowledge that is valued and the ways of knowing (Leavy 2017).

Paradigms are very important in research. A paradigm provides the lens through which we view research and the way we conduct it. Leavy (2017: 11) explains a paradigm as “a worldview or framework through which knowledge is filtered...it is a foundational perspective carrying a set of assumptions that guides the research process”. The research paradigm(s) guides our thinking and our actions during the process of research. Below I give a brief outline of the paradigms that guided my research.

Interpretive Paradigm

According to Leavy (2017: 130) the interpretive paradigm “examines how people engage in processes of constructing and reconstructing meanings through daily interactions”. She observes that a researcher working within this paradigm focuses on people’s patterns of interaction and the interpretive processes by which they assign meanings to events, situations, and so on. What the research prioritises therefore are people’s subjective understandings and multiple meanings that emerge from the research process. As Given (2008: 459) puts it, “Interpretive inquiry, as is the case with all other forms of qualitative inquiry, focuses on understanding (interpreting) the meanings, purposes, and intentions (interpretations) people give to their own actions and interactions with others”.

In this research, I was, therefore, interested in the meanings that the second-generation sufferers of the Gukurahundi attach to the stories of pain and suffering of this period that have been narrated to them by parents, friends, relatives, and community members. I was further interested in how participating in the process of devising and staging theatre encouraged the participants to share these stories in the form of speaking out since the research was being done against the backdrop of a silenced Gukurahundi narrative. The subjective experiences of the participants were prioritised as this research sought to encourage speaking out for people who are part of Matabeleland and Midlands, whose condition, in the Zimbabwean social and political system, is a condition of the subaltern.

Autoethnography (Creswell 2013) and community autoethnography (Toyosaki et al. 2009) constitute the methodology that I used in the interpretive paradigm. In autoethnographic research, a researcher connects personal experiences to wider cultural, political, and social meanings and understandings. As Stacy H. Jones, Tony E. Adams, and Carolyn Ellis observe:

One characteristic that binds all autoethnographies is the use of personal experience to examine and/or critique cultural experience. Autoethnographers do this in work that ranges from including personal experience within an otherwise traditional social scientific analysis... to

the presentation of aesthetic projects—poetry, prose, films, dance, photographic essays, and performances—as autoethnographic research. (Jones et al. 2013: 22)

Autoethnography fitted the study well because I was researching my own ethnic, cultural, and linguistic group, a group that I belong to in the place that I grew up and live in. I am a member of the community of the participants and therefore as a researcher, my subjectivity must be declared. Interpretive research not only acknowledges subjective experience as inevitable in the interpretation of research but considers it a strength. According to Ronald Jackson, Darlene K. Drummond, and Sakile Kamara (2007: 23) “subjectivity also leads to enhanced safeguards for trustworthiness such as member-checking. By doing this, the researcher notes that his or her study of others’ experiences borders the investigator’s experience as well”. As an ‘insider’ I do identify with the things the participants have experienced and, in some cases, continue to experience. I have an interest in seeing the Gukurahundi issue being addressed. However, I conducted the research guided by ethical standards.

As an insider of the society being studied, I understand the symbols, language, figures of speech, gestures, and shared meanings in the area of the Gukurahundi. I believe this helped me to interact and communicate with participants in a way that may not have been possible or at the very least difficult for an outsider. These shared ways of communicating help in creating meanings between individuals and within a small group (Blumer 1969; Hesse-Biber & Leavy 2011). For example, during the research the participants would refer to the 5 Brigade, the government, and other State Agents using symbols, gestures, and words that as an insider I understood their meanings but that would have been difficult or at times impossible for an outsider to unpack. For example, a participant would just say “*bona*”, which simply means “*them*” at a literal level, but as an insider of the community, I would be able to identify who was being referred to based on accompanying gestures, tonal variations, symbolism, and so on. Symbolism was even extended to the costumes used in the play. The characters acting as 5 Brigade soldiers were identified with red berets, a feature which characterised them during the Gukurahundi. A simple red beret, without a full army uniform, is enough (and proved enough in this research) to costume the 5 Brigade soldiers. Even the audience members from Matabeleland did not have any difficulty in terms of interpreting this kind of symbolic costuming. During interactions, the shared ways of communication and meanings helped the researcher to act appropriately and not unintentionally offend the participants. The issue of trust was also important, as I will discuss later in this chapter.

Autoethnography was used together with community autoethnography which is participatory and nurtures a sense of community (Toyosaki et al. 2009). This helped in team building as we worked together as a group during the devising process. Toyosaki et al. explain community autoethnography as follows:

We intend community autoethnography to be a relationship-making activity among researchers who participate in and coconstruct each other’s existence...Community autoethnography, as

well, is a topic-centered and interpretive approach, which helps its participants create a “safer” environment for gaining in-depth and intimate understandings of the topic...Community autoethnography centers such interactions around a given social/cultural issue, possibly to resituate it through community building. (Toyosaki et al. 2009: 59)

The qualities of community autoethnography captured in the above quotation resonated well with my research because they fit into the *ubuntu* philosophy that is prevalent in the Ndebele culture. For example, the Ndebele values communal life as seen in their proverbs. One of them says “*Umuntu ngumuntu ngabantu*” [A human being is a human being because of other human beings]. This stresses the importance of communal existence – no one exists in a vacuum, one person’s life benefits from the existence of others and vice versa. This philosophy made working together as a group efficient. We treated each other with respect. Collectively devising *Speak Out!* benefited from this philosophy as everyone in the group was committed to addressing the Gukurahundi issue which affected (and to some extent, continues to affect) our community.

Emancipatory Paradigm

The emancipatory paradigm seeks to empower participants and increase their agency in the transformation of the oppressive societal structures they find themselves in. It resonates well with the Post-colonial feminist theories that advocate for the agency of women from the Third World¹⁴. Similarly, survivors of the 1980s atrocities in Zimbabwe need to be encouraged to recount what happened and also come up with culturally appropriate ways of dealing with their pain and trauma. Paulo Freire (1970) has influenced many theatre practitioners with his liberatory and emancipatory theories. He sees conscientisation as important in the empowerment of participants to change their undesirable circumstances. This research builds on such works. Augusto Boal (1979), in his *Theatre of the Oppressed*, has also emphasised the need for the oppressed to transform their oppressive conditions. Participation helps in raising consciousness, mobilising for action, and amplifying needs from the margins (hooks 1984; Conrad and Campbell 2008).

This research was therefore birthed from a desire to see the second-generation sufferers of the Gukurahundi being empowered to liberate themselves from the socio-political conditions that are silencing them. Intimidation and repression have made speaking out on the Gukurahundi difficult. The research set out to explore ways of encouraging the victims and survivors of the Gukurahundi and their children to speak out on this issue. To gain confidence and boldness to speak is indeed emancipatory. It is

¹⁴ This concept is political when used by postcolonial feminists. I use it with the awareness of the connotations it may have.

empowering. Fear to speak and silence are oppressive. As Miranda Young-Jahangeer (2009: 38) observes, the oppressed of post-colonial societies need to come to a place where they “become liberated from the economic, social and political domination and to break the culture of silence which perpetuates it”. Matarasso (2019) also affirms that participatory art is emancipatory and democratic and thus full of potential for responding to societal issues around us to cause social change and imagine better futures. This potential is especially realised in community art. Cognisant of this potential present in participatory art, we set out to devise theatre as a way of exploring ways of encouraging the second-generation sufferers of the Gukurahundi to speak out – a critical ingredient for the *langalezo* experience.

Within the emancipatory paradigm, this research used Participatory Action Research (PAR) as a methodology (McIntyre 2008; Whyte et al. 1991). PAR involves people in the research to do research with them instead of for them. This gives them agency and thus it is emancipatory. In this research, participants were involved in the processes of the research that included devising and staging theatre, interviews, focus group discussions, and post-performance discussions. According to McIntyre (2008: xvii) what attracts practitioners and researchers to PAR is its “potential to explain and interpret reality so as to change it”. What is central in PAR is active participation as opposed to participants playing passive roles. As Whyte et al. (1991: 20) put it, “In participatory action research (PAR), some of the people in the organization or community under study participate actively with the professional researcher throughout the research process”. This way, the people become catalysts for change (Freire 1970; Boal 1970). PAR follows cyclical steps or stages consisting of planning, action, reflection, and evaluation. These proved valuable to this study.

Popular Participatory Theatre (PPT) (Young-Jahangeer 2020) was used as a method in this research. The major characteristic of PPT, which became attractive for this research, is that it prioritises the participation of members of the affected community in the theatre-making process. Therefore, members of the community affected by the Gukurahundi took part in devising and staging theatre during the research. This form is also rooted in the community such that the audience members also play a huge role in the success of the theatre experience. This, therefore, made the post-performance discussions an important part of the research process.

2.6 Getting Started: Ethical Considerations and Negotiating Consent

Research is a human endeavour and thus ethics permeates all aspects of social research. The ethical elements of research involve values, ethics, and reflexivity. The ethical component combines the

philosophical and praxis elements. Ethics influence the design of the study and its execution. (Leavy 2017). Emphasising the importance of ethics in social research, Leavy explains that:

The word ethics comes from the Greek word *ethos*, which means character. Ethics involve morality, integrity, fairness, and truthfulness. Morality is about knowing what is right and wrong, and integrity is about acting on that knowledge. Ethics are central to social research. Because we are human beings engaged in understanding other human beings—social realities—ethics are of the utmost importance so that our research is not harmful. (Leavy 2017: 24)

The data-generating processes involving devising and staging theatre, interviews, focus group discussions, observations, and day-to-day conversations were only started after research participants had signed consent forms. However, I had to negotiate around some challenges.

As a member of the Matabeleland community and a Ndebele, I am an insider of the community that I was working with in this research. However, getting consent to work with the participants from this community is not automatic. Consent is negotiated. When dealing with a sensitive issue like the Gukurahundi, one can be an insider who is an 'outsider'. As a survival strategy and as a safety measure many people of Matabeleland will not discuss issues to do with the Gukurahundi with a stranger even if that stranger is a member of the community. As a result, when you are not known to the individual, you may be closed out of the safety net or bubble and be related to as an 'outsider'. A Ndebele adage goes "*Imiduli ilendlebe*" and "*izihlahla zilendlebe*" translated as "walls have ears" and "trees have ears" respectively. These words are a caution to be careful of what you say as you may not be aware of who is listening or where your words will be retold or reported. To confirm such feelings, many participants confirmed that they do not engage in discussions that touch on this period while in public spaces or on public transport. The consensus was such acts *kuyatshayisa* [you can get beaten for it] and *kuyanyamalalisa* [it can get you abducted].

Consent, therefore, in my research, was at two levels, and at both levels, it had to be negotiated. While educational institutions like universities generally understand consent to be the permission granted by the participants to participate in research, in research that deals with sensitive issues there is more to consent than what is generally understood. To get someone to sign a consent form, the assumption is that this person has allowed you to introduce your research and yourself to them. Participants can only decide to grant consent (and sign a consent form) after you have introduced yourself to them, explained your research to them, and maybe clarified some questions that they have. However, in research that deals with sensitive issues, there is a level of consent that you need to negotiate before you get to the level of signing consent forms – you need the participant's consent to hear your introduction and the introduction of your research. If the participant refuses this consent you cannot explain your research to them and you cannot introduce yourself. In my research, the letter of introduction and request for consent

was insufficient. Participants needed to see me first to ask further questions before committing. Something written is treated with suspicion because participants live in a society where many believe that they can be ambushed and ‘fished out’ as Gukurahundi activists and ‘silenced’.

The usual consent of signing the consent form, which I refer to as the second level of consent, as required by research ethics is not that much of a hurdle because once the participants have heard about your research they are free to decide to participate or not. From the introduction you would have given them, they can evaluate for themselves the pros and cons of participating in the research and make an informed decision. The potential participants are thinking of safety. The main questions they ask are: Can I trust this person? Is this genuine research or a camouflage for something sinister? Who is this researcher in the first place? These questions are of utmost importance to potential participants from a community shrouded in silence, a community that has for a long time witnessed fierce state repression of the Gukurahundi discussions. When a researcher suddenly approaches them with a research idea that seeks to encourage them to speak out and share stories and experiences of such a painful past, a ‘yes yes’ response should not always be expected. There will be hesitations (as there were in my research), suspicions, and many questions. That is understandable. If you saw someone speaking out on the Gukurahundi being arrested, a researcher who comes up with an idea to encourage you to speak out can easily be found suspicious. Treading cautiously becomes a learned survival technique for those living in circumstances where certain actions are risky.

Faced with the social and psychological barrier of a safety net, I had to find practical ways of negotiating consent, particularly the first level of consent – what I would call the consent to get consent. I had to find a middleman – someone personally known to the potential participants. I, therefore, approached a particular director of an arts organisation¹⁵ in Bulawayo and asked him to assist me in identifying potential participants from among his group members who might be willing to participate in this research. This art group provided me with a safe and ethical way of gaining access to the participants (Given 2008). I was trusted by the director, and his group members trusted him. This made them more likely to trust me.

The organisation and its director also helped maintain accountability. I would from time to time update the director on the research processes that the organisation members involved in my research were working on. The director of this group played a big role in getting members of his group to consent to come to a meeting where I was to introduce myself and my research. At the meeting, I introduced myself

¹⁵ I have deliberately left out the name of the arts group and the name of the director since anonymity was part of the ethics of the research. Revealing the name of the group or their director would make members of the group easily identifiable. While the performances were public and the participants were seen by the audience, revealing their workplaces could compromise the ethics arrangements that were in place for the research. The director of the arts group referred to here is someone that I knew prior to the research and thus it was easier for me to introduce my research to him.

and my research. I also answered the questions from the potential participants. It was after this process that the participants signed consent forms agreeing to participate in the research. In this initial meeting, three participants were present. When these three participants had accepted me into their safe space they then acted as middlemen to introduce me to their friends who also joined the project. This is snowball sampling (Creswell 2013). As the process continued I also recruited two other members that I had worked with before on some other projects.

Following the do no harm approach to ethics (Leavey 2017) I had to make sure that my participants were not exposed to danger. Needless to say, participants pointed out this danger right at the beginning of the project. Below is an entry in my reflective journal:

Reflections on the First Meeting

The atmosphere was serene. We sat circularly. There was high expectation in the air – at least from my perspective. The prospective participants (holding the yet-to-be-signed consent forms) listened attentively as I explained more about the project. Being cognisant of the concerns that they had, I had arranged for a meeting. In this meeting, I was to explain further and in person and they were to ask as many questions as they wanted. Those who wanted to commit to taking part in the project would then sign the consent forms and those who did not want to commit would be free not to take part.

Here and there, one or two people would randomly punctuate the flow with throat clearing. The participants seemed eager to take part in the project. They nodded here and there to affirm something I had said. – I felt a sense of community permeating the air. I was encouraged by the solidarity that seemed to set in even before the actual project took off. After a lengthy explanation, I paused for questions. A hand shot up. I gestured for the young man to speak. Without wasting a second, he deposited the words in the air “What if we get arrested?” There was silence. The question lingered in the air. The others in the room fastened their eyes on me, with body language that suggested the young man had asked a question that they also had in their minds. I had indeed thought about this danger before but at this moment the severity of this potential danger settled in. (From my reflective journal, 20 February 2019)

Guaranteeing that participants would not be arrested was not something I could assure. Participating in the research project came with that risk. All research that involves challenging the status quo has a degree of risk. However, as a researcher, I had to take all steps necessary and possible under the circumstances to reduce it. One of the things I did to reduce the risk of arrest and increase safety for participants was to find a safe rehearsal space where we would work away from the public eye. I also explained the minimal risks to the participants so that they could decide whether to take part or not. Finding a safe rehearsal space was not easy. Theatre-making involves speaking out (often aloud), singing, dancing, and at times playing theatre games and doing some exercises. This increases the

chance of being heard or seen while working or rehearsing. The ideal place therefore would have to be located in an area away from public view. It is difficult in Bulawayo to find a space that suits that description while at the same time offering a conducive environment for theatre-making. Somewhat miraculously, I managed to secure such a place. It was a large office with an open space that could be used for rehearsals. The office was located out of town in a quiet industrial area. Industries in Bulawayo are not operating at full capacity so some of its areas are quiet. A friend of mine offered me this space. It became a solution to the safety dilemma that we faced. Other ways of making participants safe are discussed in Chapter 5.

One of the things that I did at the stage of the signing of the consent forms was to make sure that I explained everything involved in the research and the rights of the participants to withdraw at any stage in the process. These things were captured in the letter of introduction and the consent form but I had to explain them to the participants again when we met since they had requested to meet me face-to-face for a discussion first. As noted by Anne Ryen (2004: 219) "Research subjects have the right to know that they are being researched, the right to be informed about the nature of the research and the right to withdraw at any time". I explained everything to the participants to make sure everyone understood what they were getting themselves involved in, and what their rights were.

2.7 Confidentiality

To keep the identity of the participants confidential participants' names were not used in the research. In some instances, pseudonyms were used. Photos of the participants were kept confidential and not included in the thesis. The video of the performance was also kept confidential. It was not shared publicly through platforms like YouTube, Facebook, or WhatsApp. However, there was an ethical dilemma to negotiate. Since the participants were required to participate in a play to be staged publicly, it meant the participants could not remain anonymous on the performance days. This was explained to the participants so that they understand that on the performance days, anyone who watches these performances will be able to see them. When I explained this to the participants I thought some would find this problematic. However, they were excited by the prospect of going on stage and making their voices heard. They were not worried about a public performance. At times participants do not want to remain anonymous.

As we were preparing for our performances a need arose for us to get t-shirts and caps for use as costumes. After we had finalised issues of colour, design to be selected, and sizes, the participants suggested that we print the names of participants on the t-shirts and caps. Being so cautious about issues of anonymity, I quickly suggested to the participants that we use pseudonyms on the t-shirts and caps. I

was very confident that the participants would like this idea and embrace it. Well, I was wrong. Some participants wanted their real names printed on the t-shirts and caps. Thinking that maybe they did not understand the implications, I explained again. It turned out they were clear about their choices and they were sticking to them. Ryen (2004: 221) posits “[s]o how do we know that subjects all want to be treated anonymously? They don’t always, and this represents another dilemma”. During the discussions about the use of real names on the t-shirts and caps, one of the participants assuringly chuckled “Don’t worry Sir¹⁶, *thina asiyesabi lutho*” [Don’t worry Sir, we are not afraid of anything]. After further discussions, we agreed that those who want to use pseudonyms are free to do so and those who want to use their real names are also free to do so. It was almost a 50/50 distribution. However, in the thesis, the identities of all the participants were kept confidential.

2.8 Trust

According to Ryen (2004: 222), “trust refers to the relationship between the researcher and the participants, and to the researcher’s responsibility not to ‘spoil’ the field for others in the sense that potential research subjects become reluctant to research”. Ryne further emphasises the need for standard practices to present both the researcher and the work as trustworthy. Consent, confidentiality, and trust are closely linked. Trust is a key ingredient needed to build good field relations. Another related issue is that of building rapport which speaks to the relationship between the researcher and the participants. A deep and intense field relation is a product of shared understanding (Ryen 2004).

One of the ways I used to gain the trust of the participants was to go through an arts group Director who became the gatekeeper for those participants that I started the research with. Those who joined during the process joined because they knew the initial participants and the other two were personally known to me after I had worked with them on some other projects before. This helped in building trust in the group and establishing rapport between myself as the researcher and the participants. Being of the same ethnicity as the participants also helped in earning their trust. However, this is not enough as trust and rapport need to continue being cultivated throughout the process of the research. Right from the beginning, I was honest with the participants in terms of the goals of the research and how the data from the research will be used and presented in the thesis. During the process, I endeavoured to maintain

¹⁶ The participants addressed me as Sir. In the Zimbabwean context male teachers at school and lecturers at universities are commonly addressed using “Sir”. The participants therefore knowing my work background addressed me so.

cordial and professional relations with the participants. I treated all of them with respect. In return, the participants also treated me with respect.

One of the major factors that made me be accepted by the participants is that I come from the same society that was affected by the Gukurahundi. I believe if this research had been carried out by an outsider researcher, participants would possibly have been more reluctant to participate. This is not to say it would not have been possible, but I believe it would have been difficult. As an insider to the Matabeleland community, it was easier for me to understand what the participants were referring to even if they used rich language such as symbolism, similes, hyperbole, and so on. As part of building trust and rapport with the participants, we would share refreshments during working breaks, chatting as we did so. At times we also went together to attend theatre performances in the city. Since some of the participants were involved in other theatre companies I made it a point to attend their events when they had performances. I thus became supportive of them beyond the research. Attending their artistic events also came as a way of reciprocity but it also felt good to be part of an artistic community.

Admittedly, as a Lecturer I came to the group with a particular privilege and status. Not only that, I was a bit older than all my participants. In our relations therefore they related to me less as a peer but as an older brother or an uncle. They addressed me as Sir, *Mdala*, *Malume*,¹⁷ and such respecting terms. In the Ndebele culture that is how it is – the younger is expected to refer to the elder using terms that show respect. Since this research was done within the Ndebele cultural context, I did not seek to dismantle these ways of relating. I let them be. There was also no way of changing my status as a Lecturer. What I therefore did was to make sure that I also respected the participants and did not use my position and status to exploit the participants or to dominate them. As we were wrapping up the project one of the participants remarked “*Wena mdala sisebenze lawe kuhle yazi. Asizange sike sibe leproblem ngitsho*” [We worked with you in a good way. We never had a problem at all].

Building a good relationship requires intentionally taking steps to do so during the research process. Claus Springborg points out that:

It is important to make participants feel at ease during the data collection session. Researchers can do a number of things to make participants feel at ease... First, it is important to give participants information about how the data will be used, tell them what precautions will be used to ensure their anonymity, and answer any questions the participants may have relating to the formal structure of the research process and data handling. Second, if the participants do not

¹⁷ *Malume* is an Ndebele term for uncle. The term is used to refer to one’s uncle or any elderly individual being accorded a status of respect. The strength of being referred to as *malume* in the Ndebele culture is that it comes with a sense of flexibility. Unlike a father who is expected to be strict, an uncle is expected to be more relaxed. Nieces and nephews can play with the uncle. For the participants to relate to me as their *malume* therefore meant they felt free to work with me.

already know each other, it is important to take time to establish a certain level of trust and make participants feel at ease with each other. (Springborg 2020: 54-55)

In Chapter 5, I explain further how the issues of building trust were handled in line with the issues that are highlighted by Springborg.

2.9 Issues of Compensation and Reciprocity

The issues of compensation and reciprocity are important in social research. John W. Creswell points out that “giving back to participants for their time and efforts in our projects—reciprocity—is important, and we need to review how participants will gain from our studies” (Creswell 2013: 55). Similar sentiments have been expressed by Ryne who observes:

Participating in research is not only voluntary, but often also without compensation. Initially this can be seen as unethical in so far as an interview is regarded as work. Still, research is given an unofficial licence to deviate partly from norms regulating daily interaction. We can ask all possible questions, and we do not compensate in monetary terms. Research subjects not only give of their time, but also share their own private stories or property with us. (Ryne 2004: 26)

While participating in research as a participant is generally not considered work to be compensated with pay, there is a need to acknowledge the time, effort, and sacrifices of the participants to make the research project a success. There is a need therefore to show reciprocity to the participants and to acknowledge their efforts. Failure to show reciprocity may discourage research participants from participating in similar research in the future as they might feel ‘used’ by the researcher.

In my research, I gave all the participants money at the end of the project as a token of appreciation. Because of the economic challenges in Zimbabwe, I perceived that monetary offerings would be best suited. Another aspect to note is that the time the participants spent with me could have been spent earning somewhere else. I, therefore, did not want them to lose income by participating in my research project. A token of appreciation needs to be of value and in the context where I was working, money was suitable. The money was not significant but the participants appreciated it. I made it clear right from the beginning of the project that this will not be a pay but a token of appreciation. Of course, there is, and indeed was, that difficult moment for a researcher to decide what is too little, enough, or too much when it comes to a monetary offering or stipend. To gauge what was expected I raised this with the group. As might be expected, the responses of the participants were not uniform – expectations differ. What is important therefore is for the researcher to make a balanced approach. Secondly, in deciding what kind of stipend or offering to give to participants, I put myself in the shoes of the participants. I am part of their community so some of the expectations that they had I understood (though not completely). I, therefore,

asked myself the question, what would I consider to be a worthy stipend or offering if I were in their shoes as a participant in a research of this nature?

Another way of showing reciprocity to the participants was to support them in their artistic careers by attending their events. I made it a point to attend their artistic events – some with entry fees and some for free. I wanted to show solidarity. They appreciated that. Even after the data gathering process, I have continued to support their artistic events as much as possible.

I made sure that the participants did not use their financial resources for the research. I did not want the research to be a financial burden to them. I therefore gave the participants transport money to attend research activities. I also provided refreshments in the form of food and drinks during those days we were meeting for a long time. I also bought airtime and data bundles for participants to enable them to participate in the WhatsApp group activities and also to call when necessary. When a participant used their own money, such as when a participant ended up using expensive transport to be at the rehearsal on time, I would reimburse their expenses.

The idea of an offering is very common in the Ndebele culture. This also extends to the *langalezo* context. When someone comes to comfort the bereaved it is acceptable to bring an offering in the form of money to assist the grieving to meet expenses for burial or for communicating the message of death to those in faraway places. In the rural areas, one can also bring an offering in the form of grain, mealie meal, dried vegetables, and such stuff so that the people who have gathered for the *langalezo* experience can have something to eat. The material offerings are one of the ways of showing solidarity, support, and love during difficult times. Giving participants offerings was therefore something culturally and socially acceptable for my research.

2.10 Population Sample/Participants

This study was carried out with ten members of the Ndebele community in Zimbabwe. The number fluctuated during the project as some members joined the group and some left. The participants were recruited from the Bulawayo Metropolitan Province. I was guided by Willis Sutton and T. Munson's (1976) definition of community which included a "specific population" as its elements. Participants in this research included both males and females. I recruited participants who were young men and women between 18-35 years. This is the age group that fits well into the category of second-generation sufferers of Gukurahundi. The participants took part in devising and staging theatre on the subject of the 1980s atrocities. Participation in the project was voluntary but the participants were purposively sampled (Etikan,

Musa, and Alkassim 2016) so that Ndebele people from Matabeleland and/or Midlands provinces of Zimbabwe took part in the research.

The first participants were recruited through the theatre group that they belong to. The Director of the group acted as the gatekeeper to authorise the researcher to work with the participants. Initially, it was three participants from this group. These participants then helped in bringing aboard their friends (both from their theatre group and outside their theatre group) in a manner that fits into the snowballing way of recruiting researchers. I also brought in two participants that I knew from projects I had done before.

2.11 Duration of the Project

The process of devising and staging theatre on the subject of the Gukurahundi, including the wrap-up process, started in January 2019 and ended in February 2020. The actual period of the project was about one year and one month. This excludes the preparatory work that needed to be done as well as the data analysis and writing-up stages.

2.12 Exit or Project Wrap Up

How one leaves the research scene is important and a researcher has to think carefully of how this has to be done. After working on the research for several months with the participants we developed a relationship and a group dynamic that we all enjoyed. At the end of the research project, most participants had gained confidence and would have loved to see it continue. I also would have been happy to continue with the work a bit further. However, when a project is being done within the confines of the study, its timeframe is also influenced by the demands of the study – it has to end. Being cognisant of these realities, I pondered on the best way of wrapping up the research project. Creswell advises that one of the best ways of exiting the scene of a research study is “through slow withdrawal and conveying information about our departure—so that the participants do not feel abandoned” (Creswell 2013: 55). As the wrap-up process gradually set in, I had a meeting with the research participants where I thanked them for their participation. In response, the participants also thanked me for working respectfully and professionally with them. I also assured the participants that I would make the final copy of the thesis available to them.

Though I had given the participants some estimates of when the project would end, when the time came some wished it could continue. During one of our reflection sessions towards the end of the project, one participant exclaimed “*So vele sokuphelela khonapha mdala, asisaqhubekeli phambili?*” [So this is the

end of it, Sir, we are not continuing?]. Another participant also added “*Mina njengami vele besengile confidence uyazi. Kuthi ngabe siya qhubeka ngoSpeak Out!*”¹⁸ [As for me I had gained confidence you know. I wish we could continue with *Speak Out!*]. However, not everyone was raring to continue. Some wanted to see the project come to an end especially those who had other commitments. For example, one young lady was preparing to move to South Africa and was glad that the project was coming to an end so that her movement would not come midway through the project. Indeed, we managed to wrap up the project before her move to South Africa. What I learned from her circumstances is that research projects that stretch over several months need to be sensitive to the fact that some of the participants could have other plans in the future and the researcher should factor those plans in mapping out the research outline to avoid complications and disappointments – for both the researcher and the participants.

To achieve the slow withdrawal (Creswell 2013), we took advantage of the WhatsApp group that we had created for the research project. At a time when physical activities stopped, we continued being active on the WhatsApp group. We continued chatting in the group with participants casually interacting. As time continued, this WhatsApp group began to assume a new identity. The participants began sharing about their art activities. Invitations to artistic events began to be shared with the group. Thus we continued supporting each other by attending artistic events where one of the group members was involved. As this was happening some members started exiting the group slowly. All these helped to give us an exit from the research project. At the time of writing the thesis, a couple of members were still part of the WhatsApp group though posts have reduced significantly. It is only occasionally that someone posts something. The WhatsApp group has become more of a network platform for sharing information on artistic events taking place in the City of Kings (Bulawayo).

2.13 Data collection

In qualitative research, data is collected/generated from multiple perspectives (Creswell 2013). Collectively devising and staging theatre and post-performance discussions formed the backbone of the

¹⁸ *Speak Out!* is the title we gave to our devised theatre piece. The first phase produced *Speak Out! Phase One* and the second phase produced *Speak Out! Phase Two*. The *Speak Out!* term became common among the participants. For example, if one were asking if we are meeting for a rehearsal you would hear them saying “*Silo Speak Out! namhla?*” or “*USpeak Out! ukhona namhla?*” [Is there *Speak Out!* today?]. *Speak Out!* became part of the research vocabulary that we used. Like other terms that we used during our discussion, I observed that our shared vocabulary helped us to communicate effectively among ourselves. It also helped me as a researcher to gain a deeper understanding of the meanings that the participants attached to certain words and phrases. This assisted me also when I came to the data analysis and interpretation stage. My familiarity with the language and the vocabulary that the participants used made me interpret what was said or done in context. This is important for qualitative research that is situated in the social and cultural contexts of the participants.

data generation/collecting process. My primary role was that of a **Participant-Facilitator**. I was the one responsible for the facilitation of the research processes. I was the facilitator of the devising process, post-performance discussions, and Focus Group discussions, and I was the one who conducted interviews and facilitated reflection sessions. Therefore, while I was a participant, I was also the facilitator. My second role was that of a **Participant-Observer**. While participating in the activities of the research, I was also observing. I was observing the actions of the participants to find meanings and interpretations. At times, I would take the role of a passive observer as I observed participants working on the theatre piece scenes. Hand in hand with the process of devising and staging theatre, data was gathered/generated through or from the following:

Interviews

Interviews were held with each participant at the beginning of the project. Interviews were also held towards the end of the project. For those participants who joined the process mid-way, interviews were held with them at the time of joining the project. Unstructured open-ended questions were used during the interviews. These kinds of interviews “often encourage stories of life, if not fully-fledged life stories” (Gray 2003: 148). The interviews held at the beginning of the project were aimed at finding out how the participants had experienced the phenomenon under study – their stories concerning the Gukurahundi. These interviews were also aimed at finding out the participants’ experiences of theatre in general and devised theatre, in particular, to be clear about what theatrical experience they were bringing into the research. These interviews also sought to understand the identity of the individuals who were participating in the research. The first interviews were also meant to find out how the second-generation sufferers of the Gukurahundi identify with the traumatic experiences of their parents and relatives. The interviews done at the end of the research project were meant to solicit the participants’ views, thoughts, reflections, and stories of experience concerning the research project they had participated in.

Focus Group Discussions

One Focus Group Discussion was held at the beginning of the project and one was held at the end of the project. The Focus Group discussions were held with the same aims as the interviews. Added to the Focus Group Discussions is the concept of having conversations with each other. This meant that the participants were not telling individual stories and experiences but collective stories and experiences. They, therefore, helped each other in building the narratives. As noted by Creswell (2013: 165) “Focus groups are advantageous when the interaction among interviewees will likely yield the best information,

when interviewees are similar and cooperative with each other". In my research, this was the case. At the beginning of the research, the participants were aware that during the research process, they were going to work collectively. Focus group discussions were therefore setting them up for this collaborative nature of working. At the end of the research, the participants had an experience of working together in collectively devising and staging theatre. There was therefore a need to have a discussion that allowed for a collective sharing of experiences since the reflection was on a collective phenomenon. This is discussed more in Chapter 5.

Observations

As I have already mentioned, I was a Participant-Observer in this research. According to Creswell:

Observation is one of the key tools for collecting data in qualitative research. It is the act of noting a phenomenon in the field setting through the five senses of the observer, often with an instrument, and recording it for scientific purposes...You may watch physical setting, participants, activities, interactions, conversations, and your own behaviors during the observation. Use your senses, including sight, hearing, touch, smell, and taste. (Creswell 2013: 166)

I, therefore, observed the activities of the participants and reflected on my behaviour during the process of the research. Self-reflective enquiry helped me to seriously think about what I was observing and my thoughts, feelings, actions, and motivations to understand myself better and to make meaning of the things I was observing. This is linked to Participatory Action Research (PAR) which involves collectively taking action to change the world around us after gaining understanding from reflective inquiry. Given the categories of observation outlined by Michael V. Angrosino (2007) and Creswell (2013), my observation fell into the complete participant and participant as observer categories. At times one category applied more while at times the other applied more depending on the demands and nature of the research activities at hand.

Reflective Journal

I kept a Reflective Journal where I entered my reflections on the activities of the research for every day we met. I usually entered my reflections later in the day or the evening after our research sessions. At times I would make my entries right there at the venue immediately after the devising session. This proved useful as I would capture the fresh impressions, interpretations, meanings, thoughts, and reflections that I would have made concerning the activities that would have taken place during the research sessions.

When the research began I was so excited about the idea of the reflective journal that I also thought it would be a wonderful idea for the participants.

Right there at the beginning of the devising process, I introduced the idea of reflective journals to the participants. The participants were to use the counter books from left to write as notebooks and from right to left (from back cover to the centre) as reflective journals. However, the participants disapproved of the reflective journals. When I probed further, one participant asked “*Sir ufuna sibhale lapha?*” [Sir, do you want us to write here?”]

It turned out that the participants were not enthusiastic about using a reflective journal. I learned that some things do not work as smoothly as envisioned and thus I had to be flexible and adapt. I observed that a reflective journal was being considered by the participants as scholarly and, as Lenette points out, “artists may not wish to engage in scholarly activities” (Lenette 2019: 45). Writing in the journals was going to be burdensome to the participants who wanted to concentrate on theatre-making. I then made the reflective journal optional for the participants. Those who were comfortable with it were to use it and those who were not were free not to use it. At the end of the project, it turned out that no one among the research participants had used the reflective journal.

Conversations

Conversations were held as part of the day-to-day working with the participants. We would have these conversations during the devising sessions, during lunch breaks, in the car to and from the rehearsal venue, and at times while we were walking down the road to the commuter omnibus bus stops, to and from the rehearsal venue or to the shops to get food or to buy costumes. These conversations were formal and informal. Through these conversations, I got to understand a lot about the participants’ experiences concerning the 1980s massacres. Since at times these conversations took place in relaxed settings outside the ‘official’ research site, they were characterised by participants freely sharing their views and thoughts on the subject of the atrocities. In most cases, they came across as reflections on the research process we were involved in.

2.14 Data Recording Procedure

For the devising process, I recorded data in my **notebook**, **reflective journal**, and through **still photographs**. **Video recording** and still photographs were used to record and capture the two performances that were presented. The post-performance discussions were also recorded on video.

These were also captured in **still photographs**. Interviews and Focus group discussions were recorded using an **audio recording** device. They were also recorded on the interview protocol and Focus group discussions protocol as a backup. Observations were recorded in my **notebook** and my **reflective journal**. The video recordings were used only for the research and were never distributed on public platforms such as YouTube and WhatsApp. For confidentiality, the photographs were used during the data analysis but were not included in the thesis. Data in my notebook, my reflective journal, my interview protocol, and my focus group discussion protocol were kept secure and confidential.

The participants requested to have copies of their photographs taken during the research process. For ethical reasons, we had to discuss this as a group and it was agreed that since still photographs contain no information that can link the person in the photo with the research, it is safe to give participants copies of the photographs. This decision was made as a group. The participants attached much value to the photographs and to having them. I, therefore, gave the participants copies of their still photographs. We agreed that the photographs will be for personal use only and will not be distributed with any tagging that links them to the research. Giving the participants copies of their photographs was in some way reciprocal and a way of giving participants access to the products of the research that they had participated in.

Data from the video recordings and audio recordings was transcribed. I manually transcribed the data myself. Transcribing the data gave me another opportunity to reflect on it and to see emerging themes. Viewing the videos and listening to the audio recordings repeatedly during the transcribing process enabled me to pick up the nuanced meanings in the data. This solidified my interpretation.

2.15 Data Analysis

Data gathered/generated was then analysed following a thematic approach that groups data into themes. As Creswell points out, after the data gathering or generation stage, the next task for the qualitative researcher is to “review all of the data and make sense of it, organizing it into categories or themes that cut across all of the data sources” (Creswell 2013: 45). In the analysis stage, I interpreted the data to make meanings from it. Data came from the process of devising and staging theatre. Data also came from the post-performance discussions. The overarching aim was to find out how these processes can be used to encourage the sufferers of the Gukurahundi to speak out about their experiences. The argument I am advancing is that speaking about the Gukurahundi experiences is, for the victims and survivors of the 1980s violence, a *langalezo* experience – a way of grieving.

Lenette (2019: 39) observes that there is a “growing recognition of artistic creations and performances as research outputs in their own right”. As a result, the plays that came out of this process were

considered data because they contained stories of the sufferers of the Gukurahundi. I, therefore, did a textual analysis of these plays to understand the stories that the second-generation sufferers of the Gukurahundi are sharing through theatre. *Speak Out!* Phase two, which resulted from reworking *Speak Out!* Phase one is attached to this thesis as Appendix A.

2.16 Challenges Faced in the Process

The Fluidity of the Group

While it was desirable to have a stable group with the same participants throughout the project, this did not happen. The group of participants for the research was affected by fluidity. By this I am referring to the movement of members in both directions – some joining the group and some leaving the group. The challenges linked to members leaving the group hit very early in the research journey. The first member to leave the group had gotten a job. I was very happy to see the member get a job. At the same time, the project had been affected. We had to find another new member to replace her.

As mentioned above, our project had two phases. In the first phase, we devised a performance and staged it in March 2019 in Nkulumane, one of Bulawayo's high-density suburbs. In the second phase, we reworked our theatre piece and staged it again, at the Hope Centre located in the Central Business District (CBD) of Bulawayo.

Just before our first performance, another participant got a job in Gweru, a city that is located more than 100km from Bulawayo. This member was playing the role of one of the major characters in our play. Her departure, as the departure of other members, was celebrated for the reason that she was leaving for the greater good. However, we still had to contend with the fact that a gap had been created in the play. With the commitment from the participants, we managed to give her roles to another actor. However, this did not come without its challenges. It meant we had to tweak some areas of the play to make do with the actors available. Devising a script in a setup like this one therefore is not only a matter of following the theme and content as they unfold. It also involves making decisions on what is possible with the available cast. It involves asking questions like what is possible under the circumstances. Having to adjust at that late stage (four days before the performance) meant more pressure. With more pressure emotions can easily flare – and they did! We however solved all disagreements amicably. No matter how hard we would argue in the rehearsal room, it never got out of hand. It would be amicably resolved and, many times, it would become a subject of our jokes and laughter during the breaks for refreshments or in the car after rehearsals. With participants being young people, they often teased each other playfully, turning intense

moments into lighter ones. This helped in creating togetherness, tolerance, and playfulness within the group.

The third member to leave the group also left before the first performance. As an artist, he indicated that he needed to concentrate on his art projects. An opportunity had arisen for him to participate in a play that was being rehearsed for an upcoming festival. As much as he would have loved to continue with us, the other project was a work opportunity and he could not let it pass him by. This member is a poet and during the devising process had composed a poem for the play. As he left the group he left us with the copy of the poem that he had composed and offered that it be recited by another participant. Indeed it was recited by another participant. The member also remained present in our WhatsApp group, probably because he still felt as part of the group. During this same time, one person came to join the group and stayed to watch the rehearsal before making a decision but never returned the following day or any day after that.

The fifth and last member to leave the group midway did so after the performance of phase one. She was a college student who could no longer continue with the project because of schoolwork demands that she needed to concentrate on. After she left we recruited two members to join the group for phase two. The two new members were not only recruited to balance the numbers but also for their acting experience which I felt was necessary to uplift the group's performance. There is a need to balance theatre-making experience with other issues such as availability and willingness to participate in the project. When the two new members came in we had to update them about the work that had been done before their coming in. We sat together with them watching the video of the phase one performance. We discussed their roles in the project while also discussing the direction that the phase two project would take. During phase one, three members joined on the way, excluding the lady who watched one rehearsal and never came back.

Fluidity is one of the greatest challenges when it comes to working with young people in collectively devising a play. The young people's lives are not as settled as that of the elderly population. Young people who are available to participate in the project usually cannot guarantee their availability over a long time. This is because most of the time these young people are in the process of looking for jobs and when a job opportunity comes they will leave the project. This is understandable, particularly in the Zimbabwean context in which there is economic depression and young people are expected to contribute to the families' well-being. Some of them are at school and when seasons like that of examinations come up they can no longer continue with the project. At times the contributing factor is that they are still staying with their parents who usually have a say in where they can be at certain times, for example, one can be sent to the rural areas or can be given some errands that had not been foreseen. During this project, the participants would send a message saying they could no longer be available for the scheduled rehearsal because they had been sent on an errand by parents or elders. These, however, are not 'no roads'

scenarios that should discourage us from embarking on such projects, they are curves and detours that have to be negotiated. At times they are just speed humps that will slow us down but not stop us from reaching our destination.

Related to the points discussed above is the reality of participants having several other commitments during the days of the research project. Collectively devising theatre requires a lot of time from the participants. At times it is over-demanding on the time of the participants who already have other commitments. In a country grappling with economic challenges like Zimbabwe, it is common to find young urban dwellers doing one or two small projects as an effort to eke out a living. It is therefore unlikely to get young people who have enough time to devote to a voluntary research project that stretches for several months. There is almost always not enough time for the project because participants have to juggle with other commitments that they have. For them to say yes to such a project is a great sacrifice on their part and could be seen as a commitment on their part to see the Gukurahundi issue resolved.

Due to other commitments that the participants had, at times rehearsals had to be cancelled or postponed. At times some members of the group would arrive late for devising sessions due to other commitments that they had. More than 50% of the participants were artists who earned income from artistic endeavours. They were therefore engaged in other projects besides this one. Coming up with a rehearsal schedule was therefore a matter of negotiation. We had to find slots that worked for everyone or the majority.

At times, even after setting a negotiated slot something urgent would come up. One or two participants would send a message on the WhatsApp group informing us that they are no longer able to attend a scheduled devising session. At times one would send a message saying "*Sengithunywe etown ngabadala*" [I have just been sent to town on some errand by parents/guardians]. If 50% or more of the members were available for a devising session we would go ahead and meet. However, if more than 50% of the members were not able to attend we would normally postpone the session. On those few occasions where we allowed the session to go ahead with less than 50% members, we would concentrate more on perfecting what we had already worked on as a group instead of working on new scenes. As the Ndebele adage goes "*sisebenza ngokukhona*" [we make do with what is available/possible under the circumstances]. It is an encouragement to adapting and re-strategising when the situation demands. This is an approach or strategy that I had to put into use several times during this research project. This is a strategy that I also recommend for those who venture to do similar work.

Rehearsal Venue and Transport Logistics

As I have already mentioned above, finding a rehearsal venue that offered participants safety was a challenge. As researchers “we do not want to place the participants at further risk as a result of our research” (Creswell 2013: 15). As mentioned, we finally got a venue tucked away in the industrial areas. While this venue offered safety, it presented us with minor challenges relating to accessibility. The difficulty in accessing the area sometimes led to late arrivals at the venue by some participants. Because the area is away from town in an industrial zone, the area was not accessible by public transport. To get to the place by public transport one has to first take a bus or a commuter omnibus to the city centre, take another bus or commuter omnibus that passes next to the area, drop off along the main road, and walk through the industrial area to reach the office we were using. With my small car, I would pick up the participants from town and take them to the office/working space. What helped on other days is that there were young men in the group who were coming from the direction of the industrial area who would offer to drop off along the main road and then walk to the office (the distance is itself walkable). This meant that those I had to pick up from town would fit into my small car. If there was a need, I would make two trips to accommodate everyone. As the researcher, I made sure the participants did not get stranded. I provided them with transport money and at times I would also transport those who were staying in the direction closer to where I was staying.

It was during these trips to and from the rehearsal venue that we would continue the conversations about our work. I noticed that outside the devising space (especially in the car) the participants would be freer to express themselves. I believe the informality of the space and the conversations made everyone relax and become freer to talk about the work we were doing. I recall that during some of these trips, one participant was fond of sharing the poem he was composing. We would also give him feedback. The atmosphere during these conversations was characterised by playfulness. This informal space was uncensored. For example, participants also used this space to narrate the transport challenges that they would have faced while getting into town. The challenge was that in the afternoon fewer buses and commuter omnibuses were coming to town. This is because many people who are getting into town do so early in the morning. In the afternoon, it's quiet. Transport delays in the afternoon were a major factor leading to some participants arriving late for rehearsals. One day, after having such discussions, we decided that on some of the days, we were going to start our rehearsals in the morning. Having these conversations in the car helped me to get a picture of the challenges faced by the participants and helped me to make necessary adjustments, together with participants, regarding some aspects of the rehearsal schedules. I also realised that these conversations that were happening outside rehearsals were helping in group building. We were becoming closer and stronger as a team.

Coming but Never Arriving

Does the title of this section sound contradictory? If it does then well, that is how it is supposed to be – contradictory! On three separate occasions, some participants came for the rehearsals but never arrived. When I would call them the participants would say they were on their way but would never arrive. Eventually, their phones would be unreachable. That would be the end of it. In the next rehearsal, they would explain such as something urgent that came up that they needed to attend to, realising that they were too late and it was better not to come at all than to arrive at dismissal time. I never probed that area more than it was necessary lest I ‘scare’ participants out of the project. After all, these young people were already making huge sacrifices by participating in this project, and when they were there their commitment, passion, and hard work were indisputable. So why the fuss? *Sisebenza ngokukhona*.

Group Dynamics

Overall, relationships within the team were upbeat. There was respect, tolerance, and togetherness. We agreed respectfully and differed respectfully. Everyone was free to express his or her opinions without fear of repudiation, humiliation, or censure. Right from the beginning of the devising project, we set ground rules to create such a conducive environment and to keep relationships in the team professional and respectful. However, things were not always smooth. There were challenges here and there.

There was a young man who worked as an assistant to me in organising the rehearsals, sourcing costumes, and handling other logistics. It was just a voluntary role that he assumed informally without the group meeting to delegate him that role. I would also liaise with him for rehearsals and other logistics. Some members of the group soon began to suspect that maybe this young man was getting some money for these extra duties and began querying who made this young man a group leader. In that milieu, the young man jokingly argued “I am the leader of the group guys” to which one of the members retorted “*Akwenzi! Phela yimi engaba yi member yakuqala lapha kugroup. Ungabuza lomdala uzakutshela ukuthi mina yimi i member yakuqala lapha*” [It can’t be! I am the first person to become a member of the group. You can even ask *umdala*¹⁹, I am the first one to be in this group]. Through discussions, explanations, and clarifications we managed to get over this hurdle. Sometimes a member of the group would feel offended by a comment made by another member on the WhatsApp group. In a group, such things are common as people do not always see things from the same perspective. We did not let these challenges

¹⁹ *Umdala/mdala* is an Ndebele term used to address a male adult of the society. The term is associated with respect. It is usually used by the younger addressing the elder. The participants commonly used this term to address me during the process of the project.

deter us from our goal. We dealt with them as they came and remained focused on the goal of the project. As a researcher, I usually played an intermediary role during such conflicts.

How Far Can We Go?

With the possibility of arrest hanging over us like a dark cloud, we had to constantly ask ourselves the question “How far can we go?” Dealing with such a sensitive issue as the Gukurahundi almost always places some limitations on how far the subject of research can be explored. The safety of the participants and that of the researcher have to be considered. The aim was to do the research and complete it. Working in such a context leads to self-censorship. We censored our actions to avoid getting into trouble with the authorities. Self-censorship is both negative and positive. On the negative side, it limits the depth of the exploration that can be achieved by the research. On the positive side, it is a survival strategy to keep the participants and the researcher safe thus contributing to the life of the research to its completion.

Constrained Working Time

The working time that we had available at hand was almost always constrained. As Lenette (2919: 39) points out, there are “practical limitations related to the significant time required to participate in arts-based research”. Above, I have pointed out some of the factors that led to this such as other commitments and delays caused by transport challenges. There is also another perspective on the issue of time available for work. One day we delayed starting the rehearsal. When the time to knock off came I proposed that we extend by 30 minutes or so. The extension was not possible. One of the members indicated that she is staying with her granny and she has to go and cook for her. I was touched. Despite the chores at home, the young lady had managed to squeeze some time for the research project. As I reflected on that scenario later in the evening I came to the realisation that the participants who volunteer to take part in our projects do so through making great sacrifices. They have other commitments at home and outside the home that need their attention.

As researchers, therefore, we should not push our projects as though that is the only thing the participants have to do. My sensitivity to the participants' time was also increased. I realised that if the participants show up for the project that time should be used productively and not wasted because they carved it from their precious time. With devised theatre demanding a lot of time, the feeling that the time we had available to work was constrained stayed with me throughout the project. As Oddey (1994: 14) opines “In devised theatre there is always a sense of never having enough time to work”. We had to make do with what was available and possible under the circumstances. *Sisebenza ngokukhona*.

2.17 Conclusion

This research straddled two dispensations. It started during the Mugabe era and a large amount of data was gathered during the time immediately preceding the decriminalisation of speaking about the Gukurahundi. Data gathered after the decriminalisation of speaking out on the Gukurahundi was gathered during contexts that had not changed much as many people were either not aware of the recent developments or were still in doubt and at times unclear as to what these developments meant. This environment thus limited the research in terms of the number that could be recruited as participants as some people were not comfortable participating in such a project. It also created an environment that made publicly doing the project risky.

CHAPTER 3: THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

3.1 Introduction

This thesis concerns the use of participatory theatre to open conversations around the mass killings and torture of the Ndebele people in the 1980s known as the Gukurahundi. The aim is also to archive the Gukurahundi experiences of the affected community. The research seeks to provide legitimacy to an event that was denied discussion or even public acknowledgement. The case study is an example for seeing how the process of devised theatre can assist people in similar circumstances. In this chapter, I will theoretically frame the thesis.

The Gukurahundi occurred in Zimbabwe in the era shortly after the fall of the white colonial regime led by Ian Smith. As it concerns the experiences of the way the indigenous people of Zimbabwe jostle for power in an African 'postcolonial' context it seemed appropriate to draw on Decolonial thinking (Mignolo 2018; Gaztambide-Fernández 2014; Quijano 2000; Quijano 2007; Ndlovu-Gatsheni 2013a; Ndlovu-Gatsheni 2013b) to expand and understand this moment better. Interestingly, Postcolonial Feminism (Mohanty 1988, 2003; hooks 1989; Spivak 1988) also provided some useful contributions in their concern with marginalised or suppressed narratives and the use of alternative creative means of expression to tell these stories (Mohanty 1988). To understand how traumatic events affect the succeeding generations, the research draws from Marianne Hirsch's (2008) concept of the Generation of Postmemory or the Post generation. Also important for the framing of this research is popular memory (Dawson 2015) which prioritises the stories of the marginalised, from their perspectives.

3.2 Decoloniality, Decolonisation, Postcolonialism and the Decolonial Turn

Decoloniality is the praxis or action arising from decolonial theory or decolonial thinking. Decoloniality is a political and epistemic project that makes use of analytic approaches and socioeconomic and political practices resistant to coloniality and certain narratives of modernity which are pillars of Western civilisation (Mignolo 2011: xxiv-xxiv). In this regard, Mignolo (2011: 122-123) views decoloniality as a manifestation of "epistemic disobedience" while Quijano (2007: 176) refers to it as "epistemic reconstruction". Decolonial thinking embraces border knowledge and the subaltern (Mignolo 2000: 88) and thus its efforts oppose the tendency to regard Western European forms of thinking as universal (Quijano 2000: 544). The concept of subaltern found in decoloniality is also present in postcolonialism.

This shows that there are some relations and overlapping concepts which also apply to this particular research as I show later in this section.

Decoloniality is associated with decolonial “thinking and doing”, as observed by Mignolo (2011: xxiv). It, therefore, questions and problematises histories of power emanating from Europe as these histories are a basis of the logic of Western civilisation (Quijano 2007: 168). Decoloniality is not a singular thing but rather a method of restoration that takes into account the context of its manifestation. In this research, I apply it as a praxis that addresses the Gukurahundi issue in the Zimbabwean context. As a method, decoloniality aims at acknowledging and validating the diverse lives and lived experiences of indigenous people, people of colour, and those in circumstances that are considered colonising. It also seeks to decentre gender hierarchies and racial privilege. Ndlovu-Gatsheni (2020: no page) argues that “[t]here is a need for decentering, so that other lives come also to the center and the very idea of the center then disappears”. Ndlovu-Gatsheni further argues that coloniality is a death project and goes on to propose decolonisation as a solution, terming it a theory of life. In a broader sense, decoloniality encapsulates the efforts of social movements in search of a “new humanity” (Mignolo 2011: 52) or, as Quijano (2007: 178) argues, the search for “social liberation from all power organized as inequality, discrimination, exploitation, and domination”. This is succinctly summed up by the Decolonizing Humanities Project through saying:

Decolonial approaches, methods, and movements seek to disrupt colonial and settler-colonial logic and the seeming “naturalness” of racial capitalism. The methods and practices consider differences in ideas, social practices, histories, identities and beliefs as part of a myriad of means of “production of knowledge.” (Decolonizing Humanities Project 2022: no page)

The decolonial movement is characterised by different forms of critical theory. It is characterised by pluriversality and liberatory thinking. In its academic manifestations, it addresses issues to do with ethnic studies, gender studies, and area studies among others. Mignolo (2007: 452), drawing from Quijano, points out that decoloniality aims to expose the deficiencies of the colonial matrix of power that has given birth to distorted paradigms of knowledge and impaired or wrecked the liberating promises of modernity. As a result, decoloniality calls attention to the destruction of global coloniality of power.

According to Nick Shepherd (2018: 1), “Decolonial thinking and practice, also the modernity/coloniality/decoloniality (MCD) project, is the collective project of a group of South and Central-American (or ‘Latin American’) thinkers, writers and activists, that gained momentum in the period post-2000”. He adds that this project “has only broken the horizon of visibility in the Anglo-American academy in the last ten years or so” (2018: 1). It can, however, be argued that decoloniality has been there for a long time in the form of continuing confrontations of and delinking from Eurocentrism (Quijano 2000: 542). Ndlovu-Gatsheni also confirms the emergence of decoloniality by saying:

The concepts of coloniality and decoloniality emerged from the Latin American “Modernity/Coloniality” Project with such thinkers as Anibal Quijano, Walter D. Mignolo, Ramon Grosfoguel, Nelson Maldonado-Torres, Maria Lugones, and many others returning to research on Euromodernity and its consequences for the Global South. Coloniality became identified as the constitutive underside of Euromodernity and decoloniality as a necessary liberation struggle aimed at freeing the world from global coloniality (transhistorical expansion of colonial domination and the perpetuation of its effects in contemporary times). (Ndlovu-Gatsheni 2020: no page)

Ndlovu-Gatsheni (2020) posits that coloniality and decoloniality are concepts that gained impetus following the end of the Cold War, at a time when twentieth-century Marxism was waning. Ndlovu-Gatsheni, describing the turning point that ushered in decoloniality, says there was an “ideological vacuum” resulting from the fact that “[t]he question of colonialism and imperialism was being ignored” (2020: no page).

It is, however, worth noting that decolonial thinking was in place before its academic framing by the Latin American thinkers, writers, and activists. As Shepherd puts it:

Apart from these more self-consciously academic framings, decolonial thinkers point to deeper points of origin, including the Bandung Conference, the work of the anticolonial and antiracist thinker and revolutionary Frantz Fanon, and the thinking and practice of Amílcar Cabral, Aimé Césaire, Rigoberta Menchú, Gloria Anzaldúa, amongst others. (Shepherd 2018: 2)

Frantz Fanon (1961) views colonialism as destructive and proposes that it must be violently rejected. Fanon and others such as Ngugi wa Thiong’o (1986) represent a thriving tradition of decolonial thinkers and writers in Africa. The decolonial tradition or ‘turn’ therefore has roots that stretch way back, even to the 1960s. Paulo Freire’s (1971) pedagogy of the oppressed concept articulated decolonial thinking and practice that not only influenced the education sector but the theatre sector as well, inspiring Augusto Boal’s (1979) *Theatre of the Oppressed* (TO) and Theatre for Development (TFD) (See Kidd and Byram 1982; Mda 1993). In TO Boal shows how theatre can be a practice of liberation. His theorisation has had a great influence on theatre that addresses oppression. It is thus relevant to this research. TFD too, particularly that which is participatory has had Paulo Freire’s liberatory pedagogy at its core. TFD has been a form favoured in sub-Saharan Africa (See Kerr 1995; Mda 1993). Both TO and TFD are relevant to this research because they advocate for the transformation of the oppressive conditions of the marginalised.

Efforts have been made to make a distinction between postcolonialism and decolonialism, and also to locate the decolonial turn that came as a result of the limitations of postcolonialism and a need for an activism-centred approach to undo the damage caused by colonialism. Postcolonialism aims to investigate the social and political power correlation that prop up colonialism and neo-colonialism.

Postcolonial theory seeks to establish intellectual spaces for the subaltern to speak for themselves in their own voices (Chakrabarty 2000a; Spivak 1988). A leading theorist of postcolonialism, Franz Fanon (1961) unearthed the destructive effect of colonialism on the mind of the 'native' [sic] and posits that it should be violently resisted. Following in his footsteps, Edward Said (1977) enunciates his theory of Orientalism in his book *Orientalism* showing that the West created an us-and-them social binary that allowed Europe to suppress people of the Middle East, the Indian Subcontinent and Asia and muted them from expressing and representing themselves as distinct people with distinct cultures. The non-Westerners were therefore subjected to a colonial type of imperialism. The present study, therefore, draws insights from these researches that resist suppression and encourage the marginalised to speak for themselves.

During the 1980s, Gayatri Spivak (1988) established the meaning of the term subaltern and popularised it. The subaltern are those with little or no access to power (cultural, financial, social, and political) (Spivak 1988). Spivak's writings centred on the condition of women who found themselves 'powerless' because of patriarchal culture. The concept of 'subaltern' is also present in decolonial thinking, with a push toward having those marginalised groups tell their own stories from their perspectives in a way that creates agency. Scholars such as wa Thiong'o (1986) and Mohanty (1986) directed their efforts at unmasking colonial powers from the West and mobilising efforts to resist them. In the ensuing 1990s up to the 2000s, postcolonial scholars such as Dipesh Chakrabarty among others weigh in with their voices. Chakrabarty (2000b) focuses on the subaltern history of the Indian struggle for independence and opposes Eurocentric scholarship on non-Western people and their culture. Rather than the culture of Western Europe being placed on a pedestal, Chakrabarty proposes that it be viewed in a manner that treats it as equal to other cultures of the world.

It was around the 2000s that the decolonial turn came in, proposing a kind of activism-oriented approach that I have referred to above. It is worth noting that recently there have been calls to decolonise education in the Global South (Simaan 2020; Seroto et al. 2019). The aim is to make education from the Global South more globally relevant and also make it relevant to the communities in the Global South. As Simaan (2020: 1), puts it, it has to include "voices and practices from diverse communities". This fits the mold of decolonial thinking and practice.

Decolonial Aesthetics and Aesthesis

This research is conceptualised within the frames of decoloniality, particularly the concepts of decolonial aesthetics and aesthesis as envisioned by Walter Dignolo and Rolando Vazquez (2013). Dignolo and Vazquez view modern aesthetics as capable of reproducing colonial logic (a concept that I discuss below) and therefore in need of decolonisation through decolonial aesthetics and aesthesis. Dignolo and Vazquez argue:

Beyond regulating taste, aesthetics as normativity also has served to reproduce the rhetoric of modernity and the logic of coloniality: the coloniality of knowledge and the coloniality of beings. Modern aesthetics have served as a mechanism to produce and regulate sensibilities. Decolonial aestheses are processes of thinking and doing, of sensing and existing, in which the modern distinction between theory and practice has no purchase. Decolonizing the senses means, in the last analysis, decolonizing modern, postmodern, and altermodern knowledge regulating aestheses, in order to decolonize the subjectivities controlled under the modern imperial aesthetics and their aftermath. (Dignolo and Vazquez 2013: no page)

Speaking about art that is aimed at decolonisation, Walter Dignolo, in an interview with Gaztambide-Fernández, argues that “what decolonial artists want is not to create beautiful objects, installations, music, multimedia or whatever the possibilities are, but to create in order to decolonise sensibilities, to transform colonial aesthetics into decolonial aesthesis” (Gaztambide-Fernández 2014: 201). Aesthetics refers to the beauty or visual appeal of art while aesthesis is about sensibilities (feelings, sensing, believing).²⁰ Those at the borders of imperial or colonial difference have had experiences that have given birth to a kind of aesthetic that resonates with those who have been affected by colonialism. As Dignolo (2007a: 161) puts it, “What emerges from that experience is a new aesthetic, a trans-cultural aesthetic that, like in Saldivar, connects people through the world that have suffered, one way or another, the colonial wound”. The concept of a colonial wound that Dignolo raises is interesting and I will return to it later in this chapter.

Dignolo argues that decolonial aesthetics are artistic creations that seek to challenge the domination that colonises. He thus advocates for decolonial aesthesis which is concerned with art that awakens our sensibilities to see colonial injustices so that we can change our circumstances. He is of the view that the Western concepts of art are dominating and colonising and render others as weak, inferior, or of lesser value. To change this scenario, decolonial art and art-making expose coloniality and its injustices and contradictions and are determined to cause change. Change, in the form of breaking the silence around

²⁰<http://waltermignolo.com/decolonial-aesthesis-from-singapore-to-cambridge-to-duke-university>. Accessed on 25 October 2017.

the Gukurahundi, is what is at the centre of this research and what we aimed to achieve by devising and staging theatre.

In his interview with Gaztambide-Fernández, Mignolo proposes decolonial options and points out their entanglements within contemporary political and cultural processes. His argument is that “decolonial thinkers and doers have to work in the entanglement and differential of power” (Gaztambide-Fernández 2014: 198). Mignolo argues that there are various options available to artists engaged in decolonial work. Their work has to navigate contemporary art worlds shaped by “competing norms and based on diverging epistemologies and conceptions of creation and sensory experience” (Gaztambide-Fernández 2014: 198). Mignolo advocates for indigenous conceptions of and approaches to creative work. He proffers a view that indigenous practices in arts and artistic works are critical in providing ways of dealing with colonial wounds as we deploy decolonial healing. The grieving (*langalezo*) space that this research set out to create is a cultural space that draws from the indigenous systems of the Ndebele people. The *langalezo* space, as part of the indigenous system of the Ndebele people, seeks to empower and not disempower (Ndlovu-Gatsheni 2013a). This research builds on this empowering potential of the *langalezo* space by creating theatre that is anchored on collective effort and is participatory.

Decolonial aestheSis aims towards the healing of colonial wounds. According to Mignolo and Vazquez:

Decolonial aestheSis departs from an embodied consciousness of the colonial wound and moves toward healing... Decoloniality is at once the unveiling of the wound and the possibility of healing. It makes the wound visible, tangible; it voices the scream. And at the same time decolonial aestheSis moves towards the healing, the recognition, the dignity of those aesthetic practices that have been written out of the canon of modern aestheTics. (Mignolo and Vazquez 2013: no page)

In line with the above quotation, this research aimed at efforts that could lead to the healing of emotional wounds induced by the 1980s atrocities in Zimbabwe. Creating an environment where participants could voice their pain and suffering was an important part of the research. Such acts are viewed as capable of aiding grieving.

Logic of Colonialism

While decolonisation and all its efforts are largely channelled towards addressing oppression from the colonial power, in this research I apply the decolonial analytic to address the oppression of the victims of the Gukurahundi and their communities by the government in Zimbabwe. By silencing the Gukurahundi narratives of the victims while forcing upon them the so-called ‘official’ narratives, the government’s actions are, to some extent, colonising. Matabeleland was oppressed by colonialism and the settler

government led by Ian Smith, but as the ethnic minority they then also became oppressed by the political party representing (for the most part) the ethnic majority. The nature of this oppression took on a colonial logic. This is a demonstration of a scenario whereby the colonised learn from the coloniser. As Fanon (1963: 52) points out, the colonial order of things affects 'the colonised' to the extent that "the native is an oppressed person whose permanent dream is to become the persecutor". The violent world of colonialism has the negative effect of making the native desire to take the place of the oppressor and himself unleash violence against his people.

Kennedy Chinyowa (2009: 34) buttresses Fanon's line of reasoning by arguing that violence is a cyclical phenomenon that moves "from an idyllic or non-violent African communal life through colonialism to the liberation struggle and neo-colonialism, and back again to cultural regeneration". Violence is thus a symptom of underlying structural injustices that need redress. Chinyowa further contends that, in the Zimbabwean context, "within the structures of the *pungwe* (the all-night performances used by the freedom fighters to conscientise people about the liberation struggle) were sown seeds of organised violence that were to extend into the post-colonial period" (37). Violence of the post-colonial era therefore has roots dating back from colonialism. Chinyowa, drawing from Fanon (1967), concludes that:

neo-colonialism replicates colonial violence by proxy – what is true of the colonial situation applies with equal force to the neo-colonial setting. Perhaps the major difference lies in the skin colour of those responsible for perpetrating the violence, as Fanon implies in *Black Skin, White Masks* (Chinyowa 2009: 41).

The concept of the logic of colonialism is expanded by Mahmood Mamdani (2001) who sees genocides that happened during the postcolonial era as modelled along a colonial logic that has been in place for some time. Similarly, Mamdani, writing about the Rwandan genocide, proposes that to understand genocide, there is a need to look at the colonial violence that has in some way shaped or influenced it. He posits that:

the Rwandan genocide needs to be thought through within the logic of colonialism. The horror of colonialism led to two types of genocidal impulses. The first was the genocide of the native by the settler. It became a reality where the violence of colonial pacification took on extreme proportions. The second was the native impulse to eliminate the settler. Whereas the former was obviously despicable, the latter was not. (Mamdani 2001: 9-10)

While Fanon (1963) saw violence as necessary in resisting and overthrowing colonialism by the settler, Mamdani (2001) and Chinyowa (2009) show that the violence that manifests (from the indigenous people's side) as part of efforts to resist colonialism in some way contribute to the presence of violence during the post-colonial era.

Francine Masson and Linda Harms-Smith (2019) bring out another dimension by arguing that in the process of decolonisation, it is essential to recognise the collective trauma that colonisation produced on the colonised. Writing about South Africa's traumatic past, they posit that "understanding the collective trauma that colonisation wrought is fundamental to any liberatory or transformative engagement in such contexts" (1). They point out that the violent, traumatic, and oppressive understructures enacted through colonialism became further fortified structurally in various historical and current contexts and imperialist global relationships of coloniality. Masson and Harms-Smith point out that:

Examples of such historical and current contexts include colonisation of nations, genocides and ethnic cleansing, repressive racist apartheid political systems, displacement of peoples through war, and globally, disastrous consequences of extreme capitalist resource inequality...However, it is not only these structural consequences of colonialism that are of concern, but the ongoing intra-psychic and social impact in the context of the postcolonial. (Masson and Harms-Smith 2019: 1-2)

What therefore emerges from Masson and Harms-Smith's analysis is that colonialism and all forms of violence that assume and replicate the logic of colonialism produce collective trauma, a kind of trauma that is experienced by a group of people or a whole community. This trauma can be transmitted intergenerationally. Drawing from Mkhize (2004), Masson and Harms-Smith come to the conclusion that "while trauma can consciously be transmitted transgenerationally, it can also be suppressed to the unconscious through a lack of verbalisation and secrecy" (2019: 1). In chapter 1, I engaged the aspect of lack of verbalisation and secrecy concerning the Gukurahundi and also engaged the point of intergenerational and transgenerational transference of trauma. It is an issue that I also discuss later in this chapter.

Given the logic of colonialism whose footprints are dotted over the Gukurahundi, I argue that the silencing acts of the government need to be challenged through similar decolonial efforts that have been elicited by those addressing colonial oppression and wounds. Mignolo (2018) sees decoloniality as a response to the promises of modernity that legitimise coloniality (oppression, exploitation, and dispossession), arguing that:

decoloniality is the response of and from people who do not want to be oppressed, exploited, and dispossessed. Decoloniality emerges out of the need to delink from the narratives and promises of modernity—not to resist, but to re-exist. In this sense, decoloniality is both an analytic of modernity/coloniality (its constitution, transformation) and a set of creative processes leading to decolonial narratives legitimizing decolonial ways of doing and living. (Mignolo 2018: 145-146)

Sabelo Ndlovu-Gatsheni, a prominent scholar of decoloniality, offers insights into what decolonisation and decoloniality mean for Africa. His arguments are in tandem with those of Mignolo. Ndlovu-Gatsheni

(2020) points out the existence of colonial wounds that need to be healed and emphasises the importance of creating new ways of seeing things and doing things. In an interview with Duncan Omanga, programme officer for the African Peacebuilding Network and the Next Generation of Social Sciences in Africa programme, Ndlovu-Gatsheni (2020: no page) argues that “[e]mbedded in decolonization are colonial wounds crying out for healing. Decolonization encapsulates potentialities and possibilities of creating another world”. The cry for their healing is loud. Addressing the Gukurahundi wounds is also important. Such wounds are a result of the same modus operandi of oppression, suppression, domination, and dehumanising acts that obtained under colonialism. The second-generation victims are engaged with the decolonisation project as they are dealing with the after-effects and healing of past wounds. This way I find decoloniality as fitting because it describes the situation described in this case study.

Coloniality survives colonialism (Ndlovu-Gatsheni 2013a, 2013b; Mignolo 2005). While colonialism may have ended with the attaining of independence in formerly colonised states, coloniality continues – the colonial wound (Mignolo 2007a) continues. Decoloniality seeks to deal with the colonial wound that has continued to linger long after colonisation and ostensibly colonialism ended.

This concept of the lingering wound is important for this research. As argued in Chapter 1, the Gukurahundi has been referred to metaphorically as a wound or wounds (see Alexander 2021). The Gukurahundi ended in 1987 with the signing of the Unity Accord, yet the Gukurahundi wound has lingered on. To assume that this wound would instantly heal when the Unity Accord was signed between ZANU PF and PF ZAPU would be an oversight. There is still a real need to deal with the pain – psychological, physical, and spiritual (as it is connected to culture) - caused by this period. In the same way that the physical body can be wounded, so can the mind be wounded (Garland 2007). This has a devastating effect on the psychological faculties of the affected. Garland sums up the resulting impact by saying:

It leaves the individual vulnerable to intense and overwhelming anxieties from internal sources as well as from the actual external events. Primitive fears, impulses and anxieties are all given fresh life. Trust in the fundamental goodness of one's objects, that is to say the world itself, is shattered...Loss of a belief in the predictability of the world, and in the protective function of one's good objects, both internal and external, will inevitably mean a resurgence of fears about the cruelty and strength of bad objects. There is a rapid slide into primitive paranoid beliefs about one's status in the world. Crucially, the anxieties coincide: the external event is perceived as confirming the worst of the internal fears and phantasies - in particular the reality and imminence of death, or personal annihilation, through the failure of those good objects (internal and external) to provide protection from the worst. Thus a trauma is an event which does precisely this: overwhelms existing defences against anxiety in a form which also provides confirmation of those deepest universal anxieties. The damage done, more often than not, is neither trivial nor temporary. (Garland 2007: 11)

Trauma breeds vulnerability. Exposure to post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) causes long-term illnesses such as hypertension, heart disease, obesity, and other related ailments (McFarlane 2010). The traumatic memories can also hinder one from being successful as they have an imprisoning effect. McFarlane also explains that psychological damage is connected to physical illness resulting in conditions such as chronic musculoskeletal pain and disability. Further, there are physical scars that emanate from things like beating and injury to the body during the traumatic events. Physical disability and injury reduce one's chances of being able to work and earn an income for oneself and family. This affects the entire generation and the following one(s) as children of the victims are exposed to poverty which prevents them from getting quality education. The results of this are far-reaching. Psychological and physical traumas are connected. They make life difficult for the victims.

Spiritually, the victims of the Gukurahundi have been affected, as argued in Chapter 1, in that the grieving process has been blocked and frustrated by the government. Ndebele cultural practices such as discussing and sharing painful experiences have not occurred. This has a disorienting effect on the victims who become spiritually restless. This can lead to a sense of hopelessness, an absence of inner peace, and, in extreme cases, a desire to depart from this world by ending one's life. While it is difficult to assess the presence of these symptoms (or their extent) amongst the second-generation sufferers of the Gukurahundi, their existence is a possibility.

As I have pointed out above, this research is not dealing with colonial domination per se. It deals with "colonising" domination by a post-colonial government that has chosen colonial ways of dealing with its citizens. The hegemony that the research is dealing with is not Western. For some people from Matabeleland and Midlands, the transition from colonial oppression to independence has been marred by 'colonial' tendencies that, ironically, are now being practised by the formerly colonised who, instead of enjoying freedom and independence with fellow citizens, have chosen to suppress and marginalise the voices of the minority. As Miranda Young-Jahangeer (2009), drawing from scholars such as Mohanty (1991), hooks (1989b), Davis (1984), and Fanon (1990) observes, patriarchal domination, racism, and other forms of oppression share the same root and logic. It can, therefore, be argued that the atrocities of the 1980s in Zimbabwe are, in some way, modelled along colonial oppression. To understand this kind of oppression and address it, it is important to take a glimpse at the colonial oppressive systems. In the same manner, decoloniality becomes important in creating strategies for dealing with this kind of oppression.

The concept described above is important to my research which set out to not only expose the injustices of the Gukurahundi but to begin to create a future where survivors no longer feel inferior in the Zimbabwean socio-political context. Masson and Harms-Smith (2019: 3) argue that colonialism and forms of violence within the logic of colonialism lead to the "internalisation of oppression and inferiorisation"

which may remain in place for some time. It is therefore not a farfetched thought to suggest that this could have occurred among the Gukurahundi victims. Its effect could be a withdrawal of such people from political activities such as vying for political offices. Decoloniality seeks to address such issues in society. Ndlovu-Gatsheni (2013a: 15) observes that “[d]ecoloniality’s point of departure is existential realities of suffering, oppression, repression, domination and exclusion”.

Decolonial efforts are aimed at decolonisation which is concerned with dismantling colonial power and healing colonial wounds as envisioned by Mignolo (Gaztambide-Fernandez 2014). Similarly, this research set out to engage in efforts that may contribute to the healing of the Gukurahundi wounds. Decoloniality seeks to challenge such domination of others. There is a need to dismantle the colonial mindset (wa Thiong’o 1986). It is arguably from that pedestal of the colonial mindset that post-independence governments have launched marginalising and silencing actions. Mignolo argues that:

De-coloniality, then, means working toward a vision of human life that is not dependent upon or structured by the forced imposition of one ideal of society over those that differ, which is what modernity/ coloniality does and, hence, where decolonization of the mind should begin. (Mignolo 2007: 459)

Tribalism

Franz Fanon’s (1963) conceptualisation of tribalism and its related conflicts as a setback to decolonisation in newly independent African countries helps in the understanding of the Gukurahundi episode within a decolonial matrix. Tribalism-motivated conflicts puncture the independence mood in a newly independent African country that would have fought imperial domination as a united force. After Zimbabwe gained independence from Britain, the Ndebele people (who were mostly affiliated with the ZAPU political party) suddenly found themselves on the receiving end of an onslaught by the ZANU-led government (largely made up of Shona people) in what became known as Gukurahundi (Ndlovu 2004).

Tribalism in young independent nations prevents national unity and hinders progress at a critical moment when these are needed. As Fanon observes:

when dealing with young and independent nations, the nation is passed over for the race, and the tribe is preferred to the state. These are the cracks in the edifice which show the process of retrogression, that is so harmful and prejudicial to national effort and national unity. (Fanon 1963: 147-148)

Fanon finds it disturbing that the national front that has resisted colonialism and forced it to withdraw is easily cracked by tribalism and regionalism in the newly independent nation. This allows colonialism to

regain balance when in fact it had been dismantled by African unity. Tribalism rears its head in national politics with dire consequences. Fanon sees this as one of the pitfalls of nationalism.

Leroy Vail (1989) brings out a view of tribalism in newly independent nations in a way that confirms the points raised by Fanon. Vail looks at the problem of tribalism in Southern Africa with a particular focus on Malawi. Lamenting the rapidness that characterised the creeping in of tribalism in Malawi after independence, Vail observes that:

It was evident that despite the fact that Malawi had won its independence from Britain just four years earlier, its nationalist movement was already a spent ideological force. The official rhetoric in the government-controlled press and radio about 'building the nation' and the Malawi Congress Party's endless sloganeering for 'Unity, Loyalty, Obedience and Discipline' were belied by the fact that many Malawians who, according to the received wisdom of the times, should have known better, were ardent 'tribalists' with no love for the Party and its grandees or for its stated goals. Why had nationalism and nationalist unity evaporated so rapidly? (Vail 1989: x)

In search of answers to the questions posed above, Vail posits that nationalism in Malawi, and indeed in many other areas in Africa had been a negative force directed against colonialism. It contained little positive vision of post-independence societies. As a result, "Tribalism', that troubling enemy of the dominant party's programme of 'nation-building', had quickly come into the open after Malawi's independence" (1989: x). Vail identifies the major reason for this as a result of the crisis of the cabinet of late 1964 "which fractured pre-Independence political alliances along fault lines of ethnic and regional identity, with a group of Chewa-speaking politicians from the Central Region ultimately gaining the political upper hand" (1989: x). Important for this research is Vail's conclusion that the situation obtained in Malawi during the 1960s is not peculiar to that country but could have occurred as well in other countries in Southern Africa and the wider continent. He emphasises that "ethnicity remains a political reality in the region today" (1989: xii).

3.3 Popular Memory versus Dominant Memory

The paradigm of popular memory was first put forward by the Popular Memory Group at the University of Birmingham in England. This group met at the Centre for Contemporary Cultural Studies between October 1979 and June 1980 (Popular Memory Group 1982; Johnson and Dawson 1982; Dawson 2015). What comes to the fore is the differentiation between "public" and "private" constructions of memory constituted in "the former involving representations of the past that circulate within the arenas of public culture, the latter describing memories restricted to and shared within private arenas of family, community

and other social groups” (Dawson 2015: 205). Dawson further points out that within both arenas, there is an operation of cultural power exercised by the state, political movements, civil society organisations, and individuals within interpersonal relationships. This cultural power also plays an important role in determining interactions between these arenas. Arguably, competing narratives contest the past and also “vie for recognition within a field structured by dominant public memories and involving processes of subordination and marginalisation, silencing and forgetting” (Dawson 2015: 205). As a result, popular memory is mediated by competing discourses and forms of representation. Victims of collective trauma may lean on popular memory as a way of resisting being silenced. Mary Watkins and Helene Shulman observe that:

Those who have been marginalized and oppressed by dominant hierarchies often find that the issues they need to explore about the past are nowhere represented in official histories and when spoken about cannot be heard by those from the dominant culture. (Watkins and Shulman 2008: 105)

Popular memory is community-based and autobiographical on one hand, while it also includes media representations on the other hand. While these two sides do constitute popular memory in some way, it should be noted that these can be differentiated into “private memory” and “public representations”. Public representations are those that “win access to” and gain “centrality” in the confines of the public domain (Popular Memory Group 1982: 207). These are propagated by the national and local state, the culture industries, or the public media, and thus become positioned to make public meanings for vast audiences (Dawson 2015). On the other hand, private memory constitutes the sense of the past that is more privatised and which originates within a lived culture and spreads about in particular social groups in the course of everyday life (Dawson 2015; Popular Memory Group 1982).

Dawson, leaning on the Gramscian Marxist terms, observes that the interaction between public and private aspects of popular memory plays out in the form of “a hegemonic process of ideological domination, resistance and contestation” (206). In this process, dominant memory and its oppositional forms emerge (Popular Memory Group 1982). The paths of private memory and dominant memory do cross at some places as public memory may supply the terms that are used by private memory to reflect on history and public memory may bring to the public narratives of popular memory. Public or dominant memory tends to sideline or marginalise some aspects of popular memory as it gives “selective public representation to some popular conceptions whilst actively silencing, marginalising and pushing to the level of private remembrance those meanings which are to be subordinated or excluded” (Dawson 2015: 207). Dominant memory advances the dominant narratives. Popular memory creates history based on the lived experiences of those affected by historical events. Discontented by how dominant narratives sideline their voices and experiences, those at the centre of or affected by the historical event(s) turn to

popular memory to make sense of their own experiences. As a result, there is contestation between memories. Dawson points out that:

Cultural contestation between competing memories occurs as an element in ideological conflict centred on discontents and aspirations in the present, and at the level of subjectivity, in securing the sense of continuity between past and present necessary to both collective and personal identities. (Dawson 2015: 207)

Popular memory encourages the sharing of stories from the perspective of lived experiences. This also affords those dealing with traumatic experiences agency to map out ways of addressing what affects them. The ways of producing knowledge should not be dictated by the oppressors to the oppressed but the oppressed should explore avenues of dealing with issues that affect them. Paulo Freire (1971: 1) argues that “the oppressors, who oppress, exploit, and rape by virtue of their power; cannot find in this power the strength to liberate either the oppressed or themselves. Only power that springs from the weakness of the oppressed will be sufficiently strong to free both”. It is therefore necessary for the victims to explore their own ways of healing and their preferred avenues of generating knowledge about their dilemma and how to address it. The *langalezo* experience makes room for the sharing of stories emanating from lived experiences while ‘official’ narratives render hegemonic control by ignoring the perspectives of those who were or are victims of the atrocities.

This research is predicated on the assumption that Devised theatre that emanates from members of the affected community can offer an alternative space for grieving to the second-generation sufferers of the Gukurahundi and serve as a means through which to generate and legitimate popular memory (Young-Jahangeer 2009; Ashplant 2000). Devised theatre has the potential to lend itself well to those silenced and marginalised by dominant narratives - subaltern (Gramsci 1971; Spivaki 1988; Ravengai 2011) to raise issues affecting them and to seek to transform their conditions (Boal 1982; Freire 1971; WaThiong’o 1986; Young-Jahangeer 2014; Nellhaus and Haedicke 2001).

3.4 Postcolonial Feminism

Postcolonial Feminism also resonates with this research. Postcolonial feminism has been developed and advanced by scholars such as Chandra Talpade Mohanty (1988, 2003), Gayatri Spivak (1988), and others, and exists alongside postcolonial studies. It was developed principally to bring to the mainstream the experiences of non-Western women that were being marginalised by feminism. It therefore sought to give voice and agency to the unique stories of non-Western women. Although theories in this category were developed primarily to address the subjugation of women in postcolonial circumstances, the power

dynamics present in this example make this theoretical approach particularly appropriate: both for the oppression based on ethnicity (and associated political alignment) and for the very real gendered aspect to the violence.

The Gukurahundi had in its intent and operation the subjugation of ZAPU members and supporters in particular, and the people of Matabeleland and Midlands in general. This has been described in Chapter 1. Using the foundation that has been laid by postcolonial feminist writers who have emphasised the need for women who find themselves side-lined, misrepresented, misunderstood, oppressed, and silenced in postcolonial circumstances to stand up and speak for themselves, I seek to explore how victims of the Gukurahundi can break the silence and publicly share their Gukurahundi experiences.

Besides suffering as ZAPU members, supporters, and the general citizens of Matabeleland and Midlands provinces, women also suffered (and continue to suffer) as women. Rape and other sexual violence was a deliberate strategy, as it often is in war (Brown 2012; Baaz and Stern 2013; Wood 2018). Women were also beaten and bayoneted. The consequences of the violence on men also had gendered consequences as women dealt with widowhood or having to care for disabled husbands, fathers, and brothers. Further, raising 'fatherless' children and the dilemma of telling their children about their identity is another painful consequence. Viewing these experiences with a gendered outlook helps in understanding the challenges that women continue to face in postcolonial contexts.

Mohanty (2003) makes an argument for Third World²¹ women. She argues that the condition of Third World Women is different from that of white women from the West. She challenges the hegemonic discourses of Western feminists that frame Third World Women through Western eyes that 'colonise' them with their own subjectivity. Mohanty's view is that the struggles and experiences of Third World women should be told from the experiences and historical and socio-political contexts of Third World women themselves, and not framed from the hegemonic representations of white women from the Western world. What stands out is the importance for Third World women to represent themselves, have agency, and resist being dominated. This presents interesting insights for my research that is concerned with resisting the hegemonic discourses (the 'official narratives' of those in power) that have sought to exclude the narratives/ experiences/ perspectives of people of the Matabeleland and Midlands provinces from official versions of history. The dominant narratives have sought to push popular memory, which is based on the experiences of the victims, to the periphery. In this way, the dominant narrative exhibit a tendency to marginalise and silence popular memories (Ashplant et al. 2000). However, the dominant

²¹ This term is used consciously. It is a problematic term that has been criticised by the postcolonial scholars for its tendency of othering those that are non-Western.

narratives can be contested, largely by those who are dissatisfied with the present marginalising circumstances and who seek to form collective identities. As Graham Dawson puts it:

Cultural contestation between competing memories occurs as an element in ideological conflict centred on discontents and aspirations in the present, and at the level of subjectivity, in securing the sense of continuity between past and present necessary to both collective and personal identities. (Dawson 2015: 206)

Like Third World women who deserve to tell the story of their own struggles, the victims of the Gukurahundi have a right to share their own experiences about the Gukurahundi instead of having those in power/the government dictating how these narratives should be couched. The victims of the Gukurahundi deserve to make their own decisions in terms of how they want to grieve and how they want to move forward. It is the position of this thesis that silencing these voices is hegemonic and 'colonising'.

An important concept within Postcolonial Feminism applicable to this research is that of marginality. The marginalised are those who are at the periphery of society, with limited access to power (Najat and Jamili 2014). The Ndebele people see themselves as the subaltern (Spivak 1988), the marginalised in the context of Zimbabwean politics. Many years after the Gukurahundi episode, the government continues to use state resources that it has at its disposal to sideline narratives of this traumatic period and instead advance its version of the truth. This silencing of the voices at the periphery is the essence of marginalisation.

However, the concept of marginality is extended by bell hooks (1989) who sees it as a site of struggle and a place of radical openness to resist hegemony. hooks sees the margin as an opportunity where daring and bold things that shift consciousness can be done. Out of the direct gaze of the powerful on the centre, hooks (1989: 206) argues that the margin can be a "site of radical possibility, a space of resistance". This idea gave inspiration to the case study in this thesis.

Speaking out and sharing the Gukurahundi stories presents the potential to create a grieving (*langalezo*) space to deal with the emotional pain associated with this period. This creates a potential for the second-generation sufferers of the Gukurahundi to chart a way forward for their full participation in socio-political issues of Zimbabwe without being othered. From this margin, a counter-hegemonic discourse can potentially be developed. I am alive to the reality that at times the hegemonic gaze of the centre can be so strong that the periphery is silenced and finds it difficult to speak unless required to do so by the centre. Such are the realities of subalternity. Through Devised theatre, in the form of PPT, this research set out to explore ways of dismantling the silencing gaze of the centre and making speaking possible at the periphery.

Postcolonial feminism is also important as it emphasises the importance of telling/writing stories (popular history) as a way of filling gaps and leading to healing. Many stories of the Gukurahundi have not been told or documented. These need to be documented. They have to be written into history. The Gukurahundi experiences cannot just be wished away. They must be acknowledged, documented, and told. This can lead to healing and closure, and enable the development of a healthy society. Telling stories of experiences and the performance that this research explores are important in making people remember the Gukurahundi and in passing down its memory from generation to generation. As Diana Taylor (2003: 35) argues, “the telling is as important as the writing, the doing as central as the recording, the memory passed down through bodies mnemonic practices”. This then makes Postcolonial feminism relevant in the framing of this study. The conditions of women that Postcolonial Feminist theories seek to address have many resonances with the victims of the Gukurahundi. Both groups find themselves in oppressive structures in the postcolonial era. The aspect of silencing comes to the fore. Postcolonial feminists have sought to address the issue of women being silenced. Similarly, Gukurahundi victims have been silenced. In both scenarios, the national independence that is praised and cherished at the national level suddenly proves to be inadequate in everyday realities. The peculiar circumstances for the Gukurahundi victims are that their blocked grieving has a potential for trauma transference from generation to generation. There is thus a need for speaking out on the issue from the perspectives of women as well as from the perspectives of the Ndebele.

3.5 The Generation of Postmemory

To frame and understand the possibility of transference of trauma from the first-generation sufferers of the Gukurahundi to the second-generation sufferers and also, possibly, to the following generations, I draw from Marianne Hirsch's (2008) concept of the post generation which she also refers to as the generation of postmemory. In her theorisation Hirsch draws from the Holocaust, focusing on how the memories of the Holocaust are transferred to the generation of the children of survivors. The Holocaust has similarities with the Gukurahundi, and although it took place in a different time and in a different place and was at a much larger scale it still involved a strategic genocide and certainly during the war (and beyond including the present in some right-wing quarters) involved denialism by the perpetrators.

Some writings on the Holocaust can therefore be applied to the study as a way to understand the effects of the Gukurahundi that took place in Zimbabwe. Commenting on the Gukurahundi, Tshinga Dube points out that:

When we have a conflict where a lot of lives are lost, it means we must take it seriously. To those who were not affected by Gukurahundi it means nothing to them apart from being a

moment of madness but to those who were affected it remains in their heart...the pain remains for a very long time and those things go from father to son because people still talk about them...the kids that listen to you talk about Gukurahundi keep it in their hearts. When they grow, they grow with it in their hearts. They have a grievance but we do not want that grievance to go on. We want these things to be put to an end. (Tshinga Dube 2018, former Makhokhoba Member of Parliament (MP), quoted by Zimeye)

When a traumatic event like genocide happens, the generation of those who come after is prone to inheriting memories of that trauma. What they experience is postmemory. According to Hirsch (2008: 103) "Postmemory describes the relationship of the second generation to powerful, often traumatic, experiences that preceded their births but that were nevertheless transmitted to them so deeply as to seem to constitute memories in their own right."

This idea is supported by Angela Connolly (2011: 609). In writing about the trauma associated with the Holocaust, she argues that "one of the devastating effects of such trauma is the way in which it impacts not only the survivors but also the future generations". With blocked grieving for the second-generation sufferers of the Gukurahundi the possibility of inheriting the trauma of this period is high, and so is the possibility to pass this trauma to another generation. This is what makes the current research necessary. There is a need for grieving so that the trauma is addressed instead of being transferred. Writing about the traumatic experiences of the Stalin years, Nadezhda Mandelstam (1999: 300) summarises the issue of trauma transference by saying "It is an illness passed to the next generation so that the sons pay for the sins of the fathers". Such studies point to the strong possibility of transference of trauma to the next generations and the painful, disruptive nature of the resulting experience.

Postmemory is not only limited to those who were not born when the traumatic event happened. It also includes those who were very young during that time and had not yet developed a consciousness to grasp or understand what was happening around them. This is the category that I belong to in relation to the Gukurahundi. Participants of this study were all born after the Gukurahundi episode. They belong to the category that got to know about the Gukurahundi through the stories of pain and suffering shared by their family members, relatives, and members of the community. These stories carry with them traumatic memory. Besides the issue of memories from the past, the study is interested in the experiences of the second generation as they encounter such memories. Those experiences have the potential to be traumatic.

Hirsch (2008) raises questions of ethics relating to how can we, living today, appropriately handle the pain of others (the victims) and their stories without appropriating them or calling undue attention to ourselves, how can we best carry the stories of the first-generation victims without them displacing our stories and whether the memory of genocide can be transformed into action and resistance? Due to the plurality of

collective traumatic events that have continued to affect humanity, the answers to the questions posed by Hirsch are urgent. In search of the answers, Hirsch argues that the after-effects of traumatic events in the form of bodily, psychic, and affective impact of trauma and its results and the ways in which one trauma can reactivate the effects of another, cannot be fully comprehended through traditional historical archives and methodologies. There is a need to embrace other supplementary genres of memory transmission such as poetry, storytelling, narrative, oral history, testimony, photography, performance, and memorials. There is a need for aesthetic and institutional structures to complement the historical archive by providing and transmitting embodied knowledge. These supplementary genres form memory. The second-generation victims have a deep connection with the experiences of their parents such that the traumatic past constitutes for them memories in the form of postmemory. According to Hirsch "Postmemory's connection to the past is thus not actually mediated by recall but by imaginative investment, projection, and creation" (2008: 107).

Hirsch (2008: 105) observes that there has been an abundance of creative responses to the Holocaust. These have possibly helped in processing the experiences associated with this period. While for the Gukurahundi this artistic response has happened only to a limited extent. I argue, in light of the arrests I have mentioned, that this is due to censorship and fear. The production and writing of artistic works and books on the Gukurahundi have faced gagging from the state. This study, therefore, is advocating for tolerance (by the state) of artistic works and writings that address the issue of the Gukurahundi for the betterment of the whole society.

Susan Sontag (2003) argues that the way atrocities are depicted in artworks has an impact in terms of forming the understanding of those who did not experience them. Drawing from such observations, it can be argued that there is a need to exercise great care when using creative works to capture the pain of others. When art is insincere then it fails to arouse a sense of compassion or identification. While for the children of survivors of the Holocaust that Hirsch was writing about, the pain of the victims is separated from the pain of the children, only linked by memories, for the second-generation sufferers of the Gukurahundi this separation is not distinct but blurred. The reason for this is that, while the second-generation sufferers of the Holocaust have openly discussed the traumatic past that happened, the second-generation sufferers of the Gukurahundi have experienced blocked grieving because of state repression. This has created delayed grieving which on its own generates traumatic experiences that are happening in the present for the second-generation sufferers of the Gukurahundi.

These traumatic experiences of the second-generation sufferers of the Gukurahundi resulting from blocked grieving and muted public discussions on this issue, together with the traumatic memories of the victims of the Gukurahundi and survivors have created a septic environment. I use the word septic intentionally to evoke the wound metaphor that I have referred to in Chapter 1. This kind of environment

is the one that arguably exacerbates the transference of trauma from generation to generation. Mourning plays an important role in dealing with traumatic experiences. When it is blocked, the trauma is exacerbated and the chances of its transference are increased. Cláudio Laks Eizerik (2010: 388-89) posits that “in many severely traumatized individuals, unresolved mourning may lead to a deficit in the ability to symbolize. These unmetabolized, unsymbolized mental structures are then transmitted to future generations”. Garland (2007) emphasises the need to confront the traumatic past and deal with it instead of avoiding it and closing it in. She argues:

So, in our view, for traumatised individuals to get better, the knowledge and the memory of the events they have suffered may need to become part of, and integrated into, the individual's conscious existence, through being worked through instead of being walled-up in some avoided area of mental activity. (Garland 2007: 5)

Notably, the second-generation sufferers of the Gukurahundi are not only dealing with memories from the past but are also grappling with effects of the Gukurahundi that are continuing today mainly because the government has not addressed this issue (although recently there have been movement and action in that direction). One of these painful effects is the problems faced by children of parents who were killed during the Gukurahundi. Many of these children, now young adults, have no birth certificates and some are using birth certificates that do not bear their parents' details.

In mid-2019 I attended a Human Rights Commission hearing in Matabeleland North where I heard first-hand stories of this nature being narrated. The reason that those who were narrating these stories gave for their failure to get documents such as birth certificates, National Identity documents, and death certificates (for their relatives who were killed during the Gukurahundi) was that the officials at the Registry Office did not accept the Gukurahundi as a cause of death for the deceased parents or relatives. The affected are constantly turned away and told that the government does not accept the Gukurahundi as a cause of death. Surviving families are caught in a web of dishonesty – lie on the death certificate or don't apply for a death certificate. Such experiences demonstrate how the creation of 'official' versions of history (by preventing any documentation that might acknowledge another version) can carry trauma forward. This adds another layer of pain and trauma for survivors.

If the after-effects of the Gukurahundi that are currently being experienced as described above are not addressed, there is a possibility that even further generations will either inherit the same traumatic experiences or the traumatic memories of these experiences. This research, therefore, set out to create a grieving (*langalezo*) space where the past memories of the Gukurahundi, inherited through stories and the current traumatic experiences, can be discussed and negotiated past in order to face the future positively. While Hirsch (2008)'s theorisation is mostly about dealing with the memories of the past, this

research has an added burden of seeking to avert the creation of traumatic memories that would then affect the next generation in the form of postmemory.

In her theorisation, Hirsch argues that while postmemory emanates from things that happened in the past, the effects of these past happenings continue into the present. She argues that in the same way, post-colonialism does not mean that colonialism has totally ended, postmemory does not mean that the effects of the past traumatic events have ended. She explains:

We certainly are, still, in the era of “posts,” which continue to proliferate: “post-secular,” “post-human,” “postcolony,” “post-white.” Postmemory shares the layering of these other “posts” and their belatedness, aligning itself with the practice of citation and mediation that characterize them, marking a particular end-of-century/turn-of-century moment of looking backward rather than ahead and of defining the present in relation to a troubled past rather than initiating new paradigms. (Hirsch 2008: 107)

Hirsch goes further to offer a stern warning, arguing that to grow up with overwhelming inherited memories and to be dominated by narratives that preceded one’s birth or consciousness comes with great risk. This risk is that of having one’s own stories and experiences displaced or even evacuated by narratives and stories of a previous generation (Hirsch 2008: 108). If the Gukurahundi issue is not addressed and closure not experienced, there is great danger that the Gukurahundi narratives and stories will displace the stories of this generation and suffocate new narratives that ought to emerge from this generation. Somehow, such a vicarious situation threatens to ‘chain’ the second generation to their past instead of releasing them to explore the present and the future.

While averting the transference of trauma from one generation to another, performance has the potential to capture the Gukurahundi experiences. As Joseph Roach (1996) argues, performance can play an important role in making people forget or remember. This way, as regards remembering, it can help keep memories alive that are important or necessary for coming to terms with a traumatic past. Diana Taylor (2003: 16) points out that “by taking performance seriously as a system of learning, storing, and transmitting knowledge, performance studies allows us to expand what we understand by knowledge”. I, therefore, argue that performance was deployed in this research with a view that it can create a ‘safer space’ for passing on information about the Gukurahundi from one group or generation to the next or another. I also approached the research with a conviction that performance has the potential of making people remember the Gukurahundi within a ‘safer space’. This is important for the victims of the Gukurahundi so that they can deal with the past trauma associated with this period. Caroline Garland (2007) is of the view that in the context of trauma and dealing with it, remembering the traumatic event is important instead of trying to wish it away. She therefore argues that “increasingly, clinical findings indicate that events have to be remembered, rather than forgotten or put out of one’s mind” (2007: 4).

Joseph Roach (1996) sees performance as interlinked with memory and history. In this way, performance, through embodiment, plays an important role in the transfer and continuity of knowledge. Performance can therefore play an important role in the transfer of knowledge about the Gukurahundi so that the victims can remember what happened and deal with this trauma from the past. Similar sentiments are echoed by Taylor:

Multiple forms of embodied acts are always present, though in a constant state of againness. They reconstitute themselves, transmitting communal memories, histories and values from one group/generation to the next. Embodied and performed acts generate record and transmit knowledge. (Taylor 2003: 20-21)

It is therefore important to deal with the Gukurahundi trauma from the past. The Holocaust that Hirsch writes about has been remembered in many ways, has had many performances that address it, and is being discussed publicly. For the Gukurahundi the opposite is true. It is therefore against this backdrop that I conceptualised this research.

3.6 Conclusion

In this chapter, I have presented the theoretical framework for this work. I have argued that just like coloniality that has continued long after the formerly colonised nations gained independence, the Gukurahundi wound has continued long after the signing of the Unity Accord that effectively ended it. Ways that have been suggested by scholars such as Walter D. Mignolo and Rolando Vazquez (2013) offer useful lessons for addressing the Gukurahundi. Theatre that seeks to challenge the culture of silence and to aid in the processing of pain and disturbing stories offers hope for dealing with the Gukurahundi issue. I have also emphasised the importance of indigenous solutions to the problems as advocated for by the decolonial theory. The *langalezo* space, a cultural space in the indigenous system of the Ndebele people lends itself well as an answer to this call.

I have also shown that ideas within Postcolonial Feminist theories have resonance with this current research. These theories advocate for the telling/ writing of stories or filling erased gaps, the same things that this research advocates for. The concept of marginality has also been explained and its applicability to this research demonstrated. Lastly, I have used the theory of postmemory, and this has been explained. This theory brings to the fore the danger of not addressing traumatic memories like that of the Gukurahundi. Intergenerational and transgenerational transfer of trauma remains a great danger. Addressing the Gukurahundi trauma therefore becomes not only necessary but urgent.

CHAPTER 4: LITERATURE REVIEW

4.1 Introduction

This chapter is a review of available literature in the areas that are related to this research. It is important for any research to be situated within the broader body of literature in its field and also to build on such works. This research is no exception. Those who write of creative works and trauma (e.g. Bray and Bray 2013; Halba and Young 2012; Meskin and Van de Walt 2013; Moyo 2013; Shmukler 2012; Lovey 2013) are of the view that creative forms in general and theatre in particular can play a significant role in dealing with trauma. Art can thus serve the purpose of grieving and being involved in the process of making art is seen as a viable way of assisting mourning (Lovey 2012) and creating spaces for meaningful discussion to occur (Young-Jahangeer 2014). The Holocaust has generated a sizable number of theatrical, cinematic, and literary works²² that have come as a response to it while the Gukurahundi that happened in Zimbabwe in the 1980s has not been well engaged in the creative arenas. Again, while in countries like South Africa, there is a lot of work going on about theatre for trauma, in Zimbabwe, it is not very widespread arguably because of the silence and secrecy that has shrouded traumatic events like the 1980s atrocities that this research deals with.

This chapter is divided into two sections. Section A gives a context on researching the Gukurahundi and also examines the terms that have been used in reference to the Gukurahundi. In this section, I also bring out perspectives on grieving to make a case that grieving is necessary and befitting for the victims of the Gukurahundi. This, therefore, extends the argument introduced in chapter 1. In Section B, the phenomenon of creative responses to traumatic situations and sensitive issues will be discussed. This will be done by reviewing literature on creative responses to the Holocaust, the Rwandan genocide, and traumatic and sensitive issues in South Africa. I then review literature from Zimbabwe on creative works that speak to the Gukurahundi. Two plays from Zimbabwe are reviewed in detail.

²² Some of the theatrical responses will be under discussion in this section but it is important to mention the broader artistic response to the Holocaust within the fields of film and literature. Spielberg's (1994) *Schindler's List* and Benigni's (1997) *La vita e bella* a.k.a *Life Is Beautiful* are two of the most well-known films. The books *The Boy in the Striped Pyjamas* (2006) by John Boyne and Anne Frank's (1989) *The Diary of Anne Frank* remain popular set works in schools around the world. The debut of recognisable Holocaust literature in the United States came in 1952 with the publication of *Anne Frank: The Diary of a Young Girl* by Doubleday. The book reportedly sold approximately twenty six million copies. It was later translated into fifty eight languages (Plunka 2009).

Section A: Contextualisation

4.2 Researching the Gukurahundi

While some victims of the Gukurahundi are still alive, it has, until recently, been quite difficult to conduct interviews about this period because of state censure of such practices. One could be arrested for conducting interviews in the communities on the Gukurahundi and labelled as a person with intentions to incite people against the government or to open ‘old wounds’. This label can have undesirable consequences for researchers and participants. Therefore, academic works that touch on the issue of the Gukurahundi mainly rely on the CCJP & LRF report as a dependable account and documentation of this period. It is thus inevitable in this study, too, that there is an overreliance on the CCJP & LRF report. Notwithstanding, there are some academic works, autobiographies, and creative works that speak to the issue of the Gukurahundi (See, for example, Werbner 1991; Alexander et al. 2000; Mdlongwa et al. 2015; Ngwenya 2014; Ndlovu 2004; Nkomo 2001; Msindo 2012; Raftopoulos 2004; Eppel 2005; Mlalazi 2012).

Notably, the period of research for the CCJP & LRF report overlapped with another major research done in Nkayi and Lupane districts between 1994 and 1996 through oral interviews conducted by Jocelyn Alexander and John McGregor together with ZPRA²³ veterans and local leaders. The research culminated in the publication of a monograph titled *Violence and Memory* which was written with Terrence Ranger (Alexander 2021). Jocelyn Alexander, commenting on their experiences in the field during research, states “We encountered fear: the phrase ‘we are already dead’ at times preceded stories of Gukurahundi” (Alexander 2021: 773). This shows the deep impact of the Gukurahundi on its victims – they were traumatised.

The CCJP & LRF (1997) report represents research in the nature of “a human rights investigation undertaken in 1995–96” that “would permanently transform the stuttering discussion of Gukurahundi” (Alexander 2021: 773). Alexander further states that this report, which was published in 1997 under the title *Breaking the Silence, Building True Peace*, was “commissioned by two Zimbabwean non-governmental organisations (NGOs), the Catholic Commission for Justice and Peace (CCJP) and the Legal Resources Foundation (LRF), and authored by Shari Eppel” (Alexander 2021: 773). Data for the 261-page report was gathered using various methods and sources. Sources included Catholic Commission for Justice and Peace in Zimbabwe (CCJP) archival material collected in the 1980s,

²³ ZPRA stands for Zimbabwe People’s Revolutionary Army. This was the armed wing of ZAPU during the liberation war. It refers to the same military wing referred to as ZIPRA with an “I” in this research.

Bulawayo Legal Project Centre (BLPC) archival and current material, Human Rights Reports, media reports contemporary to the 1980s (both local and international), academic research works, selected interviews with CCJP & LRF officials, commercial farmers, and others and lastly, medical and other material evidence (CCJP & LRF 1997: 9). According to CCJP & LRF (1997: 9) relying upon a variety of data sources was done as a strategy to “overcome the difficulties in collecting data on human rights abuses”.

The conclusions of the CCJP & LRF (1997: 95), claimed amongst other things that “the data relating to Bhalagwe may bear some comparison with genocide survivors, such as those from the Nazi era or Cambodian survivors from the Pol Pot regime”. Bhalagwe is a detention and interrogation camp that was situated in Kezi, Matabeleland South where detainees were subjected to gruelling torture at the hands of the 5 Brigade and government agencies. To some victims of the Gukurahundi, just the name Bhalagwe is triggering. This reportage confirms the extent of the trauma equating it with the events of the Holocaust and the Killing Fields.

4.3 Genocide, Massacres, or Disturbances?

The usually quiet unfolding of human history is sometimes interrupted by events of shattering and lasting effect on the lives of whole peoples.

Skloot 1982: 3

Gukurahundi has been described with various terms. While earlier writings (e.g., CCJP & LRF 1997) have widely used the term disturbances, recent writings seem to be shifting towards revising this to “genocide” (e.g., Mpofu 2019; Mpofu and Moyo 2017). Dumisani Ngwenya (2014: 27) refers to the Gukurahundi activities as “atrocities”, another term that has been used widely to describe the killings, rape, torture, and other gruesome acts that were perpetrated against the people of Matabeleland and Midlands during this period. CCJP & LRF (1997) also use this term.

Some of the terms that have been used to describe the Gukurahundi demonstrate that the happenings of this period have not been acknowledged and have also not been discussed widely due to government denial and repression. Samuel Ravengai (2015a: 284) describes the Gukurahundi period as “this unreported period”. The lack of reporting on this period alluded to is a result of the government’s stance of making the Gukurahundi subject a taboo and criminalising it (see Mpofu 2019). The Gukurahundi has also been referred to by Pedzisai Maedza (2017) as an unconfirmed genocide.

The government has referred to the Gukurahundi as a “civil war” (CCJP & LRF 1997: 31). The government probably chose this term as a way of justifying its deployment of the 5 Brigade in Matabeleland and the Midlands provinces. However, to refer to the Gukurahundi as a civil war is problematic for two reasons. First, the description gives the impression that the civilians that were brutalised by the 5 Brigade during this time were also armed and retaliating. This was not the case. There is no evidence to suggest that the civilians mobilised themselves at all and certainly not in any way that could be considered a resistance. Secondly, such a description glosses over the point that there were actually two conflicts going on simultaneously in Matabeleland and Midlands provinces during that time; the conflict between the various Zimbabwe National Army units and the Police Support Unit versus the dissidents and the conflict between the 5 Brigade and the unarmed civilians (CCJP & LRF 1997). Reportedly, the 5 Brigade was not interested in the former conflict but in the latter (Ndlovu-Gatsheni and Willems 2010). According to CCJP & LRF (1997: 50), “evidence points to the conclusion that the 5 Brigade was in fact trained to target civilians.” It is further observed that the violence of the 5 Brigade against the civilian population was not random, but well-organised and widespread. A similar point is raised by a former dissident who says:

The Gukurahundi wasn't a good fighting unit. It was trained to reduce the Matabeleland population, it was killing civilians. The Gukurahundi weren't soldiers, where do you see soldiers who sing when on patrol? They were looking for civilians not other soldiers, so we would come across them singing and we would take cover. Soon after you'd hear people crying in their homes... [W]e'd clash with them, but instead of following us, they'd call for the villagers. That's where you'd hear bazookas and AKs firing into homes. (Alexander et al. 2000: 200, cited in Ngwenya 2014: 28)

From accounts such as the one above it is clear that the 5 Brigade was more interested in violence against civilians and not in dealing with the dissident problem. It was the Police Support Unit (SU), the paratroopers, and other Army brigades that were involved in confronting the dissidents with stealth and also worked in cooperation with the civilians but the 5 Brigade was not (CCJP & LRF 1997). It is further elaborated that:

Commercial farmers interviewed also felt 5 Brigade was more interested in “politicking” than pursuing dissidents, and when farmers reported a dissident presence, 5 Brigade would show a marked lack of interest. Farmers agreed SU, the paratroopers and other Army units were more active in pursuits of dissidents. (CCJP & LRF 1997: 51)

Genocide Watch (2010), a UN-affiliated organisation has referred to the Gukurahundi as a genocide (See also Mpofu and Moyo 2017; Mpofu 2019). To further understand this, it is important to look at what constitutes genocide. According to Gene A. Plunka (2009: 2) genocide is “the intent to destroy a national,

ethnic, racial, or religious group". Skloot provides a more detailed explanation of genocide. He observes:

When Raphael Lemkin coined the word "genocide" in 1944, he provided a name for the kind of human savagery with which he had personal experience...Genocide joins together the Greek "genos" (race or kind) with the Latin "caedere" (to kill) to name behavior that had been known but not defined conceptually or legally. Article 2 of the United Nations genocide convention reads: "Genocide means any of the following acts committed with intent to destroy, in whole or in part, a national, ethnic, racial or religious group" ...Lemkin's precise and expansive definition addressed the massive scale and clear intent of the killing and stipulated that it could occur during war or peacetime and could be carried out by governments or individuals. He insisted that genocide was different than common savagery, no matter how large-scale, because whole groups were targeted for annihilation. (Skloot 1982: 3)

During the Holocaust, the Jews were humiliated, degraded, and made second-class citizens to justify their extermination (Skloot 1982). Skloot further points out that:

Before and during those years, German citizens were subjected to viciously anti-Semitic propaganda in which Jews were labeled as subhuman criminals or likened to nonhuman disease-causing insects; it was a kind of racism which touched a responsive nerve in many of the national and ethnic populations of Europe. Through such ubiquitous psychological and cultural conditioning, the barbarous measures that were either being taken or being planned against the Jews became increasingly acceptable. (Skloot 1982: 6)

Echoing the same sentiments Plunka (2009: 2) argues that "the Jews were compared to various types of bacillus, parasites, or diseases, with genocide encouraged as the panacea". In a fashion similar to the afore-described scenario, in Zimbabwe Joshua Mqabuko Nkomo, ZAPU leaders, and its supporters were referred to as dissidents to justify their attack. The Ndebele people were also equally referred to as dissidents. Mugabe and others in government emphasised that the "dissidents" had to be crushed (See CCJP & LRF 1997). The word Gukurahundi implies a cleansing of the dirt. With the dissident rhetoric, Mugabe (together with others in government) justified his decision to deploy the 5 Brigade for the Gukurahundi operation.

Commenting on the Rwandan genocide between the Hutu and Tutsi, Mahmood Mamdani (2001: 14) argues that "ethnic violence can result in massacres, but not genocide. Massacres are about transgressions, excess; genocide questions the very legitimacy of a presence as alien". This is an interesting point when considering the ethnic – and African - roots of the Gukurahundi. The Gukurahundi was more organised and sustained than a massacre. Arguing for a genocide then would imply that in a bid to create a one-party state Robert Mugabe and his inner circle considered those who were not part of this one-party state agenda as 'outsiders'. As a result, it can be further argued, that ZAPU and its

supporters, and the generality of the people of Matabeleland and parts of Midlands provinces were alienated and thus viewed as not part of the system.

4.4 Perspectives on Grieving

Below I will examine different perspectives on grieving to advance the notion that grieving is a universal human phenomenon. People's rights to participate in this experience should not be hindered.

The Language/s of Grieving

Grieving is a necessary component of emotional healing accommodated within the rituals of most cultures. Historians and cultural writers on Ndebele people's lives and culture (Nyathi 2005; Ndlovu et al. 1995; Sibanda 2002) describe specific Ndebele grieving practices and rituals. Notable are the concepts of *ukukhala* [mourning] and *ukuzila* [observing a period of mourning]. These come with associated rituals and practices that are either done at the family or community level. These practices are part of the *langalezo* experience. A *langalezo* experience is a cultural communal experience. It is not experienced alone. The practices of *ukukhalelana* [comforting the bereaved] or *ukukhulumisana* [visiting the bereaved to talk to her or him about her/his loss] involve contact and conversation. The one who is going through a season of *ukuzila* is not left alone but is constantly visited by relatives, friends, and neighbours to comfort her or him with words of encouragement or just to spend time with her/him *emxoxisa* [having a casual talk with her/him]. To have a *langalezo* experience one needs others and there should be *ukukhulumisana* [talking to each other]. The specific cultural (and communal) practices of processing grief are enshrined in the language itself. The silence around the issue of the Gukurahundi has hindered many Ndebele people from practising their mourning rituals, thus blocking the process of grieving and subsequent healing.

Robert Skloot (1982: 3) observes that when life-shattering events take place in the lives of people, upon reflection "have been the inspiration for the imaginative literature of every age, as history is retold and re-experienced in song and story, poem and play". Notably, Ndebele people have in the past composed songs to document and come to terms with issues that have affected them. This is in line with Thenjiwe Magwaza's (2001) and Karin Barber's (1997) writings on African popular culture. Magwaza argues that cultural forms and artefacts (like beadwork) are used in African culture to communicate and often as a form of protest. Bernadette Nompumelelo Zondi (2008) echoes the same sentiments as she sees songs that emanate from people's experiences, as a form of negotiating and commenting on these experiences.

These examples demonstrate that composing songs, plays, and poems presents a potential to grapple with difficult life experiences. Even the creation of artefacts like beadwork offers an avenue to express oneself in African culture. There are therefore many possibilities to explore. NoViolet Bulawayo (2022), in her novel *Glory*, demonstrates the power of fiction or creative writing to address issues affecting humanity. She uses allegory to grapple with the trauma of the Gukurahundi and to depict other socio-political issues that relate to Zimbabwe.

Barber (1997: 5) observes that songs from the Mozambican plantations were “generated by people’s suffering, giving collective voice to memories of pain to make them serve as a ‘map of experience’”. They represent that part of the mind that refuses to capitulate. A notable example of this in the Ndebele context is the song “*Kudala kwakunganje, umhlab’uyaphenduka...sawela kuTshangane saguqa ngamadolo inkos’ uLobengula yasinyamalala*” [For a long time things were not like this, things do change...when we got to Tshangane river King Lobengula disappeared] (Ndlovu et al. 1995: 3-4). In this particular mourning song, the Ndebele people use the complex disappearance and death of their King Lobengula, as a metaphor for what happened for the coming generations. In these examples, we see how storytelling through art in general, and songs, in particular, are used to document history and to give collective expression to that history. This use of cultural and creative forms to speak to history has not happened for the Gukurahundi. The theatre plays that we devised as part of this research consisted of acting, songs, dance, and poems, thus drawing from this rich African performance tradition.

In addition to providing a *langazelo*, there is a gap in the literature that this research seeks to fill. While the period of the protracted liberation struggle that led to Zimbabwe’s independence in 1980 has generated a lot of research, the Matabeleland and Midlands disturbances of the 1980s have remained less researched and less documented. While the ZANU PF government needs to protect its own ‘official version’ of the Gukurahundi events so that it is absolved from any culpability in the atrocities of this period, the current research, in part, seeks to contribute towards filling the gap in the literature on the issue of the Gukurahundi and to contribute towards documenting the Gukurahundi experiences.

Grieving or mourning is not a phenomenon limited to the Ndebele people. It is something that resonates with all humanity regardless of context. As a way to establish the idea of a grieving ritual across time and place, I will engage its description in an ancient Greek play text, *Antigone*, and in accounts recorded in the Bible.

By denying Polyneices a decent burial in the play *Antigone*, Creon was, arguably seeking to continue punishing him even after death. Similar scenarios occurred during the Gukurahundi. The 5 Brigade soldiers would not only forbid the relatives of their victims to nurse their wounds or to seek medical help for them (such as taking them to hospital) but at times they would even go to the extent of forbidding

burial for those they had shot dead (CCJP & LRF, 1997). Someone once narrated to me an incident where the 5 Brigade soldiers shot dead a member of their family and then ordered that he not be buried. This person narrated that they had to endure the pain of seeing the corpse of their relative rotting and falling to pieces until the homestead stank. They only buried him after several days had passed. Even today many voices have called for the reburial of the Gukurahundi victims, some of whom were buried in mass graves and a manner devoid of dignity.

Along with forbidding burial, Creon forbade the mourning of Polyneices. Based on this play by Sophocles, forbidding mourning or grieving has a painful effect on the relatives left behind. For them, the characters in Sophocles' play, to find closure there is a need to grieve or mourn unhindered, and to bury their loved ones in a dignified manner. Antigone's response to Creon's declaration that Polyneices should neither be mourned nor buried reveals the yearnings of the heart of humanity – the necessity to grieve. Despite the decree by Creon that whoever disobeys his law and buries Polyneices shall be punished by death, Antigone stands up to Creon's order and disobeys it. Antigone refuses to listen to her sister Ismene who warns her not to bury their brother as per Creon's orders. Antigone does not only bury her brother, she readily admits to the offence when caught and accepts to die. Antigone's action is a demonstration of her willingness to die for what she believes is right – she would rather die than accept being silenced. She claims her right to mourn and to bury her relative even if it puts her life in danger.

Based on Sophocles' play *Antigone*, I argue that even in antiquity ritualised grieving was seen to be necessary. Since my research has a theatre element in it, I saw it fit to also draw lessons from theatrical works. As a result, I examined this play by Sophocles.

Christianity has had a significant influence on the Ndebele grieving practices, directly or indirectly, covertly or overtly through the work of missionaries in Africa (Moyo, 2018). An insight into grieving practices recorded in the Bible can help illuminate the present-day phenomenon. While there are various religions in Zimbabwe, the nation is generally regarded as Christian because of the widespread of Christianity. Therefore, accounts from the Bible are likely to resonate with many citizens. Grieving is a natural phenomenon triggered by loss. Cultures and religions have consistently developed rituals and practices to assist with this process. I will discuss some examples from the Bible. Significantly, these examples not only demonstrate the desire by humans to express their pain and loss during times of grieving but also the importance of discussion and dialogue as a way of seeking a way forward – negotiating past painful experiences to move on and live life fully.

The first incident I analyse is that of David (King of Israel and Judah) grieving or mourning the death of Abner found in the second book of Samuel chapter 3 (2 Samuel 3) in the Old Testament. Abner was the commander of Saul's army and later after Saul's death shifted to David's side and David received him in

peace. However, this did not go well with Joab the commander of David's army. Unbeknown to David, Joab devised a scheme to kill Abner. When David learnt that Joab had killed Abner he was not pleased and he dissociated himself from the actions of Joab. David mourned passionately for Abner. David commanded that mourning be held for Abner (2 Samuel 3: 31). This was very noble and kind of David. Abner was therefore buried decently because of David's benevolence as the leader of the people. In 2 Samuel 3:36, it is recorded that the people were pleased by the actions of David their King. David understood the necessity to grieve for Abner and to give him a decent burial. David himself followed the bier (2 Samuel 3: 31).

It is worth noting that David composed and sang a mourning song as a way of grieving for Abner. The New Living Translation (NLT) renders 2 Samuel 3: 33 this way "Then the king **sang this funeral song** for Abner: "Should Abner have died as fools die?" (2 Samuel 3: 33, NLT, emphasis added). Through the song that David composed, he found a form of expressing his grief (creatively) for the death of Abner. In the song, David grapples with the difficult circumstances of Abner's death and questions how it happened. There was freedom of emotion – for both King David and the people who joined in mourning Abner. This was supported by the King. Considering that David's commander was the one who killed Abner, the king's actions probably played a role in appeasing the people and also proving that David had no hand in the killing of Abner.

A second account to be discussed here is that of David mourning the death of Saul recorded in 1 Samuel 31 and 2 Samuel 1. Saul, who was the leader of Israel at that point was wounded in the battle of Israel against the Philistines. When Saul realised that he was badly wounded he asked his armour bearer to thrust him through with a sword so that the Philistines would not come and thrust him through and abuse him. His armour bearer was afraid and would not do it so Saul took a sword and fell upon it and died (1 Samuel 31: 3 – 4). Saul's son Jonathan was also killed in that battle. When the news of Saul and Jonathan's death reached David (the incoming leader of Israel) he tore his clothes (as a sign of mourning) and those with him joined in (2 Samuel 1: 11). In 2 Samuel 1:12 the mourning by David and his followers is described: "And they mourned, and wept, and fasted until even, for Saul, and for Jonathan his son, and for the people of the Lord, and for the house of Israel; because they were fallen by the sword" (KJV). David is also then accounted to have composed a song (Samuel 1: 17 and 19-27) in remembrance.

While in the biblical examples examined, we see that David composed songs as part of practising grieving, for the Ndebele people who suffered the Gukurahundi onslaught (and their relatives and children), the situation has been different. The composition of songs has been repressed. The writing of plays on the Gukurahundi has been met with government repression through the banning of the works and arresting of playwrights as noted in Chapter 1. Prevention of these rites is torture in itself. In the

biblical examples, we see again the importance of mourning rituals in the healing process. This can too be seen as a way to mend political ties. The role of creative expression through songs, poetry, and other forms of storytelling is documented as a part of the mourning process.

Section B: Creative Responses to Genocides, Atrocities and Traumatic Situations

4.5 Creative Forms and the Holocaust

Art plays an important role in the processing of trauma but also the documenting of it 'lest we forget'. The Holocaust is one of the – if not the – most significant landmarks for reference when dealing with issues of genocide and trauma. The way art in general and theatre in particular has been used to address the traumatic experiences of the Holocaust provides us with a rich tapestry to learn from and build upon, especially in my research that is grappling with the Gukurahundi traumatic experiences. I will engage it in some detail here; however, while the Holocaust has been acknowledged and thus dealt with publicly and at a global level, the Gukurahundi genocide has not been acknowledged as a genocide by the Zimbabwean government and is practically unknown to most people outside of Zimbabwe. Nevertheless, the Holocaust has given birth to many theatrical (and other) works that may offer us insights into how the arts in general, and theatre, in particular, have responded to genocide and traumatic events. The idea of the representation and fictionalising of genocide (using the Holocaust example) is also debated.

Major events like the Great Depression, the First World War, and the Holocaust are life-shattering (Skloot 1982). Skloot is Western in focus and therefore exhibits the unintentional bias of the authors who tend to ignore the atrocities endured by Africans. Having said this, it is worth mentioning that colonisation has been viewed by Frantz Fanon (1961) as destructive to the lives of the colonised. Similarly, Francine Masson and Linda Harms-Smith (2019) argue that colonisation and its substructures such as apartheid and wars produced (and in some cases continue to produce) collective trauma on the colonised or the affected. Although not at the scale of these mentioned traumatic events, a similar statement can be made for the Gukurahundi in the context of Zimbabwe.

Skloot points out that such life-shattering events generate a different understanding in people and these understandings can sometimes be contradictory. They are viewed from different perspectives depending on the angle that one is using such as the position of being a Jew or a Christian (or none of these), a German, Pole, Israeli, Russian, or American, survivor, politicians, and so on. As a result, artists have also presented different angles and this idea of multiple perspectives is important if we are to achieve a more

complex understanding of an occurrence. In Zimbabwe, the understanding of the Gukurahundi is textured by such positions as being a Ndebele, a Shona, a politician, a first-generation sufferer, a second-generation sufferer, a survivor, and so on. This research leans more towards understanding the perspectives of the second-generation sufferers though the perspectives of the first-generation sufferers are also being addressed.

Plunka (2009) gives an account of the genesis or early years of what he calls “Holocaust drama: the theatre of atrocity” which is theatre that came as a response to the Holocaust. He mentions that Frances Goodrich and Albert Hackett adapted *The Diary of Anne Frank* for the stage and it was staged in 1955 and achieved box office success. The play had its origins being traced to “a Dutch edition of Anne Frank’s diary, kept as her record of hiding from the Nazis in an Amsterdam annex from 12 June 1942 until 1 August 1944” which was published in 1947 (Plunka 2009: 6). Despite succeeding at the box office, the play was criticised sugar-coating the Holocaust to appeal to the audiences (Plunka 2009). Noted Holocaust scholar, Lawrence L. Langer (1984: 214) weighed in with criticism of the play too, arguing that “an audience coming to this play in 1955, only a decade after the event, would find little to threaten their psychological or emotional security. No one dies, and the inhabitants of the annex endure minimal suffering”. The play leaned more towards box office needs thus cheapening the subject matter presented in Anne’s diary.

The toning down and the sugar-coating that the Goodrich and Hackett play is accused of was made possible by the fact that the original survivor who put the story down in a diary got overshadowed by the two playwrights. A play that has one or two authors tends to privilege the author or authors and give them plenty of power to shape the direction of the play and to determine its tone. In my research, I considered using devised theatre, in the form of PPT which decentres the author while empowering the participants who become authors of their own stories. I was interested in a theatre approach and form that would allow the participants ample room to have a say in how their stories are told and which aspects are emphasised. The research sought to explore theatre not only as a way of speaking out but also as a way of documenting the Gukurahundi experiences of the participants. Documenting these experiences is important in creating a communal archive of the Gukurahundi.

On the other hand, Goodrich and Hackett can be forgiven for their toned-down play. It could be that being more explicit during those days was not an easy thing. Christopher Bigsby (2006) points out that speaking out on the issues of the Holocaust was a difficult thing during the first decades after it occurred. Bigsby (2006) writes “At times, even addressing such issues is to hear the ice begin to crack beneath one’s feet. For some two decades it was if not a secret then a story few were willing to tell and to which few were willing to listen. Now it is told in survivors’ tales, recounted in schools, dramatized”. Such observations can also be made regarding the Gukurahundi. In the immediate years that followed the Gukurahundi

producing or creating artworks that raised the issue was not only difficult but it was highly risky. The government repression was heavy. More recently, plays and other creative works that have presented explicit details of the Gukurahundi have emerged. I believe that the more such plays and creative works are produced the more the artists will become bolder and bolder in portraying the Gukurahundi experiences. The audiences are also becoming more 'prepared' for much more explicit content on the Gukurahundi atrocities. Later in this chapter, I review some of the plays that have emerged that address the Gukurahundi.

One of the things that can be learned from the Goodrich and Hackett play is that for anyone who creates artworks, particularly drama on traumatic experiences like that of the Holocaust, and that of the Gukurahundi, there is a need to think deeply about how the subject is approached. One needs to avoid sugar-coating or trivialising the pain and suffering of those who have been victims of such occurrences. On the other hand, one grapples with the question of how far one can dig into past experiences without re-traumatising the participants. The answer is not on either extreme. It is on the middle road which is not a cut-out path but a negotiated one.

The adaptation of Anne Frank's diary into a play brings to the fore a very important point – the desire of theatre to work with real-life experiences of victims of traumatic events as a way of manoeuvring past these experiences. It is a similar desire that has necessitated the need for exploring a theatrical response to the Gukurahundi that took place in Zimbabwe. The desire emanates from the realisation of the potential that lies in theatre to address sensitive issues like atrocities. Plunka posits that:

The immediacy of theater affects us emotionally, subliminally, and intellectually in a direct way that few other art forms can duplicate. Theater of the Holocaust can pay homage to the victims, educate audiences, induce an empathetic response from the audience, raise moral and ethical questions for discussion/debate, and draw lessons from history. (Plunka 2009: i)

My research was therefore framed with the realisation of this potential. How this potential of theatre can be tapped into and fully realised remains a subject of exploration.

The trial of Adolf Eichmann is identified as the most single important event that propelled the growth of Holocaust literature (Plunka 2009). Adolf Eichmann had been captured by Israeli agents in Buenos Aires on 11 May 1960 and his trial ran from 11 April to 15 December 1961. As Plunka observes, the trial of Adolf Eichmann:

became a national catharsis for Israel, which had not had the opportunity after the war to exert justice on Nazi perpetrators, as other countries were able to do. Unlike the Nuremberg trials, which focused primarily on crimes against peace and humanity, the Eichmann trial made the Holocaust specific to the annihilation of European Jewry, as dozens of witnesses testified about the devastation of the Shoah. (Plunka 2009: 8)

The time of the capture and trial of Eichmann saw the coming to the fore of important literary works on the subject of the Holocaust. Plunka (2009: 9) gives a list of such works, mentioning “Elie Wiesel’s first novel *Night* (1960:), Millard Lampell’s adaptation of Hersey’s *The Wall for Broadway* (1960), Primo Levi’s *Survival in Auschwitz* (1961), Viktor Frankl’s survivor testimony *Man’s Search for Meaning* (1962), and the Berlin premiere of Rolf Hochhuth’s controversial *Der Stellvertreter* (1963, *The Deputy*) under direction by Erwin Piscator”. The emergence of these artistic works shows how art captures what is happening in society, in the process, providing commentary on the events and documenting the unfolding of events for future reference and reflections.

The Gukurahundi case presents a sharp contrast to what happened in Germany during the trial of Eichmann. While the trial of Eichmann generated a lot of artworks, including theatrical works, in Zimbabwe it is the silence about the Gukurahundi that has propelled artists to use theatre as a form of expression on the Gukurahundi issue. Ironically, in Zimbabwe artists have been arrested for creating artistic works that address the Gukurahundi. Shepherd Mpfu points out that:

In Zimbabwe journalism is an occupational hazard. Similarly, the arts and especially Maseko’s art, unlike music, has been subjected to those constraints leading to his arrest...On the Gukurahundi case, silence and arrests have been potent forms of violence used to control and subdue voices railing against ZANU-PF silences on genocide. (Mpfu 2019: 69)

Art is dynamic. It can emerge as a response to what is happening in society and it can also emerge as a response to what is failing to happen – in a bid to break the silence, to close gaps, and to advocate for action.

As the Eichmann trial continued, Plunka (2009) observed that it produced documentary drama that by its nature seeks to document real-life events. The emergence of this genre of theatre in Germany during Eichmann’s trial shows that theatre played a role in documenting the Holocaust story. The use of theatre to document the Gukurahundi that happened in Zimbabwe has been to a very limited extent. The limitation has come mainly as a result of the government’s silencing of the discussions on the Gukurahundi. In my project, I made use of devised theatre as a way of addressing the Gukurahundi issue among the second-generation sufferers of the Gukurahundi. The play that was produced had aspects of documentary drama infused in it. We made use of the CCJP & LRF (1997) report, film, and personal stories shared by the participants to build the play. It is part of this research’s objectives to document the Gukurahundi experiences through theatre and hence we borrowed some aspects of documentary drama in our work. The playmaking process has been discussed in Chapter 2 and will further be discussed in Chapter 5.

Other art forms such as films also played their part in the portrayal of the Holocaust. Some of the films that got the ball rolling include *Judgment at Nuremberg* (1961) which ran during the Eichmann trial and *The Pawnbroker* (1964) which came later during the Auschwitz hearings. These films and many others

played an important role in raising consciousness among people about the Holocaust (Plunka 2009). Plunka even credits films for introducing the term “holocaust” in Western German vernacular as churches, schools media made efforts to explain miniseries on the holocaust. This demonstrates the role art can play in potentially raising consciousness on the Gukurahundi in Zimbabwe. To manoeuvre past the pain of that period there is a need to honestly face the reality of that period and work on moving forward than seeking to close it inside a box that continues to prolong the transference of trauma to the next generation(s).

Plunka (2009) shows that theatre and other creative expressions of the Holocaust have not received a uniform response from scholars. Some scholars such as Theodor W. Adorno (1974) and Elie Wiesel (1989) have advocated for silence arguing that the theatre of the Holocaust has the potential to trivialise the suffering of the victims and to disrespect the dead. Lawrence Langer (1975) has also cautioned against this, describing holocaust literature as incapable of depicting annihilation which is an experience that is typically not part of our human cultural tradition. However, as Plunka (2009) points out, the obligation by artists, and indeed survivors, to bear witness to the suffering of the victims who died, and to pay homage to them, has outweighed the call to remain silent. Plunka observes that:

One of the major aspirations of those who survived the extermination camps was a desperate need to tell the story in order to honor those who were degraded as vermin, suffered unmercifully, and then were slaughtered without due process of the rites of death. (Plunka 2009: 14)

Remaining silent in the aftermaths of traumatic events has also been criticised for doing what the perpetrators want and wish for – behaving as if it never happened (Bettelheim 1979). With regards to the Gukurahundi, the government has, for a long time, pretended and behaved as if it never happened. While most feared the consequences and remained silent, there were those whose bravery was evident – the creatives who must tell a story regardless of consequences. Their voices, and those of some members of the community, kept rising and recently, the government announced that people are now free to speak about their Gukurahundi experiences, without recrimination.

Primo Levi (1988) argues that silence gives room to the perpetrators of atrocities to destroy evidence riding on the belief that the monstrous events of the genocide, when narrated by the survivors, will not be believed by the world. I agree with the argument that choosing silence will therefore be surrendering one’s agency into the perpetrator’s hands. Alvin H. Rosenfeld (1980) argues that silence about the Holocaust presents the Nazis with one more posthumous victory. Silence therefore takes power away from the victim while at the same time giving an undeserved advantage to the perpetrator.

Plunka (2009) sees theatre as an ideal medium for addressing atrocities, submitting that the Shoah²⁴ cannot and should not be relegated to the realm of mysticism as it is not entirely incomprehensible or unfathomable. Nevertheless, Plunka does not completely dismiss Wiesel and Adorno's standpoints. Instead, he recognises these scholars as playing an important role in balancing the equation, as they “do serve an important purpose in Holocaust studies, for they are the watchdogs for writers who may go to extremes in their callous or trivial treatment of a sacred historical event” (Plunka 2009: 15). Again, the issue of avoiding the trivialisation of the sufferings of the victims comes to the fore. This is something that equally applies to the issue of the Gukurahundi. Creative forms as a response to the Gukurahundi genocide should take caution not to trivialise the pain and suffering of the victims. This is something that I kept in mind as I undertook my research.

Skloot (1982: 10) too, strongly opposes the shying away and remaining silent of artists in the aftermath of the Holocaust, arguing that “despite the volatility of the subject matter and the ambiguity of many of the conclusions which can be drawn from it, the temptation to withdraw from involvement is strongly resisted”. Skloot goes further to proffer an explanation that one of the reasons many artists have resisted the temptation to be silent on the Holocaust subject is that they feel that they have a moral duty to pursue the subject.

Artists who are motivated by an inherently moral duty believe that keeping silent is not a choice that is available to them. As Skloot (1982: 11) puts it, such artists “accept the challenge of the Holocaust's victims, who frequently and fervently urged that the truth of those events, or at least the facts about them, be conveyed to future generations”. On moral ground, Elie Wiesel (1967), in this instance agrees with the above standpoint and cautions against choosing silence. Wiesel argues that those who do not engage in remembering and in making others remember are complicit with the perpetrator of the atrocities. The necessity to resist silence is a clarion call not to be ignored, not only for the Holocaust but also for the Gukurahundi.

Skloot (1982) grapples with three important questions about artists' relationship to the Holocaust: The first question being, is it possible for the Holocaust to be addressed or engaged in works of art? Secondly, if it can be dealt with in works of art, will the experience be cheapened, trivialised, or exploited in the treatment it is given? Thirdly, what moral responsibility do artists have in taking up the Holocaust theme? Skloot admits that the answers to these questions are controversial, complicated, and highly contested. Langer (1975) has thoughtfully considered these questions and in turn, asked whether art can represent

²⁴ According to the University of Southern California Shoah Foundation (2022: no page) “In Hebrew, “shoah” literally means catastrophe. Used as a proper noun, “Shoah” refers to attempts to eradicate the Jewish population of Europe in the 1930s and 1940s by Nazis during and before World War II. The proper noun “Holocaust” is used in the same way”.

the atrocious inhuman suffering of the victims of events of the magnitude of the Holocaust without doing injustice to the suffering. Langer's concern is about an artistic work falsifying the experience of atrocity it tries to depict (artistically) by giving it a shape and intelligibility which it never possessed. Skloot points out that Langer:

is concerned that because the Holocaust was a time of chaos and madness, a structured artistic re-creation of that experience, beginning with the process of selecting what part or aspect of the experience to treat, might distort and even deny the very nature of what life at that time was like. As a result, the audience might receive a kind of aesthetic satisfaction which betrays the historical reality or distracts attention from the ethical implications of the Holocaust. (Skloot 1982: 12)

Langer concludes that aesthetic stylisation does not result in a distractive and distracting kind of pleasure. Langer (175: 22) writing about what he calls "aesthetics of atrocity", points out that it is the responsibility of the artist to find a style and form that is suitable for fittingly dealing with the Holocaust. Many artists have rejected silence and embraced Langer's call to address the Holocaust (Skloot: 1982). Skloot goes further to give three reasons why artists have rejected silence and chosen to address the Holocaust. First, they are drawn to such a subject that can touch humanity to the core and they want to make this subject accessible to imagination so that they can touch humanity. Secondly, they are responding to the survivors' call and want to bear witness to the suffering that the survivors endured, and at times courageously overcame. Thirdly, they desire to retell the story of what transpired.

Langer's argument holds true for the Gukurahundi. Art in general and theatre in particular, can be used to deal with this sensitive and emotive issue. Again, the three reasons that Skloot offers that make artists reject silence regarding the Holocaust offer encouragement to Zimbabwean artists and theatre practitioners, myself included, to expend energies towards the creation of artistic works that deal with the Gukurahundi. Skloot also offers hope to survivors who, through the works of art, can have their pain and suffering witnessed and documented for use as maps of experience and points of reference, a move that has the potential to aid the process of grieving and dealing with the Gukurahundi pain.

Literature and theatre/drama of the Holocaust help in educating the audience (those that may not have information) on what transpired during this period of atrocity (Skloot 2008; Plunka 2009). Similarly, art, particularly the theatre of the Gukurahundi, presents an opportunity to educate second-generation sufferers on what transpired during this dark period. Plunka (2009)'s preference for theatre as an artistic form that can be effectively used to address the Holocaust is made clear. His conviction that theatre possesses not only the potential but also the effectiveness in addressing atrocity is also made clear. Plunka argues:

Drama seems to be an ideal medium to represent these eternal conflicts and dilemmas [of the Holocaust]. Theater affects us emotionally, subliminally, or intellectually (sometimes simultaneously) in a direct way that poetry and fiction cannot. The theater also possesses a powerful immediacy effect between actor and audience that no other art form can match. The audience can serve as a community participating in a palpable rite of mourning for the Holocaust victims. (Plunka 2009: 16)

Plunka (2009: 16) therefore concludes that “despite the objections from Wiesel and Adorno, drama has proven to be an effective medium for representing the Holocaust”. Drama is an effective medium for addressing the Holocaust (Plunka 2012). Plunka is not only raising the issue of the potential and effectiveness of theatre in dealing with atrocities, but he is also raising an aspect of the participating audience, through theatre, being in a way, participants of a mourning or grieving ritual. It is such realisation that holds hope for the current research that set out to explore theatre as grieving for the victims and second-generation sufferers of the Gukurahundi. Theatre offers hope of encouraging a *langalezo* experience, a grieving or mourning experience. Elinor Fuchs (1987: xxvi) argues that for the mourning rite to be complete, there is a necessity for the participation of the audience as living witness, riding on the realisation that “the theatre itself offers a certain fragile potentiality for re-creation”. The Gukurahundi atrocities were experienced by the residents of Matabeleland and Midlands provinces collectively. It is therefore important that the grieving process is experienced collectively rather than individually. Theatre offers potential for the second-generation sufferers of the Gukurahundi to collectively explore ways of grieving and addressing the issues of the Gukurahundi. The *langalezo* experience that I have referred to as a grieving experience in the Ndebele culture is by and large a collective experience.

Many playwrights have written plays that respond to the Holocaust (See Plunka 2012; Plunka 2009; Skloot 2008; Schumacher 1998; Skloot 1983). Skloot (1982) offers five main objectives that have motivated artists to create works about the Holocaust. The first reason is that they desire to pay homage to the victims, individually or collectively. Secondly, they seek to educate audiences about what transpired. Thirdly, they seek to produce an emotional response to the facts of that period. Fourthly, they seek to raise moral and ethical questions so that the audiences can ponder or reflect on, and discuss. The fifth reason is so that artists and audiences can draw lessons from the re-created events. I argue that these reasons can also be applied to the Gukurahundi. The difference is that unlike in the Holocaust where these objectives have been pursued freely, for the Gukurahundi such objectives have not been fully and freely pursued by artists and audiences, particularly during the years before 2019.

As many artists have responded to the Holocaust through theatrical works, the debate has shifted to the form and style of theatre that should be used. Artists, particularly playwrights, are constantly searching for a theatre form and style that responds appropriately to the theatre of the Holocaust (Skloot 1982). Plunka (2009: 16) supporting Skloot’s argument for an appropriate form and style, points out that “the

form of the play the playwright chooses makes all the difference in whether the Holocaust will be sanctified or treated sacrilegiously on stage". Exercising caution in choosing the style and form arises because of the need that has been pointed out by scholars that artists should avoid trivialising the suffering of the victims of the Holocaust. I find this applicable, to a certain extent, to the theatre of the Gukurahundi.

Another bone of contention has centred on the use of realism in depicting the Holocaust (Skloot 1982). On one side realism has been known for depicting "life as it is lived" while on the other hand, it has been criticised in the context of the Holocaust "on the grounds that it presented not more truth, but considerably less" (Skloot 1982: 16-17). The use of realism in theatre of the Holocaust has therefore remained a debatable issue. When dealing with traumatic events like the Holocaust and the Gukurahundi the artists may find themselves faced with a dilemma concerning the choices they have to make. On the one hand, there is a danger of making the work of art unrecognisable through abstraction while on the other hand, there is a danger of making the work of art untruthful through a necessarily reductive replication. Some see a realist approach in this kind of theatre as a falsification of the subject while on the other hand, others see an abstract approach as a betrayal of the subject matter. This is a path that anyone who ventures into the kind of theatre that addresses traumatic events has to keep in mind and negotiate based on the unique circumstances at hand.

Skloot (1982) offers hope and comfort to the artist or researcher who might find himself hesitant because of the form and style conundrum. Skloot argues that there is no one way or approach to treating traumatic events like the Holocaust in theatre. He further mentions examples of those who have used different modes. According to Skloot:

In truth, there is no single correct style for the Theatre of the Holocaust, and we should be cautious of those who insist on only one kind of treatment. In their search for the forms to achieve their individual objectives, it is not surprising that playwrights of the Theatre of the Holocaust have employed a wide range of dramatic modes. Peter Weiss's *The Investigation* attempts a documentary style, Nellie Sachs's *Eli* is an extended poem in dramatic form, Erwin Sylvanus's *Dr. Korczak and the Children*, one of the best plays on the Holocaust theme, makes use of Pirandellian techniques...It is true, however, that many other Holocaust plays retain a realistic base, because that is what people know best; audiences accept the form most readily because it is most "lifelike." (Skloot 1982: 17-18)

Skloot's standpoint is also echoed by Claude Schumacher (1998) who emphasises that there is no model for approaching the Holocaust in terms of dramaturgy – the approaches vary. His view is that "there is no model, there can be no model of representation of the Holocaust...each playwright must solve the problem of representing the unrepresentable, of offering staging suggestions for the unstageable which will stimulate the imagination of directors and actors and challenge the spectator". Similarly, I am of the view that there is not one way of approaching the theatre of the Gukurahundi. With this realisation, I explore

collectively devised popular participatory theatre in this research. In the next session, I turn my attention to devised theatre and the Rwandan genocide to present a case for the use of devised theatre in dealing with genocide and traumatic events.

4.6 Theatre and the Rwandan Genocide

In April 1994, a Hutu-led faction of the government of Rwanda initiated a genocide against the Tutsi population and left almost one million people dead, many wounded and a nation traumatised (Norridge 2019). Like during the Gukurahundi where supporters of ZAPU and Ndebele speakers were equated to chaff, the Rwandan genocide was characterised by dehumanising terminology. James E. Waller (2002: 47) states that “the Hutu extremists called the Tutsi *inyenzi*, meaning ‘cockroaches’ or ‘insects’”. Waller refers to this as dehumanisation of victims, which the perpetrators do as a strategy to absolve themselves of the moral responsibility of their actions and to justify the unleashing of violence upon their victims. With the likening of people to insects, genocide was, therefore, encouraged as a solution. The Gukurahundi unfolded in a similar pattern. A noticeable likeness between the Rwandan genocide and the Gukurahundi is that both coalesced around tribal affiliation as opposed to religious difference, although for the Gukurahundi, the ZANU versus ZAPU politics played an enormous role (Moyo and Young-Jahangeer 2022).

Theatre has played a role in memorialisation, mourning, and recording of the Rwandan genocide (Steele 2006). Nandita Dinesh (2015) reflects on theatre initiatives in times and places of war. In 2007 her work took her to Rwanda where she facilitated a research project to explore the potential and/or limitations of theatre in post-conflict zones. In referring to these zones Dinesh (2015: 46) puts “post-conflict” in inverted commas as a way of indicating that this conflict is not entirely over. Similarly, I argue that in Zimbabwe, *gukurahundiality* (after effects of the Gukurahundi that have arguably continued) and its associated manifestations continue to create conflict that makes the “post” in post-conflict questionable in the context of discussing the Gukurahundi. Indeed there was still conflict in Rwanda during Dinesh’s research, albeit in a different form and measure than the one experienced during the genocide. She recounted one such disturbing incident:

While we were at dinner one of the young women in our ensemble received a phone call in which she was told that two of her nieces had been killed in a village close to Kigali. This was part of a spate of killings that occur every year during the April genocide commemoration period, I was told, and this year my colleague’s nieces had fallen victim to these murders. A silence descended upon the group. (Dinesh 2015: 46)

As responses to these news came up, Dinesh, through an interpreter, learned that one of the speakers seated very close was advocating for revenge – imploring others to join him as they go and hunt for the murderers and kill them. This came as dark humour to Dinesh and her team who were “a group of idealistic theatre people who had just spent the last few weeks talking about peace and reconciliation in the face of violence” and now found themselves confronted by a response and a reality they had not anticipated (Dinesh 2015: 47). This kind of response made the theatre ensemble members take a step back and begin to consider the possibility that what the theatre ensemble had been engaged in for the past week could be futile. This painful reality led Dinesh to question her naïve idea of:

attempting to explain or understand Rwanda or any other conflict/post-conflict zone. Not only did I begin to think that it was impossible to even attempt an understanding, I began to wonder – as Agamben does – if there ever can be an understanding that seems sufficient. (Dinesh 2015: 47)

The above-described experience shows that an exploration of ways to address issues that emanate from past (or even present) violence remains significant. There are no ready answers for the theatre artist who seeks to venture into such an area. The exploration is a journey that those who are willing to take are not guaranteed a certain destination. It is a journey that is worth taking nevertheless. The process of learning and relearning must not stop for a theatre artist who engages in the theatre of trauma or theatre that addresses sensitive issues like that of the Holocaust, the Rwandan genocide, and the Gukurahundi. One of the things that led to Dinesh questioning her understanding of the Rwandan genocide could be her positionality – she entered that research space as an outsider who probably had not grasped the nuances of the Rwandan genocide. In my research, I am an insider in the affected community and while this does not make me have all the answers to the questions of the Gukurahundi, it gives me an advantageous understanding of the shadings of the Gukurahundi issue that might be easily missed or inaccessible to an outsider as I have discussed in chapter 2.

The play titled *The Question Mark* was created in April 2008 and later performed in various sites in Rwanda. It was a product of a two-week-long devised workshop with about 15 young Rwandans, one Ugandan theatre director, and Dinesh. Similar to my research, the young people who were involved in creating this Romeo and Juliet narrative were between the ages of 16 to 30. By 2008 people falling into this age group were those who were either not yet born or toddlers during the Rwandan genocide. Dinesh (2015) points out that these are people who have to be careful about whom to fall in love with (as in those from the perpetrator group falling in love with those from the victims' group) and so the devised play created made this the centre of its focus.

In reflecting on her work in Rwanda, Dinesh admits that she and her team erred on the side of seeking to use theatre to provide an explanatory approach to the Rwandan genocide. The theatre piece, *The Question Mark* was predictable to the audiences. It explained to the audiences:

that the violence of 1994 was a thing of the past and that they should not ask their younger generation to pay for the mistakes of their ancestors – an oversimplified approach to the violence of 1994 that did not allow space for a humble acknowledgment of the various in-between zones in Rwanda’s history and future. (Dinesh 2015)

Dinesh goes further to point out that the conundrum that faced their theatrical approach has also faced many other artworks that address the issue of post-conflict reconstruction in post-1994 Rwanda. Confronted with the limitations that arise during such an approach, Dinesh advocates for an approach that moves from simplistic binary and singular identities of “victim” and “perpetrator” to an approach that makes sufficient allowance for nuances. In search of such an approach, Dinesh experimented with form. Her focus was on the aesthetic form and she left the content in the hands of the participants.

Dinesh started by working with people from Non-Governmental Organisations (NGOs) affiliated groups which were easy to contact for her as an outsider. Slowly she began to see the different potential advantages of working with theatre people. As her focus shifted to a form that did not lead to finding solutions it became a challenge to work with less theatrically experienced participants from NGOs. Working with amateur theatre makers with less theatrical experience meant that there was less room to experiment with form as much time would be spent working on getting participants comfortable with performance. Dinesh settled for working with established theatre groups. Even in working with experienced artists, she made it a point to experiment with forms that the artists or group had not tried before (Dinesh 2015).

One of the lessons that is a takeaway from Dinesh’s experiences is that those who choose to be experimental in their theatre approach need to carefully think about their target participants. In choosing participants for my research, I targeted largely those with theatre experience. I also made room for amateur theatre-makers and those with no experience at all. This was possible at the beginning. During the second phase of the project, when a need to add two more people to the group arose, I opted for experienced theatre makers so that we would not spend a lot of time trying to introduce them to theatre conventions but instead focus on content, form, and dramaturgy. Based on my own experiences with amateur theatre makers, I concur with Dinesh that working with inexperienced theatre makers diminishes the room that one has for experimenting with form as more time is spent trying to make amateur artists comfortable with the basics of performance.

Dinesh focused on form and left the content to the participants. From this approach, one realises that the participants were given room to work with content and express themselves. This is one of the advantages

of devised theatre. The approach seems to have worked well for Dinesh (2015: 52) who testifies that “there is much to be said in favour of the collaborative involved in this particular project”. Devised theatre is collaborative and this collaborative nature makes it an appealing art form for experimental work and work that offers opportunities to participants to have a voice in the creative process (Felseghi 2017; Skapinker 2014; Hayes and Cantillon 2014; Perry 2011). Devised theatre offers what Boal (1979) advocated for in his *Theatre of the Oppressed* and resonates with what Freire (1971) advocated for in *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* – the oppressed being empowered to transform his/her own circumstances of oppression.

Another case of interest when it comes to theatre as a response to the Rwandan genocide is that of Brent Blair and Angus Fletcher (2010) who deployed image theatre to address the Rwandans’ culture of silence around the genocide. Their point of departure is the observation that the Rwandans have generally been quiet when it comes to discussing their experiences of the genocide. They point out that there is an observed pattern of reluctance on the part of Rwandans, whether victims, perpetrators, or bystanders when they are engaged to speak about their personal involvement in the genocide. A certain fieldworker observed that to ask Rwandans to share their personal experiences about the genocide is to “immediately restrict, if not terminate, any conversation” (cited in Blair and Fletcher 2010: 23).

The sense of discomfort that characterises the Rwandans when they are asked to relate their genocide experiences is something that seems to be playing out concerning the Gukurahundi. For the Gukurahundi, the perpetrators have probably shied away from the subject as a deliberate strategy to avoid taking responsibility for their actions during this period. On the other hand, the victims or survivors have been uncomfortable because talking about this subject is risky. During the process of devising our play, participants pointed out, many times, that talking about the Gukurahundi “*kuyatshayisa*” [you can get beaten for it] and “*kuyanyamalalisa*” [you can disappear for speaking about it]. Similarly, there have been issues on the Rwandan genocide that remain unresolved. As Blair and Fletcher put it:

Even its status as genocide has been downplayed or denied; the government has suggested that the very notion of race-based murder is a European invention, while many Hutus prefer to regard the killing as simple retribution for earlier Tutsi-led massacres of Hutus in Rwanda and Burundi. In short, both the origins and the logic of the killings remain unresolved, making it awkward and even dangerous to converse about the genocide in ways that depart from the agreed upon details. (Blair and Fletcher 2010: 24)

With various methods of trying to encourage dialogue and speaking out on the Rwandan genocide seemingly facing hurdles, Blair and Fletcher (2010) turned to image theatre as an alternative. In 2007 and 2008 Blair and Fletcher facilitated theatre workshops meant to address the culture of silence around the Rwandan genocide. The devising focused on image theatre which is a kind of participatory theatre

developed by the Brazilian theatre practitioner, Augusto Boal in the 1970s. Image theatre is a performance technique that uses still images or tableaux, sculpted with participants' bodies, to present a slice of life that expresses attitudes and emotions to explore internal and external oppression as well as unconscious thoughts and feelings. Once the images have been sculpted, they are dynamised or brought to life in various ways. The results of this intervention by Blair and Fletcher were positive as image theatre encouraged people to share their experiences and to even reveal a lot of information on the Rwandan genocide. It also raised hopes on the potential to address genocide trauma. Summarising the results of their project, Blair and Fletcher write:

once image theatre was adapted to some of the site-specific challenges posed by present-day Rwanda, it proved a useful method of encouraging personal exchanges over the genocide. The results of this effort are provisional, but they have been described by Rwandan genocide counsellors as "truthful" and as revealing "unexpected truths," suggesting that there may be an ongoing role for theatre in helping to address the trauma of the genocide. (Blair and Fletcher 2010: 23)

Seeking to avoid falling into the trap of creating theatre that simply recites government propaganda and leaves some elements of the genocide unaddressed, Blair and Fletcher set their eyes on creating participatory theatre. This was partly inspired by Ananda Breed (2008: 47) who argues that "for theatre to be reconciliatory, it must be participatory, not merely the recitation of government propaganda". Their project was coming against the backdrop of dwindling participation in the *gacaca* (traditional courts). Blair and Fletcher (2010: 24) argue that while the *gacaca* courts have been hailed by many scholars as successful "the process is far less participatory than initially promised". Blair and Fletcher thus observed a gap that needed to be filled. Their desire to fill this gap is captured in their reflection that "if theatre is to fill the place left by the faltering *gacaca* courts, it thus needs to root itself more deeply in the personal experiences of genocide" (Blair and Fletcher 2010: 25). Making theatre participatory therefore became the guiding goal in this project.

Augusto Boal's concept of image theatre was found appealing by the participants of the project facilitated by Blair and Fletcher. In the first experimental project of 2007, these participants were National University of Rwanda students. There were about forty of them. For the second phase of the project carried out in 2008, the participants were nineteen psychologists, therapists, and government-funded social workers who "[b]ecause their professional mission was to facilitate healing and recovery from trauma, particularly as a result of the genocide, these workers were well-situated to evaluate the therapeutic possibility of a more participatory form of theatre" (Blair and Fletcher 2010: 26).

Since image theatre is participatory, it is communal and presents a slice of life that can be read politically. According to Adam J. Perry (2012: 103) image theatre “can be used as a pedagogical and dramaturgical system of decolonisation at the level of communities and individuals”. Perry further argues that:

Within the context of a decolonising dramaturgical practice grounded in a pedagogy of embodied learning, Image Theatre is presented as a holistic process which employs a counter-discursive, embodied language. Image Theatre invites participants to play in the space between aesthetic representation and social reality for the purpose of developing counter-hegemonic stories, identities and subjectivities. (Perry 2012: 103)

With the qualities described above, image theatre provided a convenient point of entry to the participants who were reluctant to speak. Sculpting images with bodies does not involve speaking and so it does not appear intimidating to participants who are reluctant to speak. The speaking part comes only when participants get to the stage of discussing the images. This becomes important in transforming even the other participants into spect-actors. Ultimately there is discussion as those doing images and the spect-actors discuss the image as part of efforts to collectively arrive at an accepted image. Image theatre therefore proved to be a suitable form and offered viable techniques for encouraging the participants to speak about personal experiences of the Rwandan genocide. What comes to the fore is that the choice of the art form and the techniques used are important and thus should be approached thoughtfully by theatre practitioners seeking to create theatre that will break the culture of silence (Freire 1971) and encourage participants to share their personal experiences.

In this project, image theatre provided a means for personal non-verbal expression which then developed into a communal discussion. This rendered image theatre useful in translating participants' non-verbal experiences into a communal discussion (Blair and Fletcher 2010). Participants participated in image theatre exercises that explored the central topic of the genocide and their personal experiences. Games were used to break the ice at the beginning of sessions and to make the participants comfortable with both the theatre form that was used and the creative space. Games also served the purpose of getting the participants out of the 'seriousness' that characterises Rwandan adult life and creating an environment of playfulness. Playfulness creates a conducive environment for theatricality and creativity to thrive. While participants were at first reluctant to play games regarding them as fit for children, they later settled into these games and began enjoying them. Games play a very important role in participatory and experimental theatre. They are the oil that keeps the engine smoothly running.

Despite the success of this project, Blair and Fletcher (2010) point out that the emphasis that image theatre placed upon the synthesis of binaries was a cause for concern. This emphasis on binaries emanates from Augusto Boal's distinction between the oppressor and the oppressed. While this distinction works for the Brazilian context, it does not equally apply to the Rwandan context (Blair and Fletcher 2010).

For Boal who considers binaries between oppressors and oppressed as antisocial, binaries are to be eliminated through a process of synthesizing them into a single bodily tableau that is the most accepted by all. However, Blair and Fletcher realised that they had to strip Boal's image theatre of its universalising tendencies and make it site specific for the Rwandan context. In creating experimental theatre work, there is a need to adapt approaches, models, or forms to the specific contexts where one is working. Commenting on the positive impact that came from a realisation of the need to adapt the form to the context, the facilitators observe that:

though image theatre was developed for a very different purpose in a very different culture, it can be adapted into a form that is more organic to the Rwandan experience. Once its original emphasis on dialectical synthesis was eliminated in favor of parallel narratives, image theatre was readily embraced by the nineteen genocide counsellors. Through exercises like the Museum, it thus offers a way to address the culture of silence that haunts even the glass display cases of the Kigali Memorial Centre. (Blair and Fletcher 2010: 28)

The collective efforts of creating a kind of theatre that seeks to break the silence on the Rwandan genocide facilitated by Blair and Fletcher exhibit signs of success. The project demonstrated that image theatre can navigate around the challenges faced by other facilitation methods seeking to achieve reconciliation in post-genocide Rwanda. The participatory nature of image theatre gave it an edge over other theatre forms that have been used to respond to the Rwandan genocide (Blair and Fletcher 2010). This participatory nature inherent in image theatre allows "for the communication of personal narratives that are unacknowledged by the publicly accepted narratives of the genocide. And unlike the *gacaca*, image theatre offers a mechanism for addressing the reluctance to speak that restricts public testimony about the genocide" (Blair and Fletcher 2010: 28).

The sticking point for the Gukurahundi is that while artists have freely explored theatre as a response to the Rwandan genocide (and the Holocaust as discussed in the earlier section), this has not been the case for the Gukurahundi. Works of art that speak to the Gukurahundi have been gagged because of sustained government repression that has only started showing signs of easing recently. Later in this chapter, I will review two Zimbabwean plays that have defied the odds to address the atrocities of the 1980s in Zimbabwe.

4.7 Devised Theatre as a Response to Traumatic Events, Sensitive Issues, and Oppressive Structures in South Africa

South Africa has a rich tradition of using theatre to respond to various life situations (Kavanagh 1985; Kruger 1999; Solberg 1999; Morris 2007; Graham 2015). When it comes to collectively devising theatre,

this tradition is common as well and has long been established. Gay Morris (2007: 172-173) succinctly sums up this tradition by saying:

Collective theatre making is not a new phenomenon in South Africa. It is a respected tradition arising out of the prevailing oral performance culture, global (e.g. Grotowskian) influences and the work of township groups that first came to prominence when the Serpent Players of Port Elizabeth devised *The Coat* (1966) and thereafter the more famous works *Sizwe Bansi is Dead* (1972) and *The Island* (1973). A number of other significant practitioners and impulses in the last quarter of the 20th century in South Africa, including Gibson Kente's township theatre, the Black Consciousness movement and Worker Theatre in the 1980s, have contributed to the quantity and quality of workshop theatre. (Morris 2007: 172-173)

Morris (2007) continues to identify collectively devised theatre works of prominence. She identifies works by Workshop 71, Junction Avenue Theatre Company, Maishe Maponya, as well as The Company under the direction of Barney Simon as notable products of collective devising. Morris (2007) argues that *Woza Albert* (1981) by Percy Mtwa, Mbongeni Ngema, and Barney Simon is probably the most famous out of all the collaboratively devised plays in the South African theatre tradition. Collective devising was a common approach to theatre-making in the production of plays that addressed apartheid. Kavanagh (1985: 63) points out that for Athol Fugard and those he worked with "the script was developed in collaboration with the actors". Kavanagh also points out that after actors had improvised their scenes Fugard would then shape the final script. The other way of approaching it was for Fugard to write draft scenes and then try them out with the actors before adding or subtracting some material here and there as the need arose. Whichever way, the actors played a role in coming up with the script that would then be polished by the playwright.

A notable feature of these plays is apartheid as a central theme. In the context of the oppressive structures of the apartheid system, artists turned to collective devising and staging of theatre as protest, theatre of resistance, an avenue of expression, and a way of navigating the rough terrain of the apartheid system. Looking at these plays in hindsight, one realises that these plays contributed considerably to documenting history – the apartheid systems, people of colour's struggles, and journey towards self-determination, freedom, and a just and equal society. According to Gibson Alessandro Cima (2018: 53) anti-apartheid theatre "became an influential vehicle for social change, addressing not only apartheid's human rights abuses, but also implicitly, and sometimes explicitly, the plight of human beings living under repressive regimes throughout the world".

Morris (2007) shows that the devising tradition did not end with the fall of apartheid in South Africa and the coming of independence in 1994 but it has continued up until today, reflecting both on new problems affecting South Africans and historical struggles around race, class, and gender that have continued to live on. In his analysis of plays like *Mdantsane Blues* and *Ubizo - Voices of elok'shini* created by Western

Cape townships and showcased at the Ikhwezi Community Theatre Festival, hosted by the Baxter Theatre during the year 2006. Morris observes that the communal nature of township life by design favours the collective devising of plays as opposed to working as individuals. She argues that:

There is a synchronicity of style between the communal, public sense in which living is experienced in the townships and the collectively devised theatre generated by community groups. Shared rather than solitary everyday experiences favour perceptions of the group over the individual. Cultural traditions such as dance and song, rhythm and rituals support a co-operative, group-orientated workshop process. Meaning, created through collective creation is achieved by consensus amongst the whole group. Thus township theatre is characterised by collectivity of both processes and means, as is township life. (Morris 2007: 166-167)

Morris goes on further to argue that township theatre is embedded in and influenced by township everyday life. Its themes and theatre-making vocabulary come from the township. Morris's observation shows that an approach to theatre-making is partly influenced by the participants and the way they experience life. Some approaches work well with people who live in certain circumstances. In my research, all the participants were drawn from the townships – *emalokitshini*. Collective devising was therefore not only suitable for the subject of research but also in sync with the rhythms of life that participants are familiar with.

Greg Homann (2009) makes an insightful observation concerning the transition that theatre had to undergo as South Africa moved from the apartheid era to the era of independence. He argues that after independence in 1994 theatre practitioners who had been directing their efforts towards the dismantling of the apartheid system found themselves wondering what stories they ought to reflect on now. Homann further argues that this period of pondering on the new direction that theatre had to take ended in 2002 with the production of John Kani's play *Nothing But the Truth* as "since then the doors to new stories have begun to open" (Homann 2009: 149). Homann further argues that the Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) greatly contributed to shaping South Africa's narrative discourse in the post-apartheid dispensation. Desmond Tutu is cited by Homann (2009: 150) as having summarised the aim of the TRC as being to "unearth the truth about our (South Africa's) dark past, to lay the ghosts of that past so that they will not return to haunt us and that we will thereby contribute to the healing of a traumatized and wounded people, for all of us in South Africa are wounded people".

While South Africa instituted the Truth and Reconciliation Commission to address wounds of the past in pursuit of healing and reconciliation, her neighbour Zimbabwe buried her head in the sand and continued to ignore calls to openly address the issue of the Gukurahundi. Not only that, those who started raising their voices on the issue were silenced through government repression. While South Africa acknowledged that truth-telling and sharing of personal experiences were vital components of healing, closure, and

reconciliation after the traumatic events of apartheid, in Zimbabwe those who spoke out on the Gukurahundi and sought to share their testimonies were considered by the government as subversive elements to be silenced. Homann (2009) argues that the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of South Africa has emerged as an event that strongly informs how South African narratives are now relayed. As a result, “the act of witnessing, so strongly set up by the 1 674 hearings held by the TRC, appears to now be inherent in how South African theatre practitioners construct stories” (Homann 2009: 150). The same cannot be said of the Gukurahundi.

Gibson Alessandro Cima (2018) analyses *Truth in Translation* which is a 2006 musical about South Africa’s Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC). *Truth in Translation* was conceived and directed by Michael Lessac working under the New York-based Colonnades Theatre Laboratory (CTL). Michael Lessac worked with Jacqueline Lessac (producer) and Paavo Tom Tammi (playwright) (Cima 2018). *Truth in Translation* “dramatizes the lives of eight language interpreters as they direct the flow of information at the commission and soak up the painful memories of South Africa’s past” (Cima 2018: 43). This shares important parallels with the example under analysis in my research where I focus on the painful stories of the Gukurahundi and how the second-generation sufferers have experienced them ‘one step removed’. *Truth in Translation* acknowledges that the traumatic experiences are not only for those who experienced them directly but also affect the interpreters who have to embody them through translating in the first person. In the context of the Gukurahundi, I argue that the painful stories of the Gukurahundi are not only limited to those who suffered them directly but they also affect their families, friends, relatives, and children who hear these painful stories. I also argue that the failure to address the trauma of this period, therefore, carries risks for the second generation as this trauma is likely to be transmitted to them.

According to Cima (2018), *Truth in Translation* premiered in Kigali, Rwanda on 5 August 2006 before being staged in Johannesburg, South Africa, in Europe, the United States, and Zimbabwe. That the play premiered in Rwanda and also had multiple tours across Europe while only being staged in Johannesburg in South Africa is interesting as it indicates that the play was really not for a South African audience. On the other hand, the play created during this research was intended for the Zimbabwean audience only.

Truth in Translation was developed in collaboration with interpreters who worked at the Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC). Working from the Johannesburg Market Theatre Laboratory the CTL put together a diverse cast in terms of race and ethnicity. There were 11 South African performers altogether. Two workshops were conducted – one to devise the script and the other to create the music (Cima 2018). The creation of *Truth in Translation* mixed improvisations with paraphrased TRC testimonies. The creators of this play also drew material from other sources such as novels and poems. Music was composed by Hugh Masekela. *Truth in Translation* incorporated the anti-apartheid legacy into its approach. Writing about the playmaking processes and intent of this play, Cima says:

In developing *Truth in Translation* the cast became actor/interpreters, liminal figures who improvised scenes and characters by combining the interpreter interviews with their own apartheid experiences. Working with Lessac and the cast, Tammi mixed these improvisations with paraphrased TRC testimony, as well as quotes from memoirs, novels, poems, and televised newsmagazines about the commission, to create the musical's book. South African jazz trumpeter Hugh Masekela composed original songs, with lyrics drawn from similar sources. He also included versions of apartheid-era protest songs. The resulting musical mixed documentary and verbatim theatre techniques with anti-apartheid South African protest theatre playmaking strategies. Using this hybrid method, *Truth in Translation* performed the difficult act of interpreting as a metaphor for reconciliation and forgiveness. (Cima 2018: 44)

Of note concerning the process of *Truth in Translation* is how testimonies of those who experienced the apartheid traumatic happenings were infused with the experiences of performers. It was not a matter of TRC testimonies alone or a matter of performers' experiences alone – it was a mixture of different shades of this traumatic event. Similarly, in addressing the Gukurahundi issue we did not focus on one side of things. We used testimonies and stories captured in the Catholic Commission for Justice and Peace & Legal Resources Foundation (CCJP & LRF) report of 1997. We also made use of Zenzele Ndebele's documentary on the Gukurahundi. Testimonies from these sources were mixed with improvisation by performers, information from interviews, and group discussions with the participants. The participants' experiences were also fused into the plays that we created. I, therefore, find the play *Truth in Translation* insightful. However, while *Truth in Translation* presented a two-sided narrative composed of both survivors and perpetrators telling their personal stories as per the Truth and Reconciliation Commission's hearings, my research is interested in the testimonies, stories, and experiences of the victims and their children, particularly their children who constitute the second-generation sufferers of the Gukurahundi. As regards the Gukurahundi, there has been no truth-telling equivalent to the South African Truth and Reconciliation Commission hearings.

The approach that was used by Lessac and the rest of the team in creating *Truth in Translation* built on and continued the tradition that was established by the anti-apartheid plays. This tradition has devising as one of its major characteristics of playmaking processes. I argue that devising afforded all the participants room to contribute to the shaping of the final script. Cima observes that:

Truth in Translation's method of devising scenes based on its actors' experiences, its staging of survivor/perpetrator encounters, and its conception of reconciliation all derived from anti-apartheid theatre. By adapting anti-apartheid theatre methods to his TRC musical, Lessac sought to recapture some of this theatre's spirit of hope and apply it to contemporary human rights crises. (Cima 2018: 53)

What can be observed therefore is that actor's experiences are infused into the play. That is one of the advantages of devised theatre. The final product is not only a writer's product but a product of collective

effort. The process used in creating this play also demonstrates that devising remains a valid and powerful theatre-making approach to address current issues confronting humanity. It was used successfully by CTL to address issues arising from the TRC hearings. I believe devising has the potential to succeed in addressing the sensitive Gukurahundi issue in Zimbabwe.

Working with testimonies of survivors to create theatre did not come without its challenges. Creative interpretations of testimonies may be acceptable to some while being controversial to others. Such challenges are not new to *Truth in Translation* but have also been encountered in the Theatre of the Holocaust and thus remain important for consideration by artists or practitioners engaging in this kind of theatre. Capturing these challenges Cima observes that:

The use of testimony from survivors and perpetrators of state violence in a theatrical performance, whether quoted verbatim or fictionalized, represents a dramaturgical challenge not only for *Truth in Translation* and GAC's future projects, but also for any theatre practitioners who seek to make work about transitional justice. How to create theatre that foments dialogue around forgiveness and reconciliation while remaining respectful to the survivors who shared their painful stories at the commission? (Cima 2018: 51)

To address this challenge, *Truth in Translation* did not purport to be documentary theatre, but rather theatre that draws upon actual testimony. Some testimonies were excerpted from the TRC hearings, composite testimony was created by combining multiple witnesses' stories into representative accounts, and some testimony was invented wholesale resulting in a kind of theatre that invokes rather than realistically depicts the TRC. CTL also relied upon TRC accounts circulating internationally (Cima 2018).

Another possible danger that confronted the CTL in the creation and performance of *Truth in Translation* is that of the possibility to re-traumatise survivors. Cima (2018: 57) argues that "translating state violence into stage violence also necessitated that CTL confronts a common dramaturgical problem: how to depict violence onstage, especially memories of state violence, without retraumatizing survivors?" Cima points out that to address this pending danger, CTL moved away from offering a realistic depiction of apartheid human rights abuses and focused on deconstructing acts of torture and staging these from different perspectives across space and time.

Young-Jahangeer (2014) in her work in Participatory Theatre with inmates at Westville Correctional Centre demonstrates theatre's potential to create democratic spaces in oppressive structures. This project, which began in 2000 and is ongoing makes use of Popular Participatory Theatre to create a space for prison inmates to explore issues arising from the experience of incarceration for women. Of note is that there is collective participation in the theatre-making process as well as in the performance as the play is a catalyst for dialogue with audience members. I believe this makes it possible for the female

inmates to participate fully in the process. Collaborative theatre-making is empowering and engaging for all participants.

Another work of note dealing with traumatic events is Georgina Shmukler's (2014) *Trauma and Theatre Making with reference to The Line* where she reflects on her project that addresses the problem of xenophobia in contemporary South Africa. The script was based on interviews of the victims of xenophobia and it thus testifies to theatre's potential to create a space for expression and dialogue for those in conditions that deny them such a space. The research grappled with the traumatic incidents of xenophobia that took place in South Africa in 2008. Actual testimonies were infused into the script in an experimental work that captures the traumatic narratives and the interpretation of traumatic events for an audience. Shmukler concludes that there is a need for theatre-makers who address traumatic issues, to have considerable insight into the structures of the traumatic subject matter and its relationship to the dramatic medium.

The xenophobia addressed by Shmukler bears a resemblance to the Gukurahundi issues that my research set out to address. The common denominator for these experiences for the victims and survivors is that the experiences are traumatic and that they include violence targeted against a particular group (or groups) of people. A major difference however is that Shmukler is addressing a recent occurrence and is thus dealing with first-generation sufferers while my research is addressing something that happened more than 30 years ago and there are now second-generation sufferers. The second-generation factor brings to the surface the danger of the transference of trauma to the next generation(s). Addressing the Gukurahundi thus has two objectives – to deal with the trauma of the victims, survivors, and their children in the present context and to also seek to avert a looming danger of transgenerational and intergenerational trauma.

Shmukler's research highlights the importance of the subject in the making of theatre. The research shows that theatre is rich with possibilities to address pressing issues in South Africa. This echoes Graham's (2005: 108) assertion that drama "is a particularly powerful form for conveying narratives of trauma and loss". In my research, I therefore deployed drama, in the form of devised popular participatory theatre to address the Gukurahundi issue.

4.8 Theatre and the Gukurahundi in Zimbabwe: A Review of Two Plays

Theatre has been used to address different social, economic, and political issues in Zimbabwe, especially those of a sensitive nature (Mpofu 2019; Mpofu and Moyo 2017; Chivandikwa 2017; Ravengai 2011; Zenenga 2010). Graham (2015: 119) analyses plays that address the traumatic events in South Africa

and concludes that “the immediacy, interactiveness, and malleability of theatre makes it a medium singularly well suited for representations of mass trauma”. Plays by playwrights like Athol Fugard, John Kani, Winston Ntshona, and Maishe Maponya, Graham argues, were used during the apartheid era to counter the silencing of the people of colour who were the majority in the country. However, theatre that addresses the traumatic events of the Gukurahundi and seeks to counter the silencing of the Gukurahundi survivors remains minimal in Zimbabwe. Furthermore, I am not aware of any play on the Gukurahundi that was collectively devised. I am also not aware of any play on the Gukurahundi that has had post-performance discussions immediately after its staging.

Among the few plays that have emerged from Zimbabwe that speak to the issue of the Gukurahundi, the following stand out as notable examples; *1983: Years Before and After* (2011) written by Bhekumusa Moyo, *The Good President* (2007) written by Cont Mhlanga, *Tomorrow's People* (2009) written by Raisedon Baya, and *Talitha Koum – Someone Lied!* written by Desire Moyo (a.k.a. Moyoxide). The common thread that runs through these plays is an overarching desire to present the Gukurahundi narratives, to break the silence and tell those stories that have been suppressed for so long. The desire to document the Gukurahundi experiences and create a communal archive for the present and future generations is also evident in these plays. Interestingly, all these plays have been written by playwrights from Matabeleland which points to the fact that the artists from Matabeleland feel a collective responsibility to encourage discussion on the Gukurahundi in the context of silence, indifference, and denial by the government of Zimbabwe. Not surprisingly, some of these plays were banned for periods as the government considered them subversive²⁵ (artsfreedom.org; Ravengai 2015a). *1983: Years Before and After* and *Talitha Koum – Someone Lied!* come close to what this research seeks to do – encouraging people to speak about the Gukurahundi. I will, therefore, provide a review of these two plays as my research is building on such works.

The plays that speak to the issue of the Gukurahundi should be viewed within the larger context of creative practitioners' efforts to encourage discussions on this emotive subject. However, besides the few theatre plays that have been created on the issue of the Gukurahundi, not much else exists. There are not many to speak of. One documentary film, by filmmaker Zenzele Ndebele, has been produced that seeks to document events of the Gukurahundi period. The documentary film by Ndebele, titled *Gukurahundi*

²⁵ *1983 – Years Before and After* was banned when it was first staged in 2011. The production came back again in 2018 and this time it was staged without any interruptions. *The Good President* was banned in 2007. This was after the play had successfully ran without interruption in Harare. When the production moved to Bulawayo it was banned and prevented from playing there. Talk that was making rounds during that time speculated that the reason why the play was allowed to run in Harare and yet prevented in Bulawayo could be because the Gukurahundi theme which was contained in the play is more sensitive in Bulawayo as compared to Harare. Bulawayo is in Matabeleland where the massacres happened. Since the ban the play has not been revived and its script is not available.

Genocide: 36 Years Later was screened at Rainbow Hotel in Bulawayo on 29 September 2018 and was the subject of much controversy. The screening of this documentary film was immediately followed by speeches. One of the speakers was Chief Ndiweni of Ntabazinduna, Matabeleland North. Another speaker was Retired Judge Nare who is the current Chair of the Zimbabwe Peace and Reconciliation Commission. Zenzele Ndebele also spoke and one of the things he said was that the Law enforcement agents had been giving him a hard time seemingly wanting him to abort the project of screening the documentary film. From his account, Zenzele informed the audience members that he had recently returned from South Africa – he had to move out of the country for safety and security reasons as he feared that his life might be in danger.

On the visual arts side, Owen Maseko stands out. He has created paintings that speak directly to the issue of the Gukurahundi as part of efforts to encourage discussions on this issue. He is well known for the painting entitled *Sibathontisele* [Let's Drip on Them]²⁶. The painting depicts one of the painful ways used by the 5 Brigade to torture victims during the Gukurahundi – dripping burning plastic on them. Commenting on Maseko's art, Mpofu (2019: 67) says "Maseko's art attempts to keep the Gukurahundi debates alive even though they remain unaddressed in the official public sphere by the relevant authorities...Maseko argues [that] his art critiques government policies, and silencing of the genocide debates". Maseko's artworks on the Gukurahundi, including *Sibathontisele*, were exhibited at the Bulawayo National Gallery in 2010. The exhibition was banned and Owen Maseko was arrested for the exhibition. Mpofu records:

Maseko's exhibition was open to the public for a few hours before it was shut down and Maseko was immediately arrested for undermining the authority of the president in March 2010. The exhibition was finally closed in April 2015 after a Supreme Court upheld a decision to ban Maseko's art from being exhibited anywhere in Zimbabwe. (Mpofu 2019: 71)

The harassment of artists who create works on the Gukurahundi is evidence of the government's efforts to silence discussions on this issue. However, like Antigone in Sophocles's play *Antigone*, in the face of that repression art and artists refuse to capitulate. Below I review the plays *1983: Years Before and After* and *Talitha Koum – Someone Lied!*

Production Details of the Two Plays

Towards the end of 2018, I had the opportunity to attend the productions of *1983: Years Before and After* and *Talitha Koum – Someone Lied!* Both plays were performed at Bulawayo Theatre in Bulawayo.

²⁶ Owen Maseko himself testifies saying "my most well-known exhibition was entitled *Sibathontisele* about the massacre of the Ndebele in the 1980s in Zimbabwe", cited in Mpofu (2019: 66).

Bulawayo is the second largest city in Zimbabwe and is located in the Matabeleland region. While *1983: Years Before and After* already had a history of being performed in 2011, I shall focus on the 2018 production. The staging of these two plays is a positive step towards breaking the silence and encouraging discussion on the Gukurahundi issue. However, I am also mindful of Skloot's (2008) assertion that theatre, with all the potential it has, may not achieve immediate change in society though in the long run, it contributes positively towards building a peaceful and just society. Skloot argues:

In truth, plays are ineffective in bringing about immediate changes in societies no matter how intelligent or powerful they may be. But like the best art, they can help us to better understand the violent world and provide insights into human behavior, creating images that, in the long run, may make the world more peaceful and more just. (Skloot 2008: 6)

Talitha Koum - Someone Lied! was written and directed by Desire Moyo (a.k.a. Moyoxide). It was produced by Victory Siyanqoba Trust. The play was performed at Bulawayo Theatre in Bulawayo, Zimbabwe on the 30th of December 2018 during Intwasa Arts Festival KoBulawayo Extra. Sasha Sandys played the lead character. Costumes were designed by the Victory Siyanqoba Trust Production Company Team (Desire Moyoxide, Bhekumuzi Khumalo, Ishmael Zulu, and Antony Zulu). For the 5 Brigade soldiers, the red berets and their army camouflage was their defining feature. The soldiers also had their faces painted in black patches making them look fearful, unmerciful, and devoid of compassion. The civilians were mostly dressed in dull-coloured costumes that worked well in depicting the sad atmosphere that defined most of their lives in the theatrical world. Lighting was designed by Saimon Mambazo Phiri. For the most part, the stage was dimly lit and served to emphasise the traumatic events and also created a sombre atmosphere underlining the pain and suffering of the Gukurahundi victims.

The plot of this play moves between the past, the imaginary world of the resurrected victims, and the present. Talitha, a young woman who was killed by the 5 Brigade soldiers during the Gukurahundi is called back to life (like the Biblical Talitha who was resurrected) to recount her story of the Gukurahundi. The audience travels with Talitha on her journey which exposes the violence, pain, and suffering that was perpetrated against the Gukurahundi victims. By revealing the very things that happened the play advances alternative narratives from the perspectives of the victims versus the lies that have been told and seeks to fill the gaps left by enforced silence. While chasing after Talitha, 5 Brigade soldiers torture, maim, kill, rape, and dump her family members and many young active women and men in mass graves. Children born during this period are tagged by the 5 Brigade soldiers as 'offspring of the dissidents' and spectacular violence is perpetrated against them. Some are killed and some are maimed. In some instances parents themselves are made to kill their own children through axing, pounding with pestle and mortar, and other hair-raising methods.

As the play draws to an end, all the people who were killed by the 5 Brigade soldiers rise from their graves and confront the then Prime Minister, now former President the late Robert Mugabe, who maintains the 'official narrative' that it was a moment of madness and goes on to display the intent to further silence the victims by declaring that "*vakadaa kunetsa tovarova*" [if they want to be problematic, we will beat them up]. This plays in the backdrop of the question that victims constantly ask in a recurring song "*Why ukhathaza abantu wena?*" [Why are you making people suffer?]

Talitha Koum – Someone Lied! is set in a rural part of Matabeleland. Arguably the atrocities of the Gukurahundi were more intense in the countryside. The play had a full house. The high response of the audience to watch this play could be an indication that people are interested in having this issue discussed. Sitting there in the audience, I remember hearing people shrieking and exclaiming, "Eish!" during the scenes that depicted violence. During some scenes, the atmosphere was sombre with a stillness that indicated that people were engrossed in the play. The play was highly engaging, and the actors were convincing. The set was done with attention to detail. All parts of the play gelled together in an evidently well-rehearsed play.

1983 – Years Before and After (a.k.a. *1983: Closing the Period of Darkness*) was written by Bhekumusa Moyo. It was directed by Adrian Musa and co-produced by Raisedon Baya and Adrian Musa. The play was performed at Bulawayo Theatre in Bulawayo, Zimbabwe on the 29th of September 2018 during Intwasa Arts Festival KoBulawayo. The lead character of the play, nameless and known as Girl was played by Proficiency Kadder. The play takes a storytelling approach as it follows the struggles of a nameless Girl on a journey in search of her real identity. As the play begins, we learn that this young woman, who has been orphaned by the Gukurahundi offensive, has had difficulties obtaining a birth certificate from the Registry offices.

In her struggle against being identity-less, Girl tries to uncover information about her parents, to put together the pieces of the puzzle, and to solve the question of who she is and where she came from. Her greatest struggle, as already mentioned, is that for a long time, she has been unable to get a birth certificate at the Registry Office. In an effort that can only be characterised as absurd (Camus 1991), every time she visits the Registry Office to apply for a birth certificate the officials there insist that she should provide the cause of death for her parents, which unfortunately she does not have. Girl bemoans:

I went to the office of identification where they write your name and give you a number for you to be known with. They said I must know my father, bring his death certificate if it is true that he died. Other than that, I am troubled old man, am troubled of who really I am. I want to know the hospital where father and mother died. I need proof that they died. I only seek to know that.

(Moyo 2018: 7- 8)

The young woman does not give up. Driven by her desire to get her birth certificate and other identity registration documents, she visits her grandfather to ask him about the circumstances surrounding the death of her parents. With some difficulty, her grandfather narrates how 'her father' disappeared during the Gukurahundi. As the grandfather narrates this story, the audience is taken on a journey, through flashbacks, to the Gukurahundi era in the 1980s. In the flashback, the 5 Brigade soldiers are perpetrating atrocities on innocent civilians - killing, torturing, and mercilessly beating up people. Women are raped. Moyo and Jahangeer (2022: 5) describe it as "a gruesome episode". The nameless young woman follows the narration from the old man with keen interest. Unbeknown to her, the narration leads to a bitter, unexpected ending.

The biggest turning point in the plot and in the life of the main character comes towards the end of the play when her grandfather reveals that the man who was married to her mother, the one she had up to this point of the narration regarded to be her father, was not her father at all. At the climax of the play, her grandfather reveals that the man she thought was her father was actually killed by 5 Brigade soldiers. He was "beaten to a pulp there with a gumboot on his neck" (Moyo 2011: 18) and then they abducted him and presumably killed him. Then a 5 Brigade soldier raped her mother and she was conceived. This man who fathered her was one of the 5 Brigade soldiers who executed the Gukurahundi atrocities, perpetrating violence against her mother and her imagined community (Anderson 1991). After her birth, her mother suffered depression and psychological trauma and committed suicide. As the play draws to an end the grandfather (Man) urges Girl to forgive and forget and move on with life. The play ends with the singing of *Nkosi sikelel'iAfrica* [God bless Africa]. The anthem that comes after a prayer about forgiveness is an appeal to God for inner strength to be able to deal with the Gukurahundi trauma.

1983: Year Before and After is, like the other play being discussed here, set in a rural part of Matabeleland. The set has a backdrop of a rural setting – trees, huts, and so on. The dominating colours are dark and brown, inducing a gloomy mood. The storytelling approach that is used to unfold the plot is centred on Ndebele and African storytelling tradition. It's being rooted in the Ndebele culture is also seen in the character relations in the play, for within the culture it is a norm for children to consult their grandparents or uncles concerning their identity. While the play addresses both the victim and the perpetrator, in addressing the perpetrator the play does so from the standpoint of the people of Matabeleland. The playwright speaks from among the community of those who were affected by the Gukurahundi. The play had a full house and I believe many people in the audience identified with the issues raised in the play. During the running of the play, I heard sobbing. I turned to my right to see an audience member wiping tears.

4.9 Breaking the Silence through Theatre

One thing to be celebrated about the two plays *Talitha Koum – Someone Lied!* and *1983: Years Before and After* is that by staging Gukurahundi issues they contributed to breaking the silence on this issue. It is not possible to gauge the impact of these plays outside the theatre but the act of staging the plays alone is something worth noting. These plays represent the artistic efforts that seek to resist silencing, and also come as a protest against the oppressive structures that are silencing. The intentions of the plays to break the silence are clear from the beginning. A few minutes into the performance of *1983: Years Before and After*, the following words are uttered by the characters:

Girl:

I have come all this way

I am but only seeking the truth

Even if it is in my dreams

I shed tears that run in streams

Look, look here old man

I have grown eyes so small

That's not me, it is the incessant crying

It has become my daily like staple food

I agonize to realize sleep

I come in peace.

I am a lost child baba,

I am a child without a name, a child with no history and a child with no parents.

(She drops a tear plus and wipes)

(From 1983: Years Before and After, Moyo 2011: 4)

A similar desire to break the silence is observable in the following excerpt from the play *Talitha Koum – Someone Lied!*

Character 1 (Talitha's father): *Lingitshela ukuthi liqinisile lina, ye? Lingitshela ukuthi liqinisile liqinisile lina lithi you want to listen to our stories lina, ye? Lingitshela ukuthi you are serious sibili? You are sitting down wanting to listen to our stories lina? Okay, tell me, what will you do if we tell you our stories? What are you going to do after? Ngiphendulani! Why lithule kanti?*

Character 2: *Kanti lithulelani kanti? (Audience interjects with laughter) Mphenduleni angithi uyabuza. Isikhathi sesiside lesi. For how long, for how long? We need answers! We need answers! What about the mass graves that are scattered all over Matabeleland? Lithini ngawo? We need answers, we need answers!*

Translation

Character 1 (Talitha's father): Do you really tell me that you mean it? Are you sure you want to listen to our stories? Are you really serious about that? You are sitting down wanting to listen to our stories? Okay, tell me, what will you do if we tell you our stories? What are you going to do after? Answer me! Why are you keeping quiet?

Character 2: And why are you keeping silent and not responding? *(Audience interjects with laughter)* Answer him, he is asking. It has been really long. For how long, for how long? We need answers! We need answers! What about the mass graves that are scattered all over Matabeleland? What are you saying about them? We need answers, we need answers!

(Extract from the video performance of *Talitha Koum – Someone Lied!* 2018)

Talitha: No one alive must die *ingakhulunywanga lindaba* [No one alive must die before this issue is discussed openly].

(Extract from the video performance of *Talitha Koum – Someone Lied!* 2018)

The above excerpts demonstrate a desire for the Gukurahundi issue to be discussed. In *1983: Years Before and After* the nameless girl represents a multitude of others in similar predicaments. The girl's dissatisfaction with remaining silent about her past is a metaphor for the dissatisfaction of the Gukurahundi survivors to remain silent about their pains and suffering during this period. By choosing to open up and speak up the young woman is challenging everyone who has remained silent, suffering silently to speak up. A choice to speak out is being suggested for the audience members. This choice holds a semblance of hope compared with the untold suffering of remaining silent. The play itself, through the staging of the Gukurahundi atrocities, is taking a lead in choosing to act (and to speak) rather than remain silent. Plunka (2009) commenting on the Holocaust, argues that to be silent is to pretend that this traumatic event did not happen and thus fall into the same category as those who have denied it. The same can be applied to the Gukurahundi. These plays therefore reject silence.

The desire to break the silence is also evident in *Talitha Koum – Someone Lied!* The issues and questions raised at the beginning of the play serve two purposes. First, they are challenging the survivors to take a bold stand and tell the stories of their Gukurahundi experiences. Second, they are challenging the government to take action towards addressing the Gukurahundi issue that has remained taboo for many years. Such questions are difficult to pose in real-life settings, as one may get into trouble with authorities for doing so. However, theatre offers that space to raise such issues. Performance allows the survivors of the Gukurahundi to bypass state repression and censorship.

Despite the state's continued efforts to mute dialogue on the issue of the Gukurahundi, theatre offers the survivors an opportunity to "reinvent themselves as oppositional subjects through imagination and performance" (Graham 2015: 114). Through theatre, survivors gain agency to question and protest against any further attempts to silence them. This agency is emphasised by the fact that during the opening scene of *Talitha Koum – Someone Lied!* the characters that ask questions and protest the continuing silence are doing so when there are no other characters on stage who oppose them. These characters are in the spotlight and express their opinions without any interference. The characters that play the roles of state security agents are not present on stage at this time. In the background, the visible characters are members of the same community of survivors. Their being present in the background creates a picture of solidarity and affirmation of what is being said. They are there as witnesses of what is being said.

4.10 Theatre as Protest

The two plays come across as a protest against the further silencing of the Gukurahundi stories. *In 1983: Years Before and After* Girl refuses to settle for anything less than the truth. She cannot continue living a life of silence. Like Antigone, she is prepared to suffer for the truth rather than to accept cosmetic 'comfort' on a table of lies, secrecy, and silence. In search of the truth surrounding her birth Girl declares "If I die with knowledge I die in honor" (Moyo 2011: 6). In *Talitha Koum – Someone Lied!* Talitha's father declares "I wish my daughter could rise and demystify lies". The silencing of the Gukurahundi issue has given fertile ground for the so-called 'official narratives' which these plays protest against and label as lies. Rising from 'the dead' Talitha starts by admiring the fighter Sarafina in Mbongeni Ngema's musical (*Sarafina*) who fought apartheid. By making this reference the play is expressing a desire to arouse among its audience a commitment to fight the way Sarafina fought the apartheid system. The rising from the dead of Talitha mirrors the techniques used by Mbongeni Ngema, Percy Mtwa, and Simon Barney protesting against the

apartheid system in *Woza Albert!* Being geographic neighbors with South Africa, artists from Matabeleland have borrowed from the South African theatre tradition.

These plays are not only protest and resistance but they also fall into the category of “theatre of testimony” (Kruger, cited in Graham 2015). Graham argues that categorising the theatre of apartheid as only protest and resistance is limiting and opines that the “theatre of testimony” captures a more inclusive theatre. I am therefore not using the term protest theatre here in its limited sense but in its broader sense as a term that is used in Zimbabwe generally to refer to theatre that challenges the status quo, questions, and raises sensitive issues affecting the marginalised.

The two plays reflect efforts by the children of the victims of the Gukurahundi to resist being silenced and the erasure of their subjectivity. Both plays tell the stories from the perspectives of the victims. In this way “they create a space for and give voice to the children of the victims of the Gukurahundi to tell their truth on their own terms” (Moyo and Jahangeer 2022: 10). The plays also come across as resistance and protest against being denied access to identity documents. This is particularly so in *1983: Years Before and After* through which the children of the Gukurahundi victims are portrayed as raising their voices against this injustice. This presents an interesting ‘way in’ to open up broader discussions on the 1980s violence. Using theatre as an avenue of resistance and protest is a common phenomenon. Morris (2017: 173) observes that “common to the South African plays of the apartheid era was the need to interrogate, understand, resist and protest the racism, inequalities and many injustices of the South African state”. I argue that there are similar trends in the plays under discussion.

The struggles of the children of the Gukurahundi victims as they seek to tell their experiences are reflected in the two plays. Such struggles include failure to access identity documents and children growing up without knowing their lineage. This complicates the lives of the individuals involved, for example, not knowing their true identity means one does not know a portion of their relatives. On the other hand not being able to obtain a birth certificate means one cannot have access to other documents like the national identity card, passport, and driver’s licence. The absence of these documents makes life difficult for the persons concerned.

The two plays under discussion used performance to explore complex issues of the Gukurahundi. The atrocities of the Gukurahundi and their consequences are dealt with in the plays. The plays thus provide a window not only to raise questions and sensitive issues on this subject but also to aid in the understanding of this subject. The plays are encouraging discussion on the Gukurahundi issues but do not structure it in the plays themselves. By contrast, in my research, the plays that we performed were collectively devised. Another difference is that our performances were followed by post-performance discussions, which was not the case with the two plays discussed. The efforts to encourage discussion

by plays resonates with Skloot's (2008) expectation of plays that address atrocities like the Gukurahundi. Commenting on the plays about the Holocaust Skloot argues that "they map out a landscape of inquiry and raise for discussion issues of culpability, responsibility, and justice that both inhibit and encourage the formation of the nonviolent world in which most people want to live (Skloot 2008: 5-6). The same can be said about the two Gukurahundi plays under discussion.

4.11 The Desire for Closure

Both *1983: Years Before and After* and *Talitha Koum – Someone Lied!* end with a future outlook that is characterised by hope. Despite the pain and suffering that is being experienced by the survivors of the Gukurahundi, these plays are hopeful that healing and closure for the survivors is possible. *1983: Years Before and After* ends with Man encouraging Girl to forgive the perpetrators of the Gukurahundi and move forward. Girl prays to God for strength to forgive. The play then ends with the song *Nkosi sikelel'iAfrica* [God bless Africa]. This is a song of hope that one day things will be okay, that one day, the pain and suffering will be over. Similarly *Talitha Koum – Someone Lied!* suggests that the Gukurahundi issue should be addressed. Towards the end of the play, one character suggests that dialogue is important in resolving the Gukurahundi issue – people should talk about this issue, and victims should share their stories of pain and suffering. The endings of these plays show a desire for the survivors of the Gukurahundi to manoeuvre past the pain of this period. Importantly, that these plays are suggesting solutions discredits the narrative that those who talk about the Gukurahundi are interested in opening old wounds. On the contrary, they are seeking closure.

The difference between these two plays and the ones done during my research is that these plays were written by sole playwrights and not collectively, though Bhekumusa Moyo acknowledges that he researched villagers before the writing of the play, which means the villagers contributed material for the final script.

4.12 Conclusion

The literature reviewed shows that creative forms of art in general and theatre, in particular, have been used to respond to traumatic events in various contexts. Theatre can aid in grieving, encouraging victims to speak out, and also in the documentation of the experiences of the victims of traumatic events. For the Gukurahundi, the atrocities were experienced collectively as a community and the victims must grieve

collectively instead of individually and in private. Theatre offers the potential for such a space for collective communal grieving to be created and for such an experience to take place.

While the Holocaust has resulted in artists responding through a lot of creative works, the same cannot be said for the Gukurahundi in Zimbabwe. In South Africa, it was not until the late 60s and early 70s that art started to engage apartheid. It can therefore be argued that there were 20 years of repression before black South Africans started to 'protest' through art, perhaps except music. Similarly, in Zimbabwe, many years passed after the Gukurahundi without any significant amount of artistic works being created to speak to this issue. In South Africa the reason for the late introduction of protest theatre was twofold – the particularly repressive regime and the rise of black consciousness which played a big role in the development of ant-apartheid theatre. For the Gukurahundi in Zimbabwe, theatrical responses have been at a minimum because of government repression. However, the need to create theatrical works as a way of addressing the Gukurahundi remains high. This research comes as part of the theatrical responses that address the Matabeleland and Midlands disturbances of the 1980s in Zimbabwe which are known as the Gukurahundi. In the next chapters, I present and analyse data.

CHAPTER 5: DEVISING AND STAGING A *LANGALEZO*

5.1 Introduction

This chapter presents and analyses data from the processes of devising and staging theatre on the subject of the Gukurahundi by second-generation sufferers of the atrocities. The chapter focuses on the process from the first day of devising theatre with participants up to the point of staging the performances for the audience. The post-performance discussions are not included in this chapter as they are discussed in Chapter 7. The overarching goal of the chapter is to find out how the process of devising and staging theatre encouraged the participants to speak out on the Gukurahundi issue and their experiences of the stories from this period. The questions I am tackling in this chapter can be summarised by the following question: Can the subaltern grieve? In this research, art was not only viewed as an end product but was also viewed as “part of the process and a conduit through which a researcher accesses data” (Capous-Desyllas and Morgaine 2018: xiii).

5.2 Come Let Us Play and Create Together

It's a sunny afternoon. I am standing in the middle of the open space that was to be our working space for the project. I utter something to the participants (some are seated down while others are standing chatting) to the effect that we are going to start by playing games. Participants excitedly joined me on the stage. The idea of playing some games ignited excitement and playfulness – well this was serious business. The project was taking off and doing so in a playful manner. Playfulness was important in tackling the serious subject of this research. The excitement and playfulness that characterised the first moments were going to continue to permeate our working space. However, it was not going to be a relaxed atmosphere always. On some days there were frustrations and flair of emotions as well. (Recollections of the Researcher, 2019)

Above is the description of the opening moments of our first meeting. The first two meetings were dedicated to team building, interviews, and focus group discussions. Issues raised during these meetings were later used in the devising of theatre pieces. I, therefore, made it clear to the participants that what they shared during the first meetings would be used as material for our plays. The participants were agreeable to that arrangement.

The workshops that were done with participants were built around games and exercises as these assist in bringing about certain dynamics essential for a successful process. Clark Baim, Sally Brookes and

Alun Mountford (2002: xii) sees drama, together with games and exercises, as suitable approaches for action-oriented individuals, arguing that “in games and exercises, for example, participants actively practise the essential social skills of co-operation, trust, tolerance, self-control, and problem-solving, among other essential skills”. They add that through games and exercises, such essential skills are made tangible and immediate. The skills they mention are critical for collective devising and progress in working as a group. Games and exercises can be used for warm-up, energising the group and focusing it on a certain topic, and assisting participants to ‘break the ice’ so that they can spontaneously participate in the group’s activities (Baim, Brookes and Mountford 2002). Games and exercises were, therefore, used in the first meetings to ‘break the ice’ and to kick-start the process of working together. It is important at this stage to point out that the games and exercises described in this section were not only used in the first meetings but were also used at the beginning, and at times during, the devising sessions that followed.

Baim, Brookes and Mountford (2002) came up with levels of focus achieved through games. They recommend that in designing games (and also in group working processes), the ideal scenario to aim for is to start with low focus activities and gradually move on toward higher focus work in moderated stages. Levels are determined by the individual focus placed upon anyone in the group at a given moment. Baim, Brookes and Mountford divide games into low focus, medium focus, and high focus and explain these levels as follows:

Low Focus means that the whole group is not looking at any particular group member for longer than a brief moment. It may also mean that participants are working in pairs and small groups.

Medium Focus means that there may be a large number of people looking at a particular group member, but he shares focus with a number of others, for example while showing a small group *Frozen Picture*.

High Focus indicates that all or most of the group are looking specifically at one group member for more than a fleeting moment, for example if he is the only one talking or if he is co-presenting a two person scene to the group. (Baim, Brookes and Mountford 2002: 31)

In choosing or designing a game, there is a need to consider whether the focus is passing. This refers to a situation where it passes from one person to another. An example of this is the name game that I will describe later in this section. A name game typically falls into the passing high focus level because although the group members will be looking at the person saying their name, it only lasts for a brief moment – it passes (Baim, Brookes and Mountford 2002). When considering levels of focus to choose from, both for games and group working processes, readiness is key. The facilitator, participants (individuals and the group as a whole), and co-workers should be ready to cross the boundary to the next level. The aim is to run sessions that are “neither too easy nor too threatening, but rather provide an

optimum challenge for participants” (Baim, Brookes and Mountford 2002: 31). As the facilitator of the games and group activities during this research, I carefully considered readiness during our working processes and moderated the sessions accordingly.

Augusto Boal (2002) posits that games and exercises play a vital role in integrating the group. Games and exercises also play a critical role in preparing the actor’s body for creativity (Stanislavsky 1936). In differentiating between games and exercises Boal explains that:

The goal of the exercises is a better awareness of the body and its mechanisms, its atrophies and hypertrophies, its capacities for recuperation, restructuring, reharmonisation. Each exercise is a ‘physical reflection’ on oneself. A monologue. An introversion. The games, on the other hand, deal with the expressivity of the body as emitter and receiver of messages. The games are a dialogue, they require an interlocutor. They are extroversion. (Boal 2002: 47)

Boal (2002) further explains that most games and exercises used during theatre-making are “gamesercises” in the sense that the games contain some elements of exercises and the exercises contain some elements of games. Such “gamesercises” came in handy for us as they helped in the utilisation of the time that we had. Because time was sometimes limited for us, these helped us to get the benefits of both sides in a reduced period. I endeavoured to make the games contextual to the Ndebele culture. At times, we therefore borrowed from Ndebele children’s games. Ndebele children’s games are part of the Ndebele culture. According to Cletus Moyo and Sikholiwe Dube (2018: 1) mechanisms to socialise Ndebele children “include games, songs, plays, riddles and storytelling among many”. Most of the games that we played were games that we used to play as children. By playing these games and at times adapting them, we sought to work within the environment that the participants were familiar with. The games also helped in creating an atmosphere of playfulness. I observed that during the playing of games, participants would laugh, giggle, shout, run around, and tease each other.

As the facilitator of the sessions, I opened the platform for participants to suggest their preferred games and exercises. A participant who suggested a game or exercise would then become the facilitator during that game or exercise. If he or she did not like facilitating anyone from the group could volunteer to facilitate. The participants therefore took the lead in what they wanted to do. This is empowering and emancipatory. It is important to use research methods that offer agency in decision-making (Lenette 2019). Facilitating during games and exercises thus set the tone for the participatory nature of doing things that were to characterise the entire research process.

The first game that we played was the **Greeting Game**. To play the game participants move around the space mixing. For the first stage when they meet someone they make eye contact with them and try to only greet them with their eyes without saying anything. In stage two the participants make eye contact and smile at the person they meet. In the third stage, the participants make eye contact, smile, and say

“hie” using their preferred greeting term. For the fourth round, the participants make eye contact, smile, greet verbally, and make a high five or shake hands. At stage five participants make eye contact, smile at each other, greet each other verbally, make a high five, or shake hands and briefly introduce themselves to the other person who also introduces himself or herself. This is a low focus level game. The game helps in team building. It was appropriate for us, especially during the first days. Some participants were not known to each other and thus there was a need for a relaxed way of introductions. The participants enjoyed the game and I observed with delight as some participants who had walked into the room as strangers smiled and greeted each other warmly. We were merging into a team, a family, and neighbours all rolled into one. As the research process continued to unfold we would play this game at the beginning of devising and rehearsal sessions as a way of connecting as a team.

To make sure participants know each other by name instead of referring to each other as “you” or “that one” we played a **Name Game**. The game involves standing in a circle and looking inward. The first person says his/her name. The second person says the name of the first person and then his/her name. The third person says the name of the first person, the name of the second person, and his/her name. This continues until the last person. The game assisted a lot in team building and in getting to know each other. On day two everyone knew every other person’s name. The game also helped to build participants’ confidence. I observed that the participants became bolder with the progression of the game, and also with the progression of sessions.

Besides the games that focused on team building, we also played games that started introducing the participants to the idea of collective devising, strategically using games in the group activities as suggested by Baim, Brookes and Mountford (2002). One of the games in this category is the **Numbers Game**, which is a passing high focus game. Each person is assigned a unique number. All participants then start making a rhythmic sound by tapping above their knees while saying numbers. The first person chants his or her unique number along the tapping rhythm and ends by adding someone’s number. The person whose number is added is supposed to be the next to do the chanting of numbers and that order continues. The trick is to maintain the rhythm and not to miss your chance when your number is mentioned. The first person would go like “ah 1, ah 1 1 4”. The person assigned number 4 would have to pick up the chanting, like “ah 4, ah 4 4 2”. Number 2 would have to be next, and so on. The game works like building blocks. It encourages collective building and therefore it sets the tone for collective devising. The game is also a concentration game and thus it assisted in training our minds to concentrate as this is important in theatre making.

We also engaged in games and exercises that prepare the voice. One such is an exercise of **Vowels**. During this exercise (and game) participants stand together in the centre of the room. They then do the vowels – a e i o u. Doing them in a Ndebele style with a long echo the participants go aaaaaaaa

simultaneously as they move outward. On the second vowel eeeeeee, they move back to the centre. They alternate between moving outwards and moving to the centre until all the vowels have been said. The other version of this game has participants standing in a circle. One of them goes aaaaaaa in one long breath as he goes around the circle. Where he stops the other takes over by picking the next vowel. This game is a familiar childhood game that is found among the Ndebele people. For children, it is played mostly as a way of learning vowels. In our project, we deployed it as a voice exercise, concentration exercise, and breathing exercise. Participating in these games created an atmosphere of playfulness which encourages creativity. Games also provided opportunities for team building, tuning the voice, training the mind for concentration, exercising the physical body, and preparing it for theatre making.

The games and exercises that I have explained here do not represent an exhaustive list of the research project. There were many games that we played and many exercises that we did. We did exercises to train the body, we did exercises for the mind (concentration), and we did breathing exercises and voice exercises. We also sang songs both as a way of training the voice and as team-building exercises. While as a facilitator I suggested some games and exercises, some were suggested by the participants themselves. The same applies to the facilitation of these games and exercises. I facilitated during some while the participants facilitated some. The games and exercises presented us with an opportunity to know each other better. I am also convinced that the games and exercises helped some of the participants build confidence in going on stage to perform, particularly those who had no or little theatre experience. This relates to low, medium, and high focus games - working from low focus through to high to build focus. A lot of old games, African and Western, are passing focus so the focus is briefly on the individual so as to give them a feeling of confidence but not too much expectation. The games and exercises were also used to de-role after the devising sessions. The subject of the Gukurahundi is a serious subject that can weigh down heavily on the participants after a long day of devising. Games and exercises therefore came in hand for this purpose so that participants would be able to get out of the roles they had been playing on stage.

During devising sessions, low focus, middle focus, and passing high focus games assisted in transitioning to very high focus activities like improvisation and presentation of short scenes on stories the participants had heard about the 1980s massacres. Games assisted in building the confidence required to handle such high focus activities. During improvisations, we worked at “the level of one step removed”, focusing on non-personal material (Baim, Brookes and Mountford 2002: 32). It was only when participants had mastered enough confidence and were ready, that they would share personal stuff.

5.3 You are Important and Your Voice Matters – First Interviews and Focus Group Discussion

After playing games and doing exercises for team building, relaxation, and 'ice breaking', we started the first interviews. The interviews were followed by the first Focus Group Discussion. For those who joined the group later their interviews came immediately after joining. I interviewed the participants with the goal of finding out who was in the group – their background and life experiences relating to the Gukurahundi. This was an opportunity for the participants not only to introduce themselves to the researcher and other participants but also an opportunity to share their stories and experiences relating to the Gukurahundi. Interviews have been noted to encourage the sharing of life stories (Gray 2003). Right from the beginning of the research process, the telling of stories and sharing of life experiences were encouraged and solicited. Interviews became one way of doing this.

Instead of the researcher sitting privately with one participant at a time interviewing him/her, I asked the participants if they were comfortable with other participants sitting around to listen to the interviews. The participants agreed. This kind of approach turns an interview that could have been private into a public interview as others listen to the interview. I argue that this kind of approach kick-started the process of speaking out. With others listening it meant that the speaker was sharing their story in the presence of an empathic and supportive audience. While Ryen (2004) bemoans the self-censoring that can arise for interviewees who are interviewed surrounded by other people like neighbours or workmates, in our research, due to the historical and political context the presence of others during the interviews had the opposite effect. Their presence created an atmosphere of solidarity which seemed to encourage the interviewee to speak out.

The aspect of solidarity is important in research like this one that seeks to create a *langalezo* experience. A *langalezo* experience is anchored on solidarity as people come together to be supportive and empathic to other community members. It is an experience that encourages communal togetherness in addressing challenges that affect some or all of the community members. Chandra Talpade Mohanty says:

I define solidarity in terms of mutuality, accountability, and the recognition of common interests as the basis for relationships among diverse communities. Rather than assuming an enforced commonality of oppression, the practice of solidarity foregrounds communities of people who have chosen to work and fight together. Diversity and difference are central values here—to be acknowledged and respected, not erased in the building of alliances. (Mohanty 2013: 7)

In our case, the solidarity was not only anchored on working and fighting together but it also included a recognition of the common challenge that was being addressed. All the participants were coming from a society that has been affected by the Gukurahundi. The goal of the project was also common – exploring

ways of using theatre to aid grieving. Though we were in solidarity pursuing a common goal, we still acknowledged our diversity – our experiences were diverse, there were both males and females in the group, and there were poets, actors, and dancers which made the members diverse. I observed that when one person would be speaking, some group members would nod their heads in agreement. This serves as a way of acknowledging what has been said and thus it's a way of showing solidarity.

The approach of having other group members sit around with the interviewer and interviewee during the interview process appealed in general to the African and in particular the Ndebele storytelling culture. According to Victoria Forster (2016:34), "Storytelling is by its nature a collaborative enterprise. There is a sense of companionship in storytelling...because of the necessary involvement of an audience. It is the relationship between the teller or re-teller and audience that shapes the stories told". In the Ndebele storytelling culture, the storyteller is surrounded by a group (small or large) of listeners. Their presence plays a critical role in encouraging the storyteller to continue sharing the story. It was also important to adapt the interview procedure to the Ndebele culture so that we could maximise the indigenous systems of the Ndebele in the research. Making use of indigenous concepts is important in decoloniality (Ndlovu-Gatsheni 2013a). This is because it centres the African in empowering ways instead of looking at African problems using Eurocentric lenses.

The interviews were followed by the first Focus Group Discussion. Focus group discussions continued the sharing of experiences and added the element of discussions. Others not only listened to the speaker but they added to the narrative, asked questions, and openly empathised with the speaker. I observed that a speaker's narrative would trigger the sharing of similar experiences from the other group members. I facilitated the discussions. As the facilitator of the discussions, I made sure that the discussion was not dominated by vocal members only but was a platform for everyone to raise their views. To achieve this, when I realised that the discussion was being dominated by one person I would politely ask that we also hear others who might have something to say. I would indicate that the current speaker can continue again at a later stage. I did this to avoid pouring cold water on the discussions. Participants were free to speak in their preferred language. The Ndebele language dominated the discussions. English language would also be used but secondarily. Participants appeared more comfortable speaking in their mother tongue (Ndebele). The focus group discussion also cultivated a solidarity and storytelling atmosphere. Such an atmosphere is conducive to the sharing of experiences and views.

As I had already informed the participants about the collective devising of theatre to take place, they were aware that the stories shared during the focus group discussions were going to be used as material for the theatre pieces. The focus group discussions were therefore setting the stage for the participants to take charge of the content of the performances. I had no intention of imposing the content on the participants. Imposing the content would have been disempowering to the participants and would have reduced their

agency. Nandita Dinesh (2015: 53) argues that “the content should be in the hands of the people for whom and with whom the performance is created”. The discussions also tackled questions relating to the participants’ views about the use of theatre in addressing the Gukurahundi, a sensitive issue.

As has been argued in chapter 4, theatre has historically been a powerful tool to raise politically sensitive issues affecting humanity. Workshopped theatre in particular has played a role in political conscientisation, for example, during the apartheid era in South Africa. Though some of the participants of this research had not been involved in theatre before, there was a consensus that theatre offers a potential for addressing the 1980s massacres, an issue that is sensitive in the Zimbabwean context. I am of the view that the participants believed that theatre had some potential to address the Gukurahundi issue not because of their past theatrical experiences but rather because the silencing of the Gukurahundi issue has predisposed victims and survivors (and their children) to consider any slightest opportunity to speak out as viable. In Ndebele, there is a saying that goes “*singalamba sidla utshani*” [A hungry lion would gladly eat grass]. The saying means that in a time of crisis, the slightest chance of a survival strategy should be maximised. I believe that right from the beginning of the project the participants saw a glimmer of hope in using theatre to speak out and they wanted to make the most of this opportunity. On the other hand, theatre offers fulfilment to young people and thus it has a luring urge.

During the first interviews and the first Focus Group Discussion it became an opportune time to understand the theatrical background of the participants. This was important as it gave me an idea of how to work with them during the devising process. More than half of the participants had been involved in theatre in general and theatre that addresses social issues in particular. However, only one participant had been involved in collective theatre devising. There were also a handful of participants who had no theatre background. Less than half of the participants were experienced theatre artists. This meant that there was a lot of work to be done to make the participants comfortable with devising theatre. For this research, I have no regrets about the diverse theatre backgrounds of the participants as this offered me an opportunity to observe how the devising process works with these participants. What was important was the process that involved the second generation as participants in a project that addressed their concerns as part of the community. The focus was, therefore, not on the product but on the process.

5.4 My Story Our Story

Interviewer: What are your experiences of the Gukurahundi?

Interviewee: I wasn’t born at the time those things happened but I am aware that they happened. I come from Tsholotsho. It’s my mother’s side of the family – she is from Tsholotsho so you are always hearing a lot about these things – especially where it happened. My most

vivid memory is one day I just got off the train – so [the] Vic Falls train leaves here [Bulawayo] about 7 pm, 7.30 pm. *So idlula kithi ngabo* 12 midnight [so it passes by my home area around 12 midnight]. So we are walking *sidlula eRegina Mundi Mission* [so we are walking past Regina Mundi Mission] and my mother says “*La yikho ababecatsha khona*” [This is where they used to hide] and it’s about 500 metres away from the school *lapha ayefundisa khona* [where she used to teach] and *imizi ikhonapho eduze nje* [homes are just nearby] – and you start to realise *ukuthi* [that] no, this thing was very real.

Interviewer: *Ababecatsha lapho yi 5 Brigade kumbe ngamadissident?* [Those who used to hide there – are you referring to the members of the 5 Brigade or dissidents?]

Interviewee: *Yi 5 Brigade* because *aah kuyatshia ngale* [It’s 5 Brigade because aah it’s hot that side] – the weather is unbearable (laughs a bit). *So babecatsha esixukwini eeh emini, abantu bona besiyacatsha ngale eguswini – inkomo sasizelusela ngale* [So they used to shelter under the thick trees while people used to hide in the forests on that other side. On the other side that is where we would graze our cattle]. And there is a place *umalume owangitshengisa khona ukuthi* [that my uncle showed me that] “there is a mass grave *laphana*” [there]. So there are many stories that you get wind of but umm, I think those are the most vivid.

Interviewer: So did you see the actual place of the mass grave?

Interviewee: Yes.

Interviewer: How did you feel when you were shown that place?

Interviewee: You get a lot of emotions – anger, for one, and you get to realise how lucky you are to be alive – *lapho ababecatsha khona* [where they used to hide] it’s right between *umuzi kakhulu* [my grandfather’s homestead] and the place where my mother taught and so anything could have happened in that distance. She was always at least – she was within walking distance or rifle distance most of the time – even *ezinye izihlobo* [even other relatives]. So it’s horrifying.

Interviewer: Have you personally met people who were affected by the Gukurahundi?

Interviewee: Yes. Ah, *bakhona abatshaywayo. Abanye bayakutshela, abanye balamanxeba bayakutshengisa...* [Ah, they are there. Some of these are those who were beaten. Some of them actually narrate to you their experiences. Some of them have wounds that they even show you...]

(Excerpt from an interview with Participant, 2019).

Accounts like the one captured in the interview excerpt above were not an exception but were a norm during the interviews, focus group discussions, and indeed the entire devising process. The second-generation sufferers of the Gukurahundi, as participants of this study, narrated various accounts of the Gukurahundi and how these have affected them. Marianne Hirsch (2008: 103) refers to this generation as the generation of postmemory, arguing that “Postmemory describes the relationship of the second

generation to powerful, often traumatic, experiences that preceded their births but that were nevertheless transmitted to them so deeply as to seem to constitute memories in their own right". I argue that this is the case for the second-generation sufferers of the 1980s atrocities.

Hirsch (2008), writing on the Holocaust, shows that there is a high possibility of the traumatic experiences from the past being transmitted to the second generation which is also called the generation after. For the Gukurahundi, I argue that blocked grieving through silencing has facilitated the transference of this trauma. Because of the lack of closure on the emotive Gukurahundi issue at a national level, the wounds that should have healed or begun to heal remain fresh. The sentiments of fresh wounds were echoed by the participants.

Hirsch (2008) brings up an interesting view when it comes to the term "post" in postmemory. She argues that while the term 'post' seems to suggest an; after; this is not the case. The case of postmemory is like that of postcoloniality. As much as post coloniality does not denote a complete end of colonisation but its continuing presence, postmemory also captures the continuing effects of the traumatic past. As Hirsch (2008: 107) puts it "These events happened in the past, but their effects continue into the present". The second-generation sufferers of the Gukurahundi, therefore, see their Gukurahundi-induced challenges as not a distant past but a troublesome present that is even threatening their future. For example, if the death of a parent resulted in struggles to poverty in the family due to the absence of the breadwinner and such challenges how can these be labelled as a distant buried past? Yet such challenges exist today for many second-generation sufferers of the Gukurahundi.

As participants shared experiences during the focus group discussions, the process of assembling material for our play had already started. The focus group discussion worked well in laying the foundation for a *langalezo* experience. As already explained, the *langalezo* is characterised by gatherings that usually feature the bereaved or the one befallen by calamity narrating how the painful calamity came to pass. In this cultural grieving space, the bereaved asks rhetoric questions, mourns, and at times gets into emotional outbursts. This is understood as part of the process of grieving as one seeks to come to terms with what has happened.

The presence of other people offering solidarity is important and a gathering is considered better. The other terms for such gatherings are "*ukuyahlanganisa amehlo*" or "*ukuyakhulumisa*" [to meet them – face to face] and [to greet them] respectively. These terms emphasise the importance of coming together face to face to create a *langalezo* experience. For the Gukurahundi this has not happened. The focus group discussion started this process for the participants of the study. However, noticeably the participants would hold back here and there. At times someone would start saying something and then stop abruptly

and jump to another thing or say the same thing in a less strong language. Some of these hurdles were overcome as the research progressed albeit with difficulties in some areas.

Below are some of the accounts shared by the participants during interviews and the first focus group discussion. These accounts were shared with the understanding that they are being made available as material to be incorporated into the play being collectively devised by the group. During these early stages, I noticed that the stories were moving from individual stories to universal group stories – our stories. Because of overlaps of similar events or experiences, I noticed that when a participant was sharing his or her story they would refer to incidents mentioned in stories shared by others. As a result, the stories became woven together into a sort of big story – our story. However, the individual stories did not vanish – the individual story still existed but now as part of the bigger story. Unique elements of individual stories remained and we did not seek to diminish them for the sake of the bigger story – we understood that *amasongo akhenceza emabili* [it takes two copper bangles to make a musical sound]²⁷.

My relative was raped by a member of the 5 Brigade during the Gukurahundi. The child, who is a grown-up now, has struggled to get a birth certificate. (Participant 2019)

My grandfather from my mother's side was burnt to death inside a thatched hut by the 5 Brigade members. His crime was being a member of ZAPU and being a former ZIPRA. My grandmother shared the story with me. (Participant 2019)

My mother was shot in the leg during the Gukurahundi. I do not know whether she was shot by the 5 Brigade soldiers or by the dissidents. (Participant 2019)

I have heard my uncle saying *kulabantu abalengqondo zeGukurahundi* [there are people with a Gukurahundi mindset]. I am curious to know what a Gukurahundi mindset means. (Participant 2019)

5.5 Is it a Crime to Grieve?

In Chapter 1, I engaged in detail the issue of blocked grieving processes for the victims of the 1980s atrocities. The research findings show that second-generation victims are frustrated by this. What is painful for the generation after, and indeed the first-generation sufferers, is that the grieving processes are being blocked by the actions of the government and also frustrated by the absence of a conducive environment to engage in a *langalezo* experience that one chooses. That the government is not

²⁷ This Ndebele proverb means that group effort is better than individual effort. In this case individual effort is not ignored. Rather what is emphasised is the impact that individual efforts can make when harnessed together. I quote this proverb here basically to signify that the act of coming together for the participants may have emboldened them to speak out on the Gukurahundi. Solidarity is a confidence booster.

explaining what transpired during the Gukurahundi compounds an already complicated situation. According to the CCJP & LRF:

While the suffering caused by colonial rule is widely documented and internationally recognised, the suffering in Matabeleland and the Midlands in the 1980s is a history that is unknown except to those who experienced it first hand. It is also apparent that the signing of the Unity Accord in December 1987 was an important step towards national reconciliation in Zimbabwe, there nonetheless remains in rural Matabeleland a deep seated mistrust of the Government, and a fear that events of the 1980s could be repeated in the future. (CCJP & LRF 1997: xii)

Due to the silencing of debates on the Gukurahundi by the government, an environment of fear has continued and this has delayed the healing process for the Gukurahundi wounds as grieving has been stifled. More than half of the participants echoed similar sentiments one after the other on the issue of silence on the Gukurahundi issue. They were all saying that the Gukurahundi is a silenced issue and that fear induced by this stance is common. The issue of mistrust came up equally. One of the participants expressed this by saying “*Ngokuzwa kwami indaba yeGukurahundi iyatshayisa*. It’s not something *ongayixoxa emphakathini. Ungabona abantu beyixoxa bayabe besezindlini zabo njalo bethembana*” [What I know is that the Gukurahundi issue is something that can get you beaten²⁸. It’s not something that you can discuss in public. People only discuss it privately in their houses and only with people that they trust]. Another participant highlighted that when she asked her parents about the Gukurahundi the reply she got was that “*kuyatshayisa*” [It can get you beaten]. As a result, she reported that she is cautious not to ask strangers about it because it is unknown what can befall her as a result.

Two things emerge from these comments as expressed above. First, there is an expression of fear regarding openly speaking about the Gukurahundi. Secondly, speaking of the Gukurahundi has not stopped but it continues privately among those that one trusts. Almost all the participants agreed that on many occasions they have privately discussed the Gukurahundi issue with those that they trust. It also emerged during the discussions that unknown people and government officials are not trusted when it comes to discussing issues of the Gukurahundi. Participants were of the view that they could be harmed, arrested, or ill-treated for discussing the Gukurahundi issues openly. This study sought to explore ways of encouraging openly speaking about the Gukurahundi to facilitate grieving – a *langalezo* experience.

Besides the issue of closed or censored public spaces that make speaking about the Gukurahundi difficult, the participants pointed out that there is also the problem of many unanswered questions. Two participants indicated that they had heard about the Gukurahundi before but they were not aware of what

²⁸ By saying “*kuyatshayisa*” [it can get you beaten] the participants were largely referring to being arrested and then ill-treated or tortured by law enforcement agents. During the Gukurahundi many victims were beaten and tortured and so these memories could also be playing a role in framing the discussion around this issue.

specifically happened during that period. They said they were now curious to know and understand in more detail. One of them said the only thing she knew about the Gukurahundi was that it was a moment of madness²⁹. Who was mad and why are questions she said she has pondered on for a long time. Another heard friends at school referring to the Gukurahundi but could not ask for details as she was not sure how they would react. Another participant expressed his concerns by saying:

You get paranoid because these people were being killed – your relatives are being killed, your people of your tribe are being killed. So you ask yourself *ukuthi* [that] okay what was the cause? And if you look deeper into it you can realise *ukuthi* [that] this might have been a means to [a] political end – subjugating ZAPU by destroying its powerbase – which is the Ndebele people. So you are persecuting me for being Ndebele? And you have made me an enemy? Zimbabwe has declared itself an enemy of Ndebele people – and I am Ndebele – am I welcome in Zimbabwe? Has this genocide ended or is it taking on another form? (Participant 2019)

The government's silence on the issue might have created an information gap leading to the arising of many questions that beg for answers. The issue of the Gukurahundi is not taught in primary school and high school syllabi in Zimbabwe so the information gap is huge on this matter. By comparison, the liberation struggle history is taught in the high school syllabus. The repressive actions of the government such as arresting those who have spoken out on the Gukurahundi give more credence to the notion that the government is deliberately muting dialogue on this issue and blocking the grieving process for the victims.

5.6 Let Us Do Something about It

What stood out from the interviews and focus group discussions was that the participants were determined to do something about the silence around the Gukurahundi. They were eager to speak out. This determination by the participants to change the status quo presented a very strong pivot to lift this research. Without this determination, the initiative would have been a damp squib, an anti-climax. One of the participants emphasised the need to speak out on the Gukurahundi issue by saying:

It is important...it's a major topic that we need to talk about. It's not only for those in politics. Speaking about it will help in coming up with a way forward. Without speaking about it there is no way forward. The Gukurahundi issue tore apart the Ndebeles and Shonas so we need to talk about it so that there is a way forward and reconciliation if possible. I think dialogue and speaking about it is the best therapy to heal inner pain. When you talk about it you can then move on and forget it but without speaking about it the pain remains bottled inside. Without

²⁹ Former President of Zimbabwe R. G. Mugabe is known to have referred to the Gukurahundi as a “moment of madness”.

speaking about this, rumours and 'secrets' will continue and haunt the coming generations.

This thing should end with our generation! (Participant 2019)

One of the dangers of having an oppressive situation around for a long time is that people may get familiar with that situation. That the participants were willing to challenge the status quo and speak out about their Gukurahundi experiences shows that they had not fallen into the familiarity ditch or if they had, they were willing to get out of it. Writing on decoloniality, Sabelo J. Ndlovu-Gatsheni (2013b: 10) cautions against normalising and universalising coloniality, arguing that it should rather be “unmasked, resisted and destroyed”. The decolonial effort, therefore, consists of a three-tier structure. The first tier consists of exposing the injustice. The second tier consists of resisting or challenging injustice. The third tier consists of eliminating or ending the injustice. Without the first tier, there is no foundation to build on and without the third tier, the decolonial effort is incomplete. The second tier represents the action of change. The participants pointed out the injustice that resulted from the silencing of the Gukurahundi stories. They did not stop there but went on to engage in actions of change with the view of destroying or eliminating the injustice of being hindered in having a desired *langalezo* experience.

Devising and staging theatre was the chosen way of action to encourage speaking out on the Gukurahundi issue. As we engaged in this approach we were building on other theatre works that have engaged in similar projects. While the Zimbabwean theatre works like *Talitha Koum - Someone Lied!* by Desire Moyo and *1983: Years Before and After* by Bhekumusa Moyo did not take the devising approach, their boldness to stage defiance is clear. In South Africa, however, devising is much more widespread and the apartheid plays offer many similarities with the approach taken by this research. These plays resisted the oppressive structures of apartheid. Rather than accepting the oppressive apartheid system as normal, these plays acted as works of defiance – exposing the injustice and resisting it to destroy it. It is common for Bulawayo theatre works to adopt similar approaches to those of South Africa. As Samuel Ravengai observes:

Traditionally, the centres of cultural authority for Bulawayo and the rest of Matabeleland lie outside the borders of Zimbabwe. For rural folk, their centre of cultural authority is KwaZulu-Natal, the place they were driven from by Tshaka during the Mfecane, but also, more realistically, by increased Afrikaner incursions into the Free State, where they had temporarily settled in the 1840s. For urbanites, their centre of cultural authority is Gauteng, where much of South Africa's most vibrant black theatre comes from. (Ravengai 2015b: 284)

Arguably, theatre has the potential to create a platform for resisting oppression and creating democratic spaces. According to Boal (2002: 16) “Theatre is a form of knowledge; it should and can also be a means of transforming society. Theatre can help us build our future, instead of just waiting for it”. Encouraged by such ideas, we set off on our journey of devising and staging theatre. The participants were amenable to the idea of using theatre as an avenue for speaking out. One of the participants remarked that “theatre

is different and powerful because through it issues can be vividly portrayed on stage. Theatre is the best in addressing these issues” (Participant 2019). Another participant concurred saying “Absolutely! I recall to mind 1983: *Years Before and After*, a play by Bhekumusa Moyo. It got people talking” (Participant 2019). Certainly, we also envisioned a play or plays that would get people talking. Not only the audience but first the participants and secondarily the audience members. We were also envisioning the talking that would not end within the theatrical space but that would transcend the rehearsal room and the stage and permeate the social circles beyond. As Boal (2002: 17) puts it, “Let us, we and they, create it first in the theatre, in fiction, to be better prepared to create it outside afterwards, to extrapolate into our real life”. With this in mind, we started the devising process.

5.7 Getting Started with the Devising Process

Everyone had been looking forward to the devising process. When the time came the enthusiasm was evident. There was a noticeable excitement among the participants. Like children in kindergarten, participants playfully teased each other and giggled as we waited for one or two to arrive for the session. This was a positive sign. An eagerness to engage in the devising process meant that participants were likely going to give their best efforts. With such an atmosphere there was hope for innovation, imagination, and risk-taking. As Alison Oddey (1994: 1) points out the significance of devised theatre is in “the emphasis it places on an eclectic process requiring innovation, invention, imagination, risk, and above all, an overall group commitment to the developing work”. With the benefit of hindsight, I observed that the playful atmosphere was not always present. At times the painful accounts that were shared during the process weighed down heavily on the participants and the atmosphere would be sombre. Singing songs and engaging in theatre games and exercises were therefore crucial during the process. These helped in creating an ensemble atmosphere, boosting morale, and helping to de-role after sessions.

After the first focus group discussion and interviews, we still needed to broaden our understanding of what happened during the Gukurahundi. We started the creative process by reading the CCJP & LRF (1997) report. We did not read everything. I read selected portions to the participants as we sat circularly, mimicking the Ndebele storytelling setup. For those sections that we did not read as a group, I summarised them for the participants and narrated them. We had a long working day. As we read the gruelling accounts contained in the CCJP & LRF report the atmosphere became sombre. The question that kept coming up was “Why all this brutality?” as we read portion after portion from the CCJP & LRF report.

The CCJP & LRF (1997) report was very useful as a foundational text of reference. We referred to it a lot throughout the process to get a broad view and exact details of what transpired during this period. Some participants pointed out that things contained in the CCJP & LRF report were helping in understanding what transpired. Since the devising process had already begun, we reflected on the accounts from the CCJP & LRF report and we started identifying some of the stories that we might incorporate into the play we were devising. Everyone was free to make suggestions. A suggestion would be discussed and adopted, amended, or set aside. That the suggestion was set aside did not mean it was not important but rather that it would not be part of the dramatisations. We had come to an understanding that not all important issues had to be part of the theatre piece(s). The devised play could only contain so much. Therefore, we approached everything from the perspective of creating a slice of reality, not a universal whole. Some of the accounts identified for incorporating into our play were those of pregnant women whose stomachs were ripped open by the 5 Brigade soldiers using bayonets. At this stage we did not dramatise yet, we just reflected on the accounts.

As we progressed with the process, we watched a documentary film by Zenzele Ndebele. The documentary film by Ndebele, titled *Gukurahundi Genocide: 36 Years Later* was screened at Rainbow Hotel in Bulawayo on 29 September 2018 as part of Intwasa Arts Festival koBulawayo. We then took time to reflect on the documentary film. Like the CCJP & LRF (1997) report, the documentary film captures a lot of gruelling accounts of the Gukurahundi, accounts that have not been discussed openly in public spaces.

After watching the documentary film one participant remarked “It’s difficult to understand that a human being can do such things”. When I probed further in terms of how he feels about these things, he said “*Izinto lezi zizwisa ubuhlungu. Ziletha ipain yokuthi abantu babehlukuluzwa. So lezi yizinto eziletha ukuthi uzonde, uzwe ubuhlungu, uzibuze ukuthi ukuthi yindaba izinto lezi zazisenzakala?*” [These things bring pain. It pains to see the atrocities that were committed on people. So these are things that make you angry. You ask yourself why these things were happening]. Such comments show that people, especially second-generation sufferers, have a lot of unanswered questions about the Gukurahundi. They want to know what exactly happened and why it happened. I argue that publicly speaking out on the issue may help in answering some of these questions.

As we reflected on the CCJP & LRF report and the documentary film by Zenzele Ndebele, discussions played a critical role. These discussions were aimed at affording the participants an opportunity to comment on the contents of the report and the documentary film and also to share what they understood had taken place during the Gukurahundi. Some participants said they did not know much about what had happened while others knew a lot. Some said they did not know whether the stories they heard about the Gukurahundi were true or not. At the beginning of the devising process, the words that the participants

used to describe the Gukurahundi atrocities were telling. One participant talked of “*babetshisana*”, meaning [they were burning each other]. This description is an infamous metaphor of the Gukurahundi, capturing the gruesome atrocities of the period that included, among other things, people being shut up in thatched huts and burnt alive.

On the other hand, the term “*babetshisana*” shows how the so-called ‘official’ narrative of the Gukurahundi has distorted the facts of this period. The official description implies that the “burning of each other” was a type of atrocity carried out by both sides, creating the impression that the other side was also returning fire for fire, yet it was the armed 5 Brigade versus unarmed civilians. The government has created a distorted narrative by referring to the Gukurahundi as a civil war (see CCJP & LRF 1997). However, generally, many in the second generation are not clear about what transpired during the atrocities. For example, one of the participants shared with the group that her mother was shot in the leg but added that she does not know whether this was done by the 5 Brigade soldiers or by dissidents.

I then tasked the participants to go and do their own research about the Gukurahundi. We agreed that they were going to ask their parents, guardians, or relatives. They came back with varying results. For some, relatives shared with them what they know about the Gukurahundi while some were not given any information except that talking about the Gukurahundi *kuyatshayisa* [it can get you beaten] or *kuyanyamalalisa* [it can make you disappear]. Despite the mixed outcomes, the exercise of asking parents and relatives about the Gukurahundi started a process of talking about the issue. Even for those who preferred not to speak about it, the information that talking about the Gukurahundi can get you beaten or make you disappear is still vital. It speaks volumes. We captured these sentiments in the phase one play monologues and in poems that were recited by the performers in the plays. Below is an excerpt from the play that buttresses the point I am making:

YOUNG PERSON 5: I heard a very sad story but when I tried to discuss that with my family they told me to shut up because *bathi lindaba ayikhulunywa* [they said this is not an issue for discussion]. *Bathi iyatshayisa, bathi iyabulalisa, bathi iyanyamalalisa* [they say, it’s something that attracts beatings if discussed, they say one can even be killed for speaking about it and one can even disappear for saying a word about it]. (*Speak Out!* Phase one, 2019)

5.8 The Process of Devising and Staging Theatre

Harnessing the possibilities offered by devised theatre, we created our stage play entitled *Speak Out!* While a scripted play would have limited us to the script, devising theatre gave us a democratic process in the creation of the script, empowering each participant and giving them a say in the creative process and product. At the centre of the creative process was improvisation. We devised the first play and staged

it. We then reworked it and staged it again, creating *Speak Out! Phase one*, and *Speak Out! Phase two*. During the rehearsals, I encouraged all members of the group to feel free to contribute and I emphasised that they would not be censored for their views. Putting improvisation in the centre of the creative process resonates with Ian Watson's observation that improvisation:

places the actor at the center of the creative process. This is particularly obvious in the initial stages of creating a new mise-en-scene, because it is the actor who bears the greatest responsibility for providing the raw material for the production. It is the actor who develops the initial improvisations, and it is the actor who adapts them. (Watson 1993: 94)

The phase one play was centred on the story of a young woman who narrates the story of her aunt, who was killed during the Gukurahundi by 5 Brigade soldiers who found her pregnant and ripped her stomach open with a bayonet, claiming that they wanted to remove a "son" of a "dissident" she was carrying in her stomach. The young girl was told this gruesome account by her mother. In narrating the account, the young lady says, "I believe – this is how my aunt would have told her story if she had had a chance to, but she never had one, she died on the spot" (*Speak Out!* 2019). Accounts of pregnant women who were bayoneted are a common theme of the Gukurahundi atrocities. CCJP & LRF (1997: 10) reports that "there are four accounts among CCJP & LRF records of two pregnant girls being bayoneted to death by the 5 Brigade in Tsholotsho in February 1983". Participants picked up this account as one of the most depressing accounts that have been shared with them through stories. The full phase two play, a product of the reworked phase one play, is attached as Appendix A.

We used a flashback technique to transport this story to the stage. The flashback happens during a scene where young people are seated on different parts of the stage. One after the other, they tell their stories – the stories of the Gukurahundi that they have heard. The last to tell her story is a young woman who, at the beginning of her narration, transforms to play the character of her aunt during a day she and her family were rounded up by the 5 Brigade soldiers. The transformation marks the beginning of the flashback and the other actors on stage freeze. The character Aunt narrates how the 5 Brigade soldiers arrived in her rural village in Tsholotsho armed with guns. Many people were shot dead and some were wounded as the 5 Brigade soldiers ruthlessly attacked unarmed civilians. She was 8 months pregnant. She tried to run away. However, because of her advanced pregnancy, she could not run fast. The soldiers caught up with her. As the actor playing the role of the aunt reaches this point in the narration, two male actors who had frozen on the stage 'come alive' and transform into soldiers and start intimidating the pregnant woman and eventually rip open her stomach with a bayonet.

The transformation into the soldiers' roles was aided by the putting on of red berets, a technique that uses minimal props for the transformation into another character – and resonates with Jerzy Grotowski's (1968) poor theatre concept. The 5 Brigade soldiers that massacred civilians during the Gukurahundi

wore red berets, and these became their infamous trademark. After the bayoneting, the flashback ends, and the events of the play return to the present time. One of the young people who, all along, had been listening to the narration exclaims “*ngamanga lawo!*” [That is a lie!]. Others defend the young lady who narrated the story. The young lady declares that the story she has told is the story of her aunt, which was told to her by her mother. The character who is disputing the account should, it was suggested during the devising stage, represent those who have sought to trivialize, distort, and dispute the Gukurahundi experiences as shared by the victims and survivors. By reacting to this character, the participants not only voiced their pain and frustration stemming from the attempt to silence their Gukurahundi narratives but also protested against any attempts to silence them. This is in line with Caroline Lenette’s observation that:

Adopting an arts-based research paradigm can offer a haven to Knowledge Holders, not in terms of fully addressing the difficult realities that often remain beyond the aims of the inquiry, but as points of resistance where meaningful and unique counter-narratives are created through storytelling. This way, arts-based outcomes can serve to push back against harsh policies and the circumstances resulting from neoconservative sociopolitical contexts. (Lenette 2019: 43)

I, therefore, argue that the participants used theatre as both a political and a creative act: as a way of resisting being silenced and as a way of telling their stories. This way counter-narratives are created so that the distorted versions do not thrive. Rather, gaps are filled by writing in the stories that have been left out by the ‘official’ narratives.

While the account of the pregnant woman who was bayoneted was the central theme of the play, other issues were also taken up: for example, the account of a man who was burnt alive in a thatched hut. His only crime was that of being a former ZIPRA member and being a member of ZAPU. Arguably, the ZANU government used the Gukurahundi as an opportunity to crush ZAPU, the main opposition party in the country at that time. One of the participants shared this account as a true story that happened to his maternal grandfather. It is an individual account that also embodies the accounts of many who suffered the same predicament. Using a storytelling technique that draws heavily from the Ndebele storytelling culture, this account was narrated as a monologue at the beginning of the phase one play. According to Victoria Forster (2016: 32), “Social movements also rely on stories that are told within their communities”. Storytelling therefore helps not only to give accounts of what happened but also to mobilise communities to take action to change their unfavourable circumstances.

Physical abuse in the form of beatings and torture was also captured in the play through dramatised re-enactments that sought to mirror the atrocities of the Gukurahundi events. Theatrical re-enactments not only mirror what happened, they also provide an opportunity to comment on the events (Katherine 2015).

The presentation of physical abuse was stylised. We had no intention of leaning towards realism in the presentation of these as this could have increased the chances of traumatising the participants and audience members. A stylised representation made the staging of traumatic events more pliable. However, in choosing a stylised representation we endeavoured not to trivialise the pain and suffering of the Gukurahundi victims.

In *Speak Out! Phase two*³⁰, the issues of identity and failure to get birth certificates for victims and children of victims of the Gukurahundi were introduced. The issue of identity documents was briefly introduced in Chapter 3 and Chapter 4. One of the participants had a first-hand experience of this as his family has experienced a related crisis. Some of those who grew up without identity documents have become parents themselves and the struggle to get their own documents and those of their children has presented them with a double tragedy. The problem of identity documents for the victims and survivors of the Gukurahundi and their children is a reality that cannot be disputed. I further discuss the challenges associated with identity documents in Chapter 7.

As we incorporated one of the participants' real-life experiences into the play and recorded accounts of similar experiences, our play shifted to a story of two people planning to marry, who are haunted by their history to the extent that their wedding is threatened. The young man's father was killed by 5 Brigade soldiers during the Gukurahundi. Authorities refused to process a death certificate for him because Gukurahundi was not acceptable as a cause of death. As a result, the young man failed to get a birth certificate bearing his father's name. He had to get a birth certificate using his mother's surname. As the young man approaches marriage, he is worried that even his children will use the 'wrong' surname and may never get to know their true lineage, something that also speaks of their identity. His fiancée is also trying to come to terms with the death of her aunt, who was bayoneted during the Gukurahundi. These past experiences not only affect the couple as individuals but also the future of their marriage and children. The issue of identity documents for the victims and children of victims of the Gukurahundi is a deep-seated crisis that has existed since the Gukurahundi days. According to CCJP & LRF:

Possibly hundreds of murder victims have never been officially declared dead. The lack of death certificates has resulted in a multitude of practical problems for their children, who battle to receive birth certificates, and for their spouses who, for example, cannot legally inherit savings accounts. (CCJP & LRF 1997: 6)

Music and dance were incorporated as the storyline revolved around the groomsmen and bridesmaids preparing the wedding dances for the anticipated wedding. In a Zimbabwean context, a wedding dance consists of groomsmen, in pairs with bridesmaids, dancing as an ensemble or in pairs. The groom and the

³⁰ See Appendix A for the full script of the play.

bride also participate in the dances though not all of them during the wedding day. Accompanying music ranges from soft and slow to fast and loud depending on the tastes and choices of the couple getting married. The dances include *rhumba*, *tshatshatsha*, quickstep, foxtrot, waltz, and others. The participants collectively participated in the choreography of the dances and in selecting the songs for the dances. One of the participants, an experienced professional wedding dance coach, was given the responsibility of being the overall coordinator for the wedding dances. In the rehearsal room, dancers would take turns to propose dance moves and then the rest of the members would be taught the moves once they had been adopted by the group. At times, other members would suggest changes. Just as was the case for the roles being played, in perfecting the dances during rehearsals one individual or one section would perform while the rest would watch and then make suggestions for improvement or comment on the issues at the centre of the performance. We thus used Boal's (1979) concept of the Spect-Actor to provide feedback to each other and comment on the content of our work, and to collectively participate in shaping the theatre work. One of the greatest challenges relating to perfecting the dances during the rehearsal was that dancers would learn the dance moves at a different pace. Those members who had previously been bridesmaids or groomsmen relied on their experiences while others sometimes struggled.

Songs were used as commentary in the plays – for example, “*Senzeni na?*” [What have we done?] by Albert Nyathi and another version from South Africa that speaks to the apartheid-era issues. Some participants also composed their own poems to capture their experiences and to protest against being silenced. These were incorporated into the plays. One of the poems by one of the participants goes like this:

Now that they say we may speak and we are speaking – *hatshi ukuvinjwa, hatshi ukwethuselwa*
[no to silencing and gagging of our voices, no to intimidation]. We may forgive and forget but
without answers *eish*³¹ *ngiyasola* [I have doubts]. (Poem by Participant 2019)

The use of art this way demonstrates the potential of art, in the context of African popular culture, to communitate, protest, negotiate, and comment on the experiences of its creators (Magwaza 2001; Barber 1997; Zondi 2008). The plays that we created fit this mold of art as they reflected on and commented on the participants' Gukurahundi experiences.

5.9 *Langalezo* – Exploring Theatre as Grieving

The climax of both plays came as a *langalezo* experience. Through theatricality, a *langalezo* space was created. As explained in Chapter 1, a *langalezo* space is a space provided in the Ndebele culture for

³¹ In this context, “*eish*” means “I have doubts”.

showing solidarity and offering support to each other during times of bereavement or extreme difficulty. Besides the messages said by those comforting the bereaved, there is another critical element of a *langalezo*, which is the narration (by the bereaved or affected) of how the painful experience happened. This sharing of distressing experiences is part of the ways of processing pain and working towards healing after a painful event. The listener empathises with the affected and offers hope through words and deeds.

Among the Ndebele people, the person coming to show solidarity greets the bereaved or affected by saying “*langalezo*”. The Ndebele word *langalezo* means “you have seen it” or “it has been seen”. It is both an acknowledgment that the painful event has happened and also an encouragement to manoeuvre past the pain and face the future positively. A *langalezo* space is a space for the sharing of painful experiences, the witnessing and validation of stories of pain, loss, and suffering, and the mapping of the way forward in order to face the future positively. I argue that devising and staging theatre created a *langalezo* space for the participants and the audience members.

In the phase one play, after the young lady has narrated the story of her aunt who was bayoneted, other actors gather around her, embrace her, and, true to the Ndebele cultural tradition that has just been described, say “*langalezo*”. In the phase two play, after the narration of their painful accounts, the future bride and groom embrace each other comfortingly while other actors gather around them and say “*langalezo*”. This moment is followed by a popular song of lament “*Hamba nhliziyo yakhe uye ezulwini*” [May her soul find peace in heaven]. The post-performance discussions also form part of the *langalezo* experience, for, in a *langalezo* space, value is placed on problem narration, problem discussion, and seeking ways of moving forward.

Both the process of devising theatre and that of staging theatre created democratic spaces for participants and audiences to speak about their Gukurahundi experiences, something that is forbidden ground and taboo in everyday circles. Felseghi (2017: 68) observes that in devised theatre in “creating a performance, the authors always start from human resources and their personal biographies, from a pre-existent theme, from society, politics – or all of these combined, creating unlimited possibilities”. In our project, this was done by encouraging participants to share their personal experiences and then incorporating those into the devised play. One participant, for example, shared the story of his relative who was burnt alive inside a thatched hut – a type of atrocity already mentioned in this paper - and this was incorporated into the play. During reflection sessions after devising and staging the plays, one of the participants said:

As for me, as a young person from Matabeleland, Bulawayo in particular, participating in the *Speak Out!* project gave me an opportunity to express my views and feelings concerning the Gukurahundi accounts that I have heard. So I think I was empowered to be able to express myself and to voice my feelings on the Gukurahundi issue...the theatre project empowered me

because my fellow participants came with things that I was previously unaware of and as we shared stories and experiences I developed a broader understanding of the Gukurahundi issue...the project also made me aware that we can speak about issues of Gukurahundi using all these channels even if other platforms are closed. (Participant 2019)

The sharing of stories during the devising process was enhanced by improvisation which empowered participants to break silencing and oppressive boundaries and to 'rediscover' their silenced voices through playfulness that we created through the playing of games, particularly at the start of sessions. Some of these games were also played in the middle of the devising sessions. Boal (1979: xiv) argues that "improvisation is life". That is what improvisation brought to our devising process – life. In this creative and playful atmosphere, participants may become open to several possibilities and thus realise that things can be otherwise (Forster 2016). With such a realisation there is a potential for participants to realise that they can change the situation – they can tell their own stories.

Staging the play marked one of the milestones of the process, as participants claimed their democratic spaces – where they could speak. The act of performing in front of an audience is important in that participants tell their stories and have them validated by the empathic audience. Life experiences are given added validity by depicting them dramatically with, and in front of, others (Jones 1996). This is not always the case though – there can be conflicts and negotiations during the devising process.

The rehearsal for action concept was important in this research. Boal (1979), borrowing from the avant-garde, particularly Moreno's expressionist psychodrama, describes his aesthetics of the oppressed as a rehearsal for action. He argues that participation in the theatre allows participants to rehearse what they would do in real life if faced with similar circumstances. During the reflection sessions, participants testified that after the project they had felt emboldened and empowered to go out and speak to their families, friends, and community members about the Gukurahundi, something that they had been reluctant or afraid to do before embarking on the project. One participant said, "The support that we got from the audience when we did the play is encouraging me to speak about this thing [the Gukurahundi]". I discuss more on this in Chapter 7.

Staging *Speak Out!* Phase one came with venue challenges. As I have already explained before in this thesis, the play was performed in a volatile situation. While the performance day was still a long way off, we had concluded that advertising the performance date and venue carried a risk of the performance being banned. As a result, the play was performed as part of a mini-festival event. The platform offered by this festival was for artists to perform their pieces and then get feedback from the audience in terms of how the performance could be improved. We liaised with the organisers of this event who agreed to the arrangement of us staging our performance during this event. This arrangement worked well in camouflaging our performance while at the same time reaching out to the targeted audience. The

arrangement also helped in addressing safety and security concerns that had been raised by the participants.

The attempt to create a democratic social and aesthetic space for addressing the Gukurahundi had its challenges. At the beginning of the project, some participants were very uncomfortable speaking about the Gukurahundi, citing fear of state repression. As I have mentioned in this thesis before, at one point I was asked about the backup plan in the event of their being arrested. I did not have a solid backup plan but committed to making informed and consultative decisions that prioritised their safety. This was nevertheless no guarantee. Another major challenge was that most of the participants were new to devising. They were used to acting in plays where they would be given a script. As a result, at many points when they felt frustrated by the process of devising, they would request that I just write the script and give them ready copies. Through negotiations, we managed to steer the ship to the intended destination. Despite the challenges, the overall outcome was encouraging.

5.10 Why Don't You Write a Script For Us?

The journey of the scriptwriting process had its ups and downs. The going was not always smooth. It got tough sometimes and when it did the question more often than not popped out, as if automatically, "Why don't you write a script for us?" Those members of the group who were artists, except just one, had never been involved in devising theatre. They were only familiar with the arrangement of being given the script by the Director, learning their lines, and then rehearsing. Now they were being confronted by an unfamiliar arrangement and they sought ways of riveting to the known path instead of experimenting with the road less travelled. However, requesting a written script was not an act of stubbornness in any way. It could have been due to the lack of confidence in one's own voice and the creativity inside. It could also be that the participants felt that they would do a better job with a script and might be disappointed if we went with improvising. During one of the sessions, one of the participants submitted "*Thina vele uDirector wethu uyasibhalela iscript thina sesi actor kuphela. Kanti mdala yindaba wena ungasibhaleli iscript?*" [In our art group the Director always gives us a written script. Our part becomes acting only. Why don't you also write a script for us?"]

The request by some for me to write a script did not come up once or twice. It came up many times. The latest was days towards the performance when the participants felt that we were running out of time. At this time, as at other times, I politely explained that the script has to be a product of collective devising and, therefore, I cannot and will not write the script. The preliminary results of the study were showing that involving the participants in the scripting process was one of the avenues available within the nature

of collectively devised popular participatory theatre to give agency to the participants so that they can write their own stories and thus tell them. The writing process offered a way for the participants to shape the stories, giving them control of the creative process. With this agency they could select the very words to use, the material to be included and that to be left out, and the themes of the play. If I had conceded to the participant's request to write the script individually, I believe I would have uprooted a tender germinating seed – I would have thwarted the collective efforts that are the hallmark of collectively devised theatre.

Participants did not always readily accept my no for writing the script. At times they insisted. During the incident towards the performance that I have referred to above, one participant openly expressed her disappointment for my saying no to individually writing the script. These are times that not only the facilitator's skills but also the strength of the group. If such situations are not handled well they can lower the group morale. As a facilitator, I realised that I had to also use persuasion. What worked well for the group was that the principle of respect was very strong so we always agreed and disagreed respectfully. Respect and persuasion won the day. After a lengthy episode of discussions, we were back again on the stage – collectively devising our play.

5.11 Design: Staging, Set, Costumes and Properties

Staging, set, costumes, and properties (props) design were done collectively. Towards the performance date, we held an *indaba*³² to discuss the design aspects of the production. I encouraged all members of the group to make their suggestions. According to Oddey (1994: 1) "devising is about thinking, conceiving, and forming ideas, being imaginative and spontaneous, as well as planning. It is about inventing, adapting, and creating what you do as a group". Oddey goes on to argue that in collectively devised theatre participants do not have to speak to strict roles such as performer, director, writer, set designer, costume designer, and so on but there is a flexibility that allows them to be involved in many or all different roles of the ensemble. We took this approach not only in the devising of our plays but also took the same approach in issues of design. As a group, we discussed the costumes and props that we were going to use and why we preferred to use them. We also discussed aspects of staging. Some of these discussions were made during the devising process, for example, the red berets costumes for the 5 Brigade soldiers were discussed and adopted during the devising process because of their symbolic meanings that have already been mentioned in this thesis.

³² Indaba means "a meeting".

Staging was largely determined by what Nkululeko Sibanda (2013: 73) terms the politics of space which “relates to the considerations of the performance spaces used for rehearsals and for performances”. The space we used for rehearsals was a big empty office. It greatly influenced how our staging came out but we also manipulated this space to meet the production needs. We were conscious of Peter Brook’s (1968) theory of ‘the empty space’ and Jerzy Grotowski’s (1968) theory of ‘poor theatre’, and we drew from these. The phase one play was performed in a community hall with a proscenium stage. The Phase two performance was performed in a large hall with no raised stage. For both performances, we had some parts where actors entered through the audience side instead of backstage. This was done as a strategy to make the audience feel part of the performance, in line with African theatre traditions and the *langalezo*. In terms of set, we settled for a plain background, using available “found” sets” (Sibanda 2013) and manipulating them to meet the needs of the performance. We did not want the set to draw the attention of the audience but rather, we were mindful to direct this attention to the themes of the play and the acting. On the other hand, our design approach was influenced by the reality that we did not have a budget for design. We had to use an approach that would not come with a huge financial cost.

In costumes and properties design, we took a minimalist approach. Drawing from the concept of the politics of questions (Quesenbury 2004; Sibanda 2013) that emphasises the need to ask the right questions to guide the design process, we asked questions to do with what we needed to effectively communicate the message of our production. We, therefore, needed costumes and properties that would aid in bringing out the message of the production. This explains, for example, the use of printed caps and t-shirts that I will discuss in this section. We also drew from Grotowski (1968) who argues that theatre should not, because it could not, compete against the overwhelming spectacle of film but rather should focus on the core root of theatre, that is, actors co-creating the event of theatre with its spectators. Convinced that there is no need for superfluous and elaborate sets, costumes, and properties Grotowski advocates for poverty in theatre. He is of the view that minimal sets, costumes, and properties can carry through the day for a theatre performance. Grotowski is for the idea of costumes that can enable the actor to play different roles and properties that can be transformed to represent different things on stage. For *Speak Out!* Phase one, through group effort, we agreed that performers would wear black t-shirts and black caps throughout the performance. These t-shirts were printed “Speak Out!” on the front side. Caps were also written “Speak Out!” on the front. When we had agreed on the specifications we bought black plain t-shirts and caps and got “Speak Out!” printed on them. These were meant to encourage people to speak out. The messages on the caps and t-shirts were motivated by a desire for change. These were worn with slacks, jeans, or trousers that the performers themselves volunteered to provide. However, we did not follow Grotowski’s approach religiously. We varied it to suit our needs, for example,

red berets were used during scenes seen as fit for that. Contrary to Grotowski's preference, we also used recorded music.

During *Speak Out!* Phase two, we maintained a Grotowskian approach in the sense that we still retained minimal sets and properties - performing against a plain backdrop. However, in the costumes there were changes. We came to a consensus not to use identical t-shirts and caps. Each character was costumed in a manner that befits the role. This change was largely influenced by the change in the main plot. For phase two, the main plot was that of two young people preparing to get married. The whole play largely revolved around the preparation process – particularly practising the steps for the wedding. With such a setting, we felt that making the performers wear the “Speak Out!” t-shirts would not blend well with the context. The context was centred on everyday events and we agreed that the participants be clothed in seemingly ‘everyday clothes’. In this aspect, as was the case with the phase one performance, the politics of questions (Quesenbury 2004; Sibanda 2013) was the guiding factor. Looking at it from another angle, Sibanda (2013) observes that community theatre groups in Zimbabwe performing plays that challenge the status quo usually make use of everyday clothes as costumes as there is usually not enough time to change into the kind of costumes required for the production. Just like mimed sets, the use of everyday clothes makes it easier for the artists to get away when the performance is stopped or when a threat (like arrest) comes up. Since our performance could have been performed in outside settings like streets, the use of everyday clothes as costumes would have worked for such a venue if the need to perform there had arisen. Aspects with symbolic meanings like red berets were still retained during phase two.

The flexibility that comes with devised theatre worked well for us to adjust as we saw fit. An important point to make is that these changes were not dictated by one person but were a product of collective effort. When we got to the stage of designing costumes and properties I observed that some level of trust had developed among the participants. As a result, participants were now freer to express their views. This is in line with the dictates of devised theatre as noted by Felseghi who says:

Regarding theatrical collective work, this kind of theatre is based on a matter of trust. The feeling of trust creates a total availability in the relationship between the ones involved, by giving up the conventional barriers, and working with others in a secured space, where nobody is being judged, but on the contrary, encouraged to propose new elements and situations.
(Felseghi 2017: 67)

The process of collectively designing costumes and properties, I observed, also encouraged participants to speak out. In their efforts to explain their suggestions, they engaged with the themes of the play and pointed out how the costumes and props would work out for the Gukurahundi issue being addressed. I also observed that the discussions on the costumes and props helped in building the group. During the

process, we joked and laughed even though we were dealing with serious issues. As the saying goes “*loba kufiwe kuyahlekwa*” [even during times of bereavement there is laughter].

5.12 We Want to Make Our Own History

Participants pointed out that they wish the Gukurahundi issue had started being addressed a long time ago instead of dragging on for so long. One of the challenges that have resulted from the dragging of the Gukurahundi issue is that at a time when the young generation should be making their own history and telling their own stories, they have found themselves saddled with the Gukurahundi baggage from the past. At a time when they ought to be moving forward, they have found themselves having to turn back to grapple with the unresolved issues from the past. This is frustrating to young people and during one of the devising sessions, one of the participants, during break time chat we were having as a group, burst out saying:

I wish this project will be the last one...this issue of Gukurahundi should have ended with the generation of those who experienced it. I do not wish my child to know about this thing...it is those *izalukazi* [grannies] who were there during that time who should be involved. Leave us out – it’s abuse! Ask us about the Motlanthe Commission³³ and looting³⁴ and then we can talk. That is what we know. Why can’t we tell our stories? (Participant 2019)

Taking the above statement at a surface level, one may mistakenly conclude that the young person who expressed these sentiments is fed up with issues that deal with the Gukurahundi. On the contrary, what the young person is fed up with is the fact that the Gukurahundi issue has continued to drag on without being addressed for a long time. His highlighting of current traumatic events as yet unprocessed reveals that this is a disturbing trend. Similar sentiments were expressed by other participants during the process of the research. The particular young person himself clarified his statement later towards the end of the research process. He pointed out that he desires to see the Gukurahundi issue addressed so that it does not continue to cast a dark shadow on the present and the future of the young generation.

What emerged from the research was that the Gukurahundi issue is threatening to stymie the making of history and sharing of stories from their time by the young generation. Instead of making their own history

³³ The Motlanthe Commission was set up by the President of Zimbabwe to investigate the shooting dead of protesters during the protests that erupted in Harare immediately after the 2018 harmonised elections while votes counting was still underway. Former South African president, Kgalema Motlanthe chaired the commission.

³⁴ By looting the participant was referring to the January 2019 national protests dubbed as “shutdown”. During the protests many supermarkets and grocery shops were looted and some burnt down. A few cars were also burnt down. The participant was not implying that he took part in the looting but was highlighting that these are events that took place during his lifetime that he managed to witness.

the young generation is confronted with a historical urgency that has dwarfed the emerging narratives. Grappling with such a predicament for the Holocaust survivors, Hirsch (2008: 104) poses a question on how we, the second-generation or post-generation, can carry forward the stories of the victims without “having our own stories displaced by them?” The possibility for the stories of the post-generation to be displaced by those of the first-generation victims is real. For the Gukurahundi the possibility of the Gukurahundi stories to displace those of the second-generation sufferers has been heightened by the fact that the issue has not been addressed for long. Realising the danger of their stories being displaced, the young generation, the second-generation sufferers, are mounting efforts to push back. The statement quoted above made by one of the research participants is two-pronged. First, it is advocating for the addressing of the Gukurahundi issue. Second, it is an effort to ring-fence the stories of the young generation so that they are not displaced by the traumatic narratives of the Gukurahundi. While the second-generation sufferers wish to see the Gukurahundi issue being discussed, they do not wish that this is done at the expense of their own stories.

Eva Hoffman (2004) argues that the paradoxes of indirect knowledge haunt many who came after, those who belong to the second generation. According to Hoffman:

The formative events of the twentieth century have crucially informed our biographies, threatening sometimes to overshadow and overwhelm our own lives. But we did not see them, suffer through them, or experience their impact directly. Our relationship to them has been defined by our very ‘post-ness’ and by the powerful but mediated forms of knowledge that have followed from it. (Hoffman 2004: 25)

It is the threat of having the stories of the first-generation victims or survivors overshadow or overwhelm the lives of the second-generation victims that complicates the situation. It leads to the second-generation victims getting frustrated. It is a dilemma that arises from the terrain of history and contemporary contexts at the same time. It is an experience of being in-between or being in the intersection of a troublesome past and a tumultuous present. The tumultuous present is actually so as a result of the past. As Hirsch puts it:

To grow up with such overwhelming inherited memories, to be dominated by narratives that preceded one’s birth or one’s consciousness, is to risk having one’s own stories and experiences displaced, even evacuated, by those of a previous generation. It is to be shaped, however indirectly, by traumatic events that still defy narrative reconstruction and exceed comprehension. These events happened in the past, but their effects continue into the present. This is, I believe, the experience of postmemory and the process of its generation. (Hirsch 2008: 107)

The experience of the second-generation victims of traumatic events like the Gukurahundi is therefore complex. Instead of burying our heads in the sand and hoping that things will fall into shape on their own,

we are being challenged to take action. Instead of dismissing the second-generation victims as people with a penchant for opening old wounds, we are challenged to a realisation that the second-generation victims are caught between a rock and a hard surface – as the Ndebele saying goes *yikuba phakathi kwelitshe lembokodo* [being between a rock and a grinding stone].

5.13 Conclusion

The group of participants that was involved in the *Speak Out!* project was not homogeneous. While it was a significant event for some, not all members of the group had been affected directly by the Gukurahundi, or even knew much about it. Further, the interest in addressing the Gukurahundi was not the same for all group members. Some wanted to see the issue of the Gukurahundi addressed while others wanted it to be left to the past so that young people can concentrate on issues that affect them in the now. The devising process, therefore, had to accommodate these differences. As a facilitator, I came to understand that some young people from the communities affected by the Gukurahundi are more interested in moving on with their individual lives instead of engaging with collective experiences that emanate from the past.

CHAPTER 6: FINDINGS AROUND FACILITATION - DATA PRESENTATION AND ANALYSIS

6.1 Introduction

This chapter reflects on the facilitation of the research process. Since one of the objectives of this research was to explore how participatory theatre that is devised can aid the second-generation sufferers of the Gukurahundi to speak out on how the atrocities affected them (and continue to do so), it became necessary to reflect on the facilitation process of the whole project – playmaking processes, staging, post-performance discussions and the reflection sessions held towards the end of the research. This is because facilitation plays a big role in how the discussions are structured and how they unfold. Facilitation therefore cannot and should not be ignored in such a kind of research.

I argue that the facilitator, as with my research, plays an important role in leading the whole process of devising and staging the plays and also conducting the post-performance discussions. Feedback from participants of this process should be considered and reflected on as part of a Critical/Emancipatory paradigm (Noel 2016; Mash 2014; Guba and Lincoln 2005) that values participants as teachers and integral to the research process. My critical and honest reflection on the facilitation process in this chapter is important in that it reflects what worked, what did not work, and what could be improved.

6.2 Facilitation

My facilitation involved coordinating the focus group discussions, the devising and staging processes, and managing the post-performance discussions. Sonja Arsham Kufinec (2009: 12) points out that “in the context of theatrical workshops, facilitation refers to the role of the individual guiding activities and dialogue. But this guidance is neither neutral nor detached”. This is the kind of facilitation that I engaged in. According to René Victor Valqui Vidal:

To facilitate is “to free from difficulties or obstacles”, “to make easy or easier”, or “to carry out a set of functions or activities before, during and after a meeting to help the group achieve its own objectives”. The facilitator is there to ensure a productive group process whether this is brainstorming a new idea or discussing the latest employee appraisals. The role of the facilitator is to ensure that the group works as a constructive and cohesive unit. (Vidal 2006: 17)

Concepts like ‘cohesive’ and ‘constructive’ are qualities that a facilitator must bring out in the group in order to meet the objective of the project; however, this is easier said than done. In my journey as a

facilitator, I came to understand the intersecting barriers to the process. These were primarily, time factors, personality factors, and skill factors. We had to work within the limited time that we had. This, at times, meant compressing many issues into one devising session. Different personalities in the group meant different working styles and approaches. To accommodate everyone, I had to be sensitive as a facilitator. Our theatre or drama training and experiences were different, calling for a need to balance these as a facilitator, as I will show later in this chapter.

According to Sheila Preston (2016: 1) “from the French word *facilis* meaning ‘easy’ or ‘easy to do’ the English noun ‘facilitation’ meaning ‘to make easy’ has its origins in the late fifteenth century”. She points out that academics tend to look down on those things categorised as ‘easy’ because of the connotation of them being simplistic. As a result, some theatre scholars are not comfortable with using the term facilitation because of the import of connotations that emanate from its origins. However, Preston refutes this by pointing out that:

The activity of facilitation is, in reality, far from easy in practice or intent: it is rather difficult, messy and full of contradictions and, sometimes, uneasy compromises. Facilitation, like any other cultural practice such as schooling, can be seen as a site of both domination and liberation; it can function to empower as well as validate and sustain dominant class interests. (Preston 2016: 1)

It is therefore clear that facilitation comes with challenges. For example, there was a participant who struggled with acting during the early stages. Oftentimes, when faced with difficulties in expressing her character, she would panic and become overly critical of herself to the extent of wanting to give up. Unlike other participants in the group who had undergone some informal training in theatre, this young lady had no training at all. Those with a basic understanding of theatre unintentionally sought to dominate her. This made me aware of the different theatre experiences and training that existed in the group. I also became aware of my level of training – I had a Master’s Degree and the majority of the participants had gone up to O’Level except one who was at tertiary level training as a teacher. I was concerned that the differing levels of education could adversely affect the free flow of communication which is central to the process. Zimbabweans are raised to be respectful of status factors such as education. I talked to the group members and explained to them that, as regards the project, we are all equal. I emphasised the aspect of respecting each other and assisting any group member who is struggling with performance aspects. I offered myself as an example, explaining that I would not use my level of education to intimidate anyone but would respect each participant’s views. I also encouraged the young lady not to lose hope in mastering the basics of performance. With much encouragement from the group, the young lady gained confidence and eventually settled in and artistically expressed herself freely.

Another challenge I faced as a facilitator was that some participants would become playful and start sharing jokes and distracting others during rehearsal sessions. I, therefore, had to be both stern and kind, a balance that takes great care and focus to master. At times, being the eldest in the group, and also having the researcher status, I would become too authoritative. When I noticed this, I would tone down as necessary so that I did not impose my ideas on the group and also so as not to hinder their democratic participation and expression. After the rehearsal process when we were tidying up the place, it was common for us to lightly reflect on that day's working process. In those discussions, the participants would point out that I had been too strict. These informal conversations acted as ways of sharpening the facilitation process with the participants freely pointing out my weaknesses and strengths. I used these comments to improve for the next session. I, therefore, submit that the informal discussions after the devising process are necessary and important in the non-confrontational critiquing of the facilitator's approach and should be worked into the process. Further, such critique should be welcomed to improve one's practice. This gives the participants more agency in shaping the project. It is worth noting that there are cultural aspects that should be considered here. Ndebele culture, like many other African cultures, has fairly strict guidelines for formal interactions across generations, gender, and social ranking. Creating informal ways to 'speak back' (Spivak: 1988) is therefore important for culturally responsive facilitation.

Vidal (2006) outlines several qualities that a facilitator should have. These qualities or attributes make the facilitator effective. To begin with, a facilitator should be an effective manager and should be able to guide the process smoothly. Under a good facilitator, the process becomes fruitful. The qualities that Vidal identifies as necessary for an effective facilitator are communication, planning, leadership, empathy, education, problem identification, and consulting. The facilitator should also have some personal skills and qualities, which are: flexibility, confidence, authenticity, patience, perseverance, leadership (presence), integrity, initiative, respectability, and perception (Vidal 2006: 17).

Without exhausting Vidal's list of qualities for an effective facilitator, I will briefly highlight a selected few to show how I applied them during the facilitation process. Effective communication is an important quality for the facilitator. The facilitator should be a good communicator so that the participants are clear on what is to take place and so grow a trusting environment. From the beginning of the project, in attempting to meet this objective, I made sure that I communicated the goals and methodology of the research to the participants. Again, during the staging of the performances, I informed the audience members that at the end of the performance, there would be post-performance discussions and they were invited to communicate. However, at times and despite your best efforts issues arise that are unanticipated. What comes to mind is a situation when two participants disagreed with each other lost their temper, and started shouting at each other. One participant questioned why, as the facilitator, I would give their transport monies to one person to distribute them. They suspected that maybe the person I had given

this role to was financially benefitting from the arrangement. My communication in this regard had fallen short. I had to first apologise to the group for not clarifying things. I then went on to explain that the member concerned was not being paid anything for that role. From then onwards, I made sure that I gave each person their transport money directly.

Planning is also an important quality. As the facilitator, I was the one who planned the research processes – the devising sessions required, issues of venue, provision of refreshments, transport logistics, and other aspects. If the facilitator fails to plan then the whole process suffers. The plans I had however were not cast in stone. They were negotiated with the participants to find common ground. When we started I had a draft of when we were to have rehearsal sessions but this was changed when the group members made their input. As a result, the schedule became convenient for everyone.

In facilitation, leadership quality is critical. The facilitator is a leader so that the project can move forward. As a leader, I guided the project team. Again, I was not an autocratic leader who dictated what had to be done but my leadership approach was participatory and collaborative. I involved the participants in making decisions. The costumes were decided collectively, the performance time and date for the second performance were set by the group, the plays were collectively devised such that no one person wrote the script and we all participated in directing our plays. Later in this chapter, I discuss leadership as a role of a facilitator. Leadership comes both as a quality/attribute and as a role of a facilitator.

On the personal skills that the facilitator should possess I have sampled flexibility, confidence, patience, and perseverance. During the reflection sessions that we had at the end of the project, when asked about my facilitation skills, the participants mentioned that, among many skills, I exhibited patience, understanding, and confidence (Unstructured Focus Group 2 October 2019). By understanding, I believe the participants meant that I was flexible and accommodating to all group members. As the facilitator I was flexible. I attempted to accommodate everyone involved. For example, one day a rehearsal was cancelled because other group members had other commitments. I did not insist on having my research prioritised. The facilitator needs to recognise that when he/she comes to the research field he/she does not find prospective participants just waiting for the research project. Instead, the researcher comes to a group of people who already have their plans and several things they are working on or responsible for. The researcher somehow 'interrupts' the lives of the participants. It takes great commitment and at times sacrifice, for the participants to make themselves available for a research project. The researcher should therefore be appreciative of this and show respect and reciprocity to the participants by being flexible. Even during devising sessions, if participants suggested that we dismiss early for certain reasons, I was flexible.

While it is important to maintain a commitment to the project through restating agreements³⁵ made at the beginning of the project (White and Nair 1999) there is a balance required. If the researcher becomes too rigid, participants may begin to feel that they have made a big mistake by committing to the project. As a result, they may withdraw or they may shun similar research projects in the future. When this happens, the researcher would have spoilt the research field for other researchers.

Confidence is necessary during all stages of the research process – during interviews, focus group discussions, devising sessions, and post-performance discussions. A confident facilitator inspires hope among the participants and the audience members. Patience and perseverance are linked as personal qualities that a facilitator should have. I was patient with the participants. For example, at times some participants would be late or would be absent for devising sessions. I did not respond by losing my temper and reprimanding them. Instead, I respectfully talked with them to map a way forward for making things work better in the future. The other example is that of participants who did not have theatre experience. I was patient with them and I encouraged other participants to do the same.

During the rehearsals for *Speak Out!* Phase two, one of the performers struggled greatly with wedding step dances. Other performers found the dances easy mostly because they had been groomsmen and bridesmaids before. I observed that the performer with no experience with wedding step dances was getting frustrated. She even started to blame herself for not learning the dances 'quickly enough'. However, as the facilitator, I intervened and assured her that there was nothing unusual about her learning pace. I also encouraged others to be patient with her. With the support of the whole team, she managed to learn the dances and confidently settled into the dance routine. While this might appear to be easy on the surface, it was not so. The concerned performer was emotional in her behaviour around the issue. To make matters worse, other performers were further pressurising her. It took a lot of good communication and leadership to handle the situation. At times some team members would be late or would not come to rehearsals leading to the cancellation of the whole session as they were busy.

Perseverance is a very important personal skill that the facilitator should have. Facilitating a research process is demanding and if the facilitator lacks perseverance he may not see it through the many obstacles that occur in such projects. The facilitator must resolve to keep going even when things get difficult. I learned that a never-give-up attitude is critical. Besides the busy lives of participants, the team was made up of people of diverse personalities (Felseghi 2007). It therefore takes time for the facilitator and team members to understand and appreciate each other's style of working. At times there may be arguments and disagreements. Through all these, the facilitator should persevere. It is hard not to get

³⁵ During this project, we agreed on rules to follow as a group. These rules are outlined in the following section of this chapter under the subheading **6.3 Facilitating to Speak Out!**

despondent as a facilitator and lose will and momentum. If this happens the group feels it and pulls back from the process too. This is why a strong resolve is crucial.

6.3 Facilitating to Speak Out!

Vidal (2006), drawing from Schwartz (1994) has identified different tasks that are played by the facilitator. These are grouped into three elements which are leadership, referee, and neutral.

The *leadership* role usually demands the following activities:

- *Focus*: to provide a focus for the group.
- *Stimulate*: to encourage constructive debate between the participants
- *Support*: to bring out information from introverted participants and to allow new ideas to be submitted.
- *Participate*: when the group is interacting poorly or is going in the wrong direction, the facilitator must be willing to promote new discussions.
- *Team building*: to form a cohesive, interactive, dynamic and creative group. (Vidal 2006: 3)

In line with the roles above, I provided focus to the group. As we started the devising process I was concerned that if we did not remain focused we would miss the deadlines for getting the plays ready for stage performances. I, therefore, made sure that I kept the participants aware of set performance dates. At times we would lose some time because of cancelled rehearsals and be behind schedule. To catch up, I coordinated discussions with all participants to come up with make-up slots for devising workshops. This helped in keeping us focused on our project goals. My leadership role also involved encouraging constructive dialogue between the participants. This dialogue was centred on the Gukurahundi issues. Freire (2005) argues that to facilitate intervention in a historical process, a dialogical and critical approach is necessary. Freire (2005:40) submits that “Born of a critical matrix, dialogue creates a critical attitude...When the two poles of ‘dialogue’ are thus linked by love, hope, and mutual trust, they can join in a critical search for something. Only dialogue truly communicates”. To encourage teamwork and mutual trust envisioned by Freire for a conducive environment for effective dialogue on the Gukurahundi issues, I facilitated team-building games and exercises as discussed in Chapter 5.

From the beginning of the research, I acted as the leader of the group. I directed the processes of the group. I attempted to emulate Freire’s (2005) ‘liberatory educator’, a facilitator who must be directive to lead the discussion in a way to bring about critical consciousness. According to Freire (2005: 12), “the important thing is to help men (sic) and nations help themselves, to place them in consciously critical

confrontation with their problems, to make them the agents of their own recuperation". As already stated, my role was to open up critical conversations around the Gukurahundi and to grow a resolve to speak out. This is why our play was titled *Speak Out!* The aim was to encourage the participants and audience members to speak out and share their experiences and views about the Gukurahundi. As a leader and director, I had to facilitate the creation of conditions necessary for conscientisation to take place. According to Freire (2005: 14) conscientisation "represents the development of the awakening of critical awareness". As a facilitator, I therefore aimed at creating an environment where dialogue can take place. Instead of seeking to dominate the participants and the audience members, I made efforts to encourage the participants to be actively involved in exploring the problem at hand – the Gukurahundi issue.

Though I was the leader and director of the group, I was not the only one making decisions – both operational and artistic. No, I made the decisions together with the participants. However, that decisions are being made collectively as a group does not eliminate the need for a group leader and director to offer guidance and direction. The need remains. As Felseghi argues:

The director's part in the process is determined by the group's need to have a leader to point out the key-moments of the future performance, and to consider the main ideas; this position gives him deciding power concerning the options of the whole production. No matter how democratic a group might be considered, there will always be need for someone who can assume these responsibilities. Along with the dramaturg, the director is looking to establish the "game rules" in which the performers can unleash their creativity and to propose new goals and fulfill their personal tasks. (Felseghi 2017: 67)

I was therefore responsible for leading the group. I discussed the ground rules with the group and once these were finalised I took the responsibility to remind the participants of these rules during the research process. Some of the ground rules that we had as a group are:

1. We are to show respect to others
2. Phones should be put on silent during the devising sessions
3. Participants should communicate if they are not able to come for meetings or devising sessions
4. No smoking and consumption of alcohol is allowed at the devising venue
5. Each participant should endeavour to be on time for devising sessions
6. Extension of time during devising sessions should be agreed to by all members. The Facilitator should not impose a time slot that only suits him. (Workshop 1, 2 February 2019)

The list of rules above is not exhaustive. The research showed that group rules helped in maintaining order and cultivating cordial relations among participants. I believe that if we had no ground rules to follow

there would have been chaos. It is important to have group rules and it is also important that the researcher cum facilitator ensures that the group rules are followed by the participants. It is not only about devising but also doing it within a conducive environment. Ground rules, together with other strategies like games and exercises help in creating a safer space where participants can work together and trust each other. For example, we used games like the greeting game, the name game, and the numbers game that I have described in detail in Chapter 5. This is important in devised theatre and in research that deals with sensitive issues like the Gukurahundi. As Felseghi observes:

Regarding theatrical collective work, this kind of theatre is based on a matter of trust. The feeling of trust creates a total availability in the relationship between the ones involved, by giving up the conventional barriers, and working with others in a secured space, where nobody is being judged, but on the contrary, encouraged to propose new elements and situations. (Felseghi 2017: 67)

The group rules were made collectively with everyone participating. This led to the participants taking responsibility for the rules and endeavouring to observe them.

Other elements of facilitation are grouped under the referee role. The referee role usually demands the following activities:

- *Regulation*: to maintain order of the group discussion, discouraging participants from talking at the same time, or dominating the floor.
- *Protect participants*: to ensure that all contributions to the discussion are treated equally and that no-one is rebuffed for their input.
- *Deal with problems*: to control problem participants allowing everyone to participate freely.
- *Deal with conflicts*: to identify conflicts and to create space for a fruitful discussion.
- *Timekeeper*: to adhere to workshop timetable thus ensuring completion of the agenda. (Vidal 2006: 3)

Without regulation, the group's activities can easily degenerate into confusion. As a facilitator, I had the difficult task of protecting participants so that no one was dominated. Because of the different personalities in the group, here and there disagreements would arise and threaten to explode. In calming down the situation, I thrived to avoid bias as much as I could, something that is easier said than done.

The third category is that of the neutral role. The neutral role involves the following:

- *Pragmatic*: to take a detached look at the discussion viewing each issue on its merits.
- *Encourage feedback*: to promote discussion of each selected issue, by all members of the group.

- *Impartial*: to be neutral to the discussions, this frees the facilitator to focus on the process rather than the content of the discussion and hence asking pertinent and stimulating questions. (Vidal 2006: 3)

The neutral role was the most difficult to discharge because as a member of the community that was affected by the Gukurahundi, I could not be totally detached from the content of the discussions. I have discussed this in chapter 2. However, I still had to try as much as possible to be impartial. At times, I would let the discussion go on among the group members without letting my view on the particular issue known so that the group members would state their views freely without feeling pressure to align their views to mine. Because of the privilege that comes with being the researcher, participants can consciously or unconsciously feel the urge to align their views with those of the researcher. To avoid this scenario, I would tell participants that each one's view is important and that they are welcome to differ or disagree with anyone including me.

As a facilitator, I played the above roles at different times, at times playing them at the same time. The facilitator plays an important role in moving the research process forward. His/her role is not only challenging but is also very delicate. The facilitator needs to be sensitive to both the needs of the research and those of the participants. The objectives of the research have to be kept in view and at the same time, there is a need to work ethically and professionally with the participants. Because of this, the facilitator should be there during all the sessions of the group. He/she cannot be a part-timer (Vidal 2006). I, therefore, attended all the sessions of the group. In participatory works like this research, the facilitator cultivates participatory working processes. In such contexts, as Sheila Preston points out:

Facilitation is used to connote commitment to certain principles – of enablement and participant-centredness – and processes that involve equitable negotiation between those involved. These ideals of facilitation may aim to make easier what is being experienced as difficult, whether this is helping a group dynamic, the move into drama, the exploration of an issue/topic, the articulation or the expression of an idea, self-advocacy, and so on; but the objective of making things easier sits in the context of a wider commitment to social justice and genuine co-intentionality across the board. (Preston 2016: 1)

It is through this context that I facilitated the processes of this research project. Though I was the main facilitator, the participants also got opportunities to facilitate during the processes of the research. During the devising process, I would sometimes take a back seat and let the participants take the lead in facilitation. I consider this as empowering and assisting in encouraging the participants to take a centre stage in the process of addressing issues that affect them.

Concerning my facilitation, I got positive feedback from the participants that I displayed leadership qualities that made it easier to work on the project. One of the participants commented "*Kusebenzeke kuhle lawe mdala, lapho ebesilobunzima khona ubusibonisa ukuthi senze njani. Mina njengami ngifunde*

okunengi kakhulu kuwe” [We worked well with you. Where we encountered challenges you led the way and showed us how to move forward. As for me, I learned a lot from you]. This comment serves as an indication that the participants saw strong leadership qualities in me as a facilitator. These qualities were beneficial to the project, leading to a smooth working relationship within the group.

Vidal (2006) sees a facilitator as a person with the task of empowering participants to be beneficially involved in experiential ways. The empowerment aspect also comes to the fore in the comment quoted above as the participant mentioned that he learned a lot from the facilitator. Though the participant does not clarify what exactly was learned, the fact that he testifies of having learned certain things shows that he felt empowered by the process. Since the Critical/emancipatory paradigm is about lowering the hierarchies, I argue that the empowerment of the participants also came from a realisation that you can teach the teacher – participants became aware that they could also teach the researcher something. For example, there were sessions where participants taught everyone their games, including the researcher. There were also times when the participants made suggestions on how certain aspects of the research should proceed. Examples of such things include the designing of costumes for the performance. Participants took centre stage in this process.

The facilitator has the role of making sure the process proceeds in line with the set objectives and within the desired parameters. In this research, my role as the facilitator was centred on making sure the devising and staging processes, post-performance discussions, interviews, and focus group discussions were done in line with the set objectives of the research. While for Vidal (2006) the facilitator is someone who is not involved in the task or issue being examined, for this research it was not so. I am an insider to the community that was being studied and therefore, as I argued earlier in the thesis, I was not a neutral facilitator when it came to the subject matter of the research. Anyone, regardless of their persuasions, political or otherwise, can facilitate. Neutrality should therefore not be assumed in facilitation (Preston 2016).

6.4 Facilitating a *Langalezo*

As a facilitator, I endeavoured to cultivate a conducive environment for maximum participation during the devising process. One of the strategies that I employed in the creation of a conducive environment for teamwork and creativity is the use of games during devising sessions. I have mentioned the use of games previously, however, I believe that the pivotal role that (African) games play in achieving the outcomes of this research – a *langalezo* experience – demands a bit more attention.

At the beginning of sessions, I facilitated games and exercises. These games and exercises were not only limited to the beginning of sessions but were also played in the middle of sessions and at the end of sessions. I argue that games played at the beginning, middle, and end of sessions encouraged spontaneity, and creativity and helped in team building. This resonates well with Kuflinec's (2009: 157) view that "a series of introductory games demechanizes the body, opens creativity, develops a theatrical vocabulary, and initiates more trusting encounters within the group. The games also serve as metaphors for intergroup and intragroup dynamics". With spontaneity, speaking out becomes easy as self-censorship is diminished. Another important point to note is that the use of indigenous games (in countries that have been colonised) helps to foster a unified cultural identity. Patrick Mweli (2018: 104) posits that "[i]n the African context, indigenous games are symbolic representations of cultural expression". Games cultivate active participation and build trust and unity within the group. This is aligned with the idea of a *langalezo*. As already pointed out above, the games and exercises used have been explained in Chapter 5.

Barriers and taboos are released when people become spontaneous. As Jonathan Fox (1994: 86) puts it "conversely, when a group of people really do let their spontaneous responses flow, I have found they often turn quite childish, scatological and often creative. There is tremendous energy in releasing taboos". Cultivating this playful atmosphere helped in encouraging the participants to cease or reduce holding back and participate fully in the research process. I also argue that the playful atmosphere helped remove the barriers of silence that surrounded the issue of the Gukurahundi and encouraged participants to speak out on this matter. It ceased to be a taboo and became an accessible subject that can be discussed. Facilitation played an important role in cultivating such a conducive atmosphere. It was not always playful though, sometimes the atmosphere became tense.

The facilitator has a responsibility to aid the group to move forward both when the atmosphere is conducive and when it is not. The facilitator has to be skilled in helping the group negotiate turbulent times such as when there are disagreements and when the subject matter begins to emotionally weigh down on the participants. At the beginning of the research process participants looked anxious and the greeting game helped in 'breaking the ice'.

The facilitator is an agent of change. In issues to do with community development, the facilitator is a catalyst for this change process. He/she can use tools such as games and exercises but it is also what he/she embodies. He is an animator, coach, or mediator (Vidal 2006) and these different names express the different roles this actor is playing in the change process. The central issue in this research was to encourage participants to speak out on the Gukurahundi, and to share their stories of pain associated with it. As the facilitator, my main task was therefore to guide the participants during the theatre devising and staging process. The hope was that this process would trigger and encourage speaking out and

sharing of experiences. The desired change was, therefore, the breaking of the silence on the Gukurahundi issue. To a greater extent, this was made possible. The facilitator, therefore, takes on different roles to guide the group toward achieving the aims of the research project. The same also happened during post-performance discussions where audience members shared their stories and experiences of the Gukurahundi. As the facilitator, I made it clear at the beginning of the performance that audience members are welcome to share their views and comments on the play during the post-performance discussions. The audience members responded positively to this invitation and shared both their experiences and comments on the plays.

Letting participants facilitate during the devising sessions has an emancipatory effect and I, therefore, argue that it was empowering to the participants. I noticed that some participants enjoyed facilitating. Facilitation put the participants at the centre of the process of addressing the silence around the Gukurahundi. It gave participants agency as they led in making decisions relating to the stories that they wanted to be part of the plays. However, I noticed that some reserved participants became uncomfortable when given the role to facilitate. For these participants, being asked to facilitate put them in the spotlight – something that made them uncomfortable. While some enjoyed the spotlight, others shunned it. The facilitation experience is therefore not the same for all the participants. As a lead facilitator, I had to find ways of balancing these dynamics.

The necessity of facilitation in research like this cannot be overemphasised. Besides opening up spaces for discussion and healing around the Gukurahundi, facilitation also helped in creating a conducive environment for a group made up of people from different backgrounds to work together collectively in a productive manner. Namely the mounting of a production. As a facilitator, I had the role of writing down the script after scenes had been workshopped and agreed on. This in itself is a creative process that requires employing the different roles discussed above to the task at hand. As this is a collaborative effort the facilitator is essentially 'shaping' and then 'finalising' it is not an easy task. All involved must be happy with the outcome. On the challenge of this process, Felseghi argues:

First of all, we cannot overlook the fact that each of the artists involved in a production have their own personality, and their own way of approaching the proposed theme. Secondly, after the improvisation and experimental level, there comes a moment when everything has to be framed in a fixed form. Thirdly, the devised theatre process allows everybody the possibility to defend their own ideas, to create within their idea framework, which creates the need for a mediator who can reconcile the imminent conflicts, to see the potential of development in some situations or to remove the dead weight from the project. (Felseghi 2017: 61)

Facilitation made the *langalezo* experience possible. It encouraged them to work together which in turn encouraged the participants to speak out and share their experiences and stories relating to the Gukurahundi.

During a reflection session towards the end of the research process, several participants testified that they had grown more confident to speak as the process progressed. One of them said “*Mina ngesikhathi siqala iproject leyi ngangisesaba but khathesi sokungcono*” [When we started this project I was afraid of speaking out but now I am bolder]. In response to this, another participant added “*Khathesi sokukhulumeka*” [Now it is easier to speak]. They had gradually grown used to trusting other participants and subsequently felt freer to express themselves in the group. Establishing trust was not an event but it was a process. I also observed that the participants became more open towards the end of the research process. During the first days, some participants were very reserved when it came to speaking, but as the process progressed they became bolder and freer to speak on the Gukurahundi. This is a significant finding that shows that participating in the research helped the sufferers to feel differently about themselves. Indications are that participating in the research made them feel less fearful. Their participation in the research was, therefore, not just about the ritual but the emotional aspect of healing which the process (form) facilitated.

At one point, believing that some of the participants were going too far by putting their names on the back of the t-shirts they were to use on stage, I suggested that they use pseudonyms to reduce the chances of being victimised. However, they insisted on using their real names. One of the participants jokingly remarked “*Liyesaba mdala? Thina asesabi. Nxa kungesaba thina pho i audience izayenzani?*” [Are you afraid Sir? As for us, we are not afraid. If we are afraid then what will the audience members do?] I believe trust created a safer space for speaking out and encouraged participants to be bold about standing up for what they believe even in front of an audience. Facilitation was the key to making this happen.

6.5 Conclusion

As a facilitator, I followed the cyclical steps of Participatory Action Research, namely planning, action, reflection, and evaluation. I took time to plan for the facilitation of devising sessions and post-performance discussions so that the sessions would yield the best results. I would then take action that consisted of implementing the plans I had. From the devising sessions and post-performance discussions, I would reflect on my facilitation and evaluate to identify what worked well and what needed to be improved in the upcoming sessions. This enabled me to grow as a facilitator and improve as the project progressed.

CHAPTER 7: FINDINGS AROUND THE *LANGALEZO*– DATA PRESENTATION AND ANALYSIS

7.1 Introduction

This research seeks to examine how devised theatre encourages the second-generation sufferers, and by extension, the first-generation sufferers, of the Gukurahundi to speak out and share their experiences and stories relating to this painful period and its aftermath. This chapter presents and analyses data from the post-performance discussions in the form of interviews and focus group discussions held toward the end of the research project. The first performance (*Speak Out!* Phase one) was held at Nkulumane community hall in the high-density suburbs of Bulawayo in March 2019 while the second performance (*Speak Out!* Phase two) was held at Hope Centre within the Bulawayo Central Business District (CBD) in September 2019. The phase one play was 20 minutes long and the second play was 31 minutes long, excluding the time for post-performance discussions. Our first performance was presented during an arts event that had been arranged by a local arts group while the second performance was presented as a sole event.

The two venues presented different contexts and audience compositions. During the first performance, the audience members were mostly young (18 – 30 years) while the second performance had more adults (25 years and above) in the audience. The first performance was performed to a full house of around 50 people while the second performance was presented to a small focussed audience of about a dozen people. During the first performance, our play was presented within a mini-festival context while during the second performance, our play was the sole event. The different contexts and audience compositions worked well in teasing out different audience reactions and discussions. These responses by the audience members to the performance and during post-performance discussions form the backbone of this chapter.

While Chapter 5 focused mostly on the devising and staging processes and Chapter 6 focused on facilitation, this chapter focuses on the post-performance discussions, interviews, and discussions done towards the end of the research project. Among other things, this chapter looks at the interactions between the production team and the audience. In the two previous chapters what emerged was that the participants collectively authored the play(s). In this chapter, the audience members come into the picture. This has the effect of making the theatre experience complete. As Felseghi (2017: 66) points out “the performance will not be complete until it is presented in front of an audience, which will contribute their own perception to the representation. In this case, even the audience might become a co-author of the performance”.

Since the audience feedback was going to be solicited after the performances, the plays were therefore created not only for the sake of the creative process but also with the audience in mind – to be staged for an audience. For example, the phase one play had an open ending (inconclusive or incomplete) to allow for the audience to add their views during the post-performance discussions. This is in line with the nature of popular participatory theatre (Young-Jahangeer 2003:102), a theatre form that draws from Paulo Freire's (1971) problem-posing pedagogy and African popular cultural forms (Barber 1997). The phase two play was also staged with an inconclusive ending. In this sense, we used the plays as ways of presenting a dramatised problem to catalyse a discussion around it. The aspect of the audience becoming co-authors of the performance that Felseghi (2017) is raising is very important for this research. The aim was not to present the performance to a detached audience. Rather, it was to use the performance as a way of encouraging the audience to speak out and also to comment on the play, and join as co-authors. The feedback that was given by the audience members during the post-performance discussions was incorporated into the play in preparation for the phase two performance.

The interviews and focus group discussions with the participants, which were held towards the end of the research project, served as reflections on the process of devising and staging theatre on the Gukurahundi. The participants shared experiences from the journey. They also provided an opportunity to look into the future to find a way forward. Therefore, the data from these processes and that from the post-performance discussions is presented and analysed. The coming together of the performers and the audience also carries a symbolic equivalence of a *langalezo* experience which brings people together to show solidarity with each other, to comfort each other, to share experiences (particularly though narrating stories of what transpired), and seek ways of navigating beyond the present pain. As people gather together, the common phrase becomes "*langalezo bakithi*", meaning "you have seen it" (meaning, we/I have heard about your bereavement or the painful event that has befallen you). The one responding says "*zibonakele*" meaning "Well, it has happened". The interaction shows that for a *langalezo* experience to take place, one needs another or others. For a performance the audience, therefore, plays an important role. While during the post-performance discussions, the audience members and the production team did not use the exact terminology of the *langalezo*, I argue that the experience that was created was that of a *langalezo*.

7.2 Audience Size - Less is good

On the day of our first performance, we arrived at the venue very early. As we waited for the start of the event we were relaxing under a tree outside Nkulumane hall. We were thrilled as we saw people coming in droves. There was going to be a large audience – we concluded. The event was a mini-festival and so

different groups had been invited by the organisers of the event. These different groups were going to watch each other perform and then give feedback to assist each other in growing in performance. That was the aim of the festival. We kept checking with the event organiser whether it was time to go in and we were told to wait a bit as other groups were yet to arrive. As the other groups arrived the number of people in the hall swelled. We had also joined them inside. It was a full house. All the audience members participated in the post-performance discussions. The actors of *Speak Out!* and I were excited to have a full house. We spoke about it for days after that. As we prepared for the second performance we had similar expectations.

For the second performance, we genuinely expected a full house in terms of attendance. However, today was a different day. People trickled in slowly. We only had ten audience members, filling only a quarter of the available seats. Out of these, 6 stayed behind for the post-performance discussions while 4 left. Towards the start of the performance, I noticed that the participants were getting discouraged by the low turnout of the audience. They kept asking me what was happening. I had to assure them that we were going to proceed as planned despite the low turnout. When we got to the post-performance discussions, one member of the audience lamented the low turnout and attributed it to the fear that people still have when it comes to discussing issues to do with the Gukurahundi. He opined:

Yes, I was saying this is very sad. 39 years or so – we are close to 40 years into independence so ... freedom of assembly (*respondent shakes his head in disapproval*)... (*Facilitator interjects asking for clarification*). Freedom of assembly is so bad. People are scared. Why do we have so many empty chairs here (*respondent points to empty chairs in the room*) for a theatre performance that is free to watch? It's so sad that a section of the society, a section of the people who are supposed to be a people of this country – they are still closed in a jar (*respondent emphasises this with his hands*). They don't have even the freedom of expressing themselves. You know, I don't know how to put it – it's really so sad. Even these young people who were performing here – you can tell that they are not as free as possible to showcase their talents of theatre performance. (Audience member A³⁶2019)

I concur with the audience member's observation that people are still afraid to talk about the Gukurahundi or to attend events organised for that. This shows that interventions like this research are very important. The first performance was well attended because we 'ambushed' the audience which had come for the theatre festival while the second performance was poorly attended because of fear. The fear, induced by the 1980s violence and the government's stance of repression that followed thereafter, is still alive.

However, comparing the full house and the small audience one realises that, from the perspective of post-performance discussions and their facilitation, some advantages come with having a smaller number of

³⁶The alphabetical coding in this chapter is meant for the purposes of making distinctions between different audience members. The same was applied to research participants.

audience members. Participants and I had assumed that the larger the audience the better. We were wrong. Experience revealed otherwise. Contrary to our assumptions that the second show's post-performance discussions were going to suffer because of low numbers, it turned out to be far better than the full house audience in terms of both quality and quantity of audience engagement. With the full house audience, points were raised randomly with limited follow-up and because many people wanted to say something, it was difficult to give two or more chances of speaking to one individual. However, these challenges did not arise with the low numbers of the second performance. With the low numbers, post-performance discussions of the second performance allowed for one person to have several chances to speak. This created a conversation and allowed the members of the audience to respond to each other's points, explain their earlier points, and expand on what others had said. Thus, the discussions for the second performance were much richer than those of the first performance which had a full house audience. In hindsight, I have come to the realisation that a small audience size works better for the kind of theatre work we were doing and for generating more quality research. For post-performance discussions to be thorough, a smaller audience size is better than a large audience.

7.3 Issues Emerging from the Post-Performance Discussions

In this section, I discuss findings of the research that emerged during the post-performance discussions that followed both the first performance and the second performance of *Speak Out!* In their remarks, audience members used both English and Ndebele, with more leaning on the former, probably because they had been informed that this was a research project and so they wanted to speak to a wider audience and not only those who were in the shows. Comments made in Ndebele were translated into English.

The way the audience members responded to the presented play differed for the two occasions. During the first phase where the play was presented in a context aimed at sharpening talent, I noticed that feedback tended to focus on the quality of acting rather than the content of the play. Many audience members gave comments on what worked and what could be improved from an acting point of view. This, I observe, was highly influenced by the fact that the play was presented within a context that was focused on presenting artistic works and being given comments meant to improve the performance skills of the performers and the presentation as well. The context within which a performance is presented may shape the nature of the post-performance discussions. However, that the post-performance discussions were to a certain extent coloured by the context is not in itself a problem. In fact, in this context, it was not a problem. On the contrary, it helped in giving the audience members an opportunity, and also encouraging them, to not only speak to the content of the performance but to also contribute to how the Gukurahundi issues should be presented. This way the audience members not only contributed as co-

authors of the play but also became co-directors. The following are some of the responses that the audience members gave during the phase one post-performance discussions:

I want to recommend my sister there (The one who acted as Young Person 1). She was in character. I was really impressed. Thanks for that! (Audience member D 2019)

I can say first and foremost the play was good but I believe there was a lack of emotion. Some of the actors were emotionally dry. We couldn't feel the message that they were trying to put across. (Audience member E 2019)

There is the girl who gave the first speech. The message that she gave was actually a good message but the emotion there could not show that. Is she angry or she is happy? The emotion there...you could not detect. I believe she was supposed to show out her emotions so that we could view them through her voice and the way she stands and acts (Audience member F 2019)

The above responses show that the audience members were concerned with the proper theatrical representation of the Gukurahundi experiences. I believe the reason the audience members emphasised emotions having to be accurately captured is because of the concern that if the pain and suffering of those affected are not accompanied by the appropriate emotions in the dramatised representations then there is a danger of these experiences being trivialised or cheapened. As pointed out in Chapter 4, theatre that deals with traumatic experiences will have to navigate such a terrain – concerns like these are real and therefore artists and researchers have to be sensitive in their representations of people's pain and suffering.

Disturbing Effects of the Gukurahundi are Still Being Experienced Today

During the post-performance discussions of both phase one and phase two, the audience members pointed out that what had been presented on stage had been a truthful representation of what had happened – that they had had similar experiences of the Gukurahundi. It also emerged that the plays depicted what is currently occurring. During the phase one discussion, the first audience member to speak confirmed that he identified with what had been presented on stage, saying “The things that you raised are really true” (Audience member G 2019). A similar response came up during phase two with different audience members giving responses that confirm that the issues presented in the drama are still alive in the affected communities. One respondent commented “Concerning what you were showcasing here (*gestures to the stage with a hand*), there are many things that are very important because so many lives were disturbed and so many lives are still disturbed up to now as shown in the drama” (Audience member A 2019). His comments show that the disturbing effects of the Gukurahundi are still experienced today. This proves a case for the second-generation sufferers of the Gukurahundi. The affected

communities need healing and closure. If this issue is not addressed then the possibility of the trauma associated with the atrocities being further transmitted to the next generation remains high.

Sentiments similar to those expressed above were aired by other audience members during the post-performance discussions of phase two. Audience member B said, “The way I see it, I realise that these things [portrayed in the drama] are things that are there in life, things that are happening” (Audience member B 2019). This audience member went on to acknowledge drama as a good way of portraying people’s experiences of the Gukurahundi by saying “When they were acting out the drama I realised that what they were doing [dramatising] is a good way of showing experiences that people encounter – because we cannot run away from or ignore such experiences”. This indicates that people from the affected communities have a desire to see the Gukurahundi issue addressed to finality. Realising that the government has been avoiding the issue, the affected communities are now pushing for its address. Another audience member concurred saying:

I would [like to say]...the issues raised are real. I have been to a number of seminars and I have also read a lot about these things that the young people are expressing. So I think it’s a good way to get people talking – the acting is good – you look at it [the Gukurahundi] from different perspectives and you sort of humanise it than just reading about it or having someone just telling you about it. So, yeah, congrats [congratulations] my brother. (Audience member C 2019)

One notices that the drama experience brought a refreshing way of looking at the Gukurahundi issue. It created an environment where audience members shared their experiences.

Sexual Violence Was Used as a Weapon

Rape is a weapon of war (Brown 2012). Rape during war, as in other settings, has devastating impacts on the victims. Survivors of rape during war suffer post-traumatic stress disorders (Card 1996). Maria Eriksson Baaz and Maria Stern (2013: 1) observe that while rape in war situations faced neglect for some time, things have now changed, pointing out “After years of silence and neglect, the ills of rape in war are finally being named”. This change can be observed in that rape as a strategy of war is now considered as a war crime. Elisabeth Jean Wood (2018: 2) says “Rape by combatants during armed conflict is now explicitly recognized as an international war crime and, in some settings, as genocide or a crime against humanity”. Therefore rape is both violence against women and a war crime (Korac 2018). Korac further points out that the recognition of rape as a war crime is quite an achievement by feminist activism in the last decade of the 20th century.

Findings from the research indicate that sexual violence was used as a weapon during the violence of the 1980s. Therefore, violence and trauma were gendered (Brown 2012). Women were raped during this period and as a consequence of it. In some instances, as I have argued in Chapter 4, this rape resulted in women getting impregnated by the 5 Brigade soldiers. This not only brought trauma to the women but also the burden of raising a child 'without a father' and having to answer the identity questions he/she has. Women have also faced the struggle of getting birth certificates for these children born out of rape. Commenting on the issue of identity and that of rape, an audience member said:

There are still many people whose identity is mixed up. There are many children who were born after their mothers were raped by the soldiers themselves. Personally, I saw a breakage in a family – my family. My uncle, my father's brother had a polygamous marriage. During the Gukurahundi one day my uncle came home to find out that a Gukurahundi soldier had taken his younger wife and sexually abused her. That was the end of her marriage to my uncle. That marriage collapsed because of that. So her children grew up without their mother. (Audience member A 2019)

What is also emerging from the quotation above is that the deployment of rape as a weapon of war had the effect of breaking down families in the affected communities. It drove a wedge between couples, hurting them emotionally as a couple and as individuals. These scars linger for a long time affecting even the second generation. It can therefore be argued that the effects of the Gukurahundi are still alive as argued in the section above.

Destruction of Family Structures Leading to Breakdown in Ndebele Society

The Gukurahundi destroyed family and societal structures in the Ndebele society. This led to a breakdown in the society. Audience member A. narrated saying:

I meant there was a disruption of the social life, the economic life, and the political life of the people of Matabeleland as depicted by the drama which I was also attesting to – to say yes the things that are coming out in the drama are real, they are there. Even these young people who are acting in the drama were not there when that happened but as for me I was there and I can witness the effects of Gukurahundi – there were family destabilisations, displacements, raping... I remember in our area schools were totally shut down – we ended up teaching each other as children. (Audience member A 2019)

The destruction of social life mentioned by the audience member has arguably affected the people of Matabeleland and Midlands up to this day. Families that lost members and relatives are still experiencing the aftereffects of the Gukurahundi. Some families lost breadwinners and were plunged into poverty. Without the breadwinner, some children were no longer sent to school leading to reduced employment

opportunities and leading the community as a whole into spiralling economic hardship. According to USAID (2022: no page) “Matabeleland North is one of the poorest provinces in Zimbabwe”. Although there have been other factors, the Gukurahundi did contribute undeniably to the economic depression of the Matabeleland provinces and by extension the Ndebele people who are the most populous in this region. I believe some belong to the second-generation sufferers who were born into poverty induced by the Gukurahundi through the deaths of their grandparents and some (who were born just before the atrocities started or during their period) who also lost their parents and have not yet recovered from the setbacks brought by this loss.

The shutting down of schools during the Gukurahundi meant that many people from the Ndebele-speaking communities, even those with breadwinners, failed to attend school. Many formal jobs in Zimbabwe, especially government jobs require that one should have passed 5 O’ Level subjects. Without the required 5 O’ Level subjects, many Ndebele people were (and some are still) excluded from government jobs in their country. The Gukurahundi effects are, therefore, marginalising. An audience member lamented this situation:

We are deprived of employment as we speak right now – and who are the employers? It’s them!
So in a way, we cannot talk about development and improvement going forward here. They accept that Matabeleland is marginalised – then if it is marginalised what are they doing, what has happened? Nothing! They are just keeping quiet. So we still have a stalemate. Something has to be done. (Audience member B 2019)

What is also clear from the above quotation is that there is a desire by the Ndebele people to see the government taking positive steps in addressing the social and economic imbalances that were created by the Gukurahundi. To continue to ignore them is considered by the affected communities as a disregard for their suffering. For the government to demonstrate sincerity in addressing the Gukurahundi issue, such issues need to be addressed.

Politically, the Gukurahundi atrocities instilled fear in the members of the affected communities resulting in some shying away from political activities and as a result, hindering them from contributing to the political issues of their country. For a country to achieve optimum development and progress, the participation of its members is important. Through post-performance discussions, the audience members raised their voices to point out the aftermaths of the Gukurahundi.

Identity Issues

One of the findings of this research is that the violence of the 1980s in Zimbabwe resulted in identity issues that have affected second-generation sufferers up to the present. What emerged from the post-

performance discussions is that the aftermaths of the Gukurahundi are ongoing and are a huge threat to future generations. The two plays present issues that overlap between different generations. In the phase two play that was presented, the young man and young woman who are preparing to marry are worried about their own identity and that of their children.

The issue of identity affects the victims in many ways. There is the issue of children who struggle with questions relating to their identity because they were born after their mothers were raped during the Gukurahundi. As one respondent observed, “There are still many people whose identity is mixed up. There are many children who were born after their mothers were raped by the soldiers themselves” (Audience member A 2019). This issue is also evident in the play *1983: Years Before and After* discussed in Chapter 4 where it was observed that Girl was conceived this way. The children of such people are also affected because their lineage is unclear and sometimes shrouded in secrecy.

It, therefore, emerged from the research that many second-generation sufferers and their children are experiencing problems of a genealogical nature, either through being the child of rape or not knowing their parents’ lineage. Genealogy refers to the study of family trees, to understand a person’s descent (Rose and Ingalls 1997). In the communities that were affected by the 1980s massacres, many are in search of their true genealogy. This research shows that the Gukurahundi ruptures/disrupts and curtails these genealogical identities, which are pivotal in both cultural and present-day state/government identity creation and assignment (Moyo and Young-Jahangeer 2022).

From a cultural and social viewpoint, not knowing one’s genealogy may lead to one having feelings of being fragmented. As Rose and Ingalls (1997: 8) put it, knowing one’s genealogy gives “a sense of completeness”. In African culture in general, and the Ndebele culture in particular, one needs to know his or her lineage. In the Ndebele culture, one’s lineage forms the core of one’s introduction to others. It locates you³⁷. For example, Mzilikazi, the late king of the Ndebele nation, was known as ‘UMzilikazi kaMatshobana kaMangethe’, which translates to ‘Mzilikazi son of Matshobana son of Mangethe’. In the Ndebele culture, one’s lineage is also useful in identifying one’s relatives. In the Ndebele culture marrying someone who is a relative is considered taboo. A person who does not know his father is, therefore, in danger of marrying his or her relative. Not knowing one’s biological father is, therefore, a tragic situation that can result in genealogical bewilderment and great mental torment (Moyo and Young-Jahangeer 2022). One respondent summed it up: “So basically ...there is the issue of loss of identity” (Audience member C 2019).

The other identity problem as a result of the Gukurahundi is a more bureaucratic one – although equally tragic. It was not uncommon for both parents of a young child to be killed or ‘disappeared’ during the

³⁷ For more on the complexity of Ndebele identity and naming see Ndlovu-Gatsheni (2008)

Gukurahundi. In such cases, the surviving child, now an adult, would remain undocumented. One respondent summed it up by saying:

You find that this Gukurahundi thing affects such young people and also affects the next generation in terms of civil documentation – access to civil documentation. So this is another issue that I noticed from the drama. So as it affects access to his or her identity it will also affect access to civil documentation to his or her children and their children meaning that we still have decades to come when we still have such challenges if this problem is not solved. (Audience member B)

The failure to get identity documents, particularly the birth certificate that is articulated in the above quotation, has far-reaching impacts. The birth certificate is the primary document needed to obtain an identity card. As Cletus Moyo and Miranda Young-Jahangeer (2022: 7) point out “Without a birth certificate and a national identity document or card, one is rendered stateless and cannot fully enjoy his or her citizen rights”. Registration is foundational to the recognition of citizenship and also to entitlement (Szreter and Breckenridge 2012). In the play *Speak Out!*, which was based on true events, Gukurahundi prevents the characters from obtaining birth certificates or birth certificates with correct information. This begins a chain of correlated problems. Audience members testified to such challenges being alive in the communities that were affected by the violence of the 1980s.

The birth certificate is the most fundamental principal marker of identity. It should be obtained at birth. Failure by the survivors of the Gukurahundi and their children to obtain this essential document means that they cannot obtain other identity documents and may be hindered from enjoying their citizenship rights fully. They cannot open a bank account, access education, or sit for public national examinations. They cannot get loans and mortgages from banks or financial institutions and, thus, are denied shelter and livelihoods. Without birth certificates, the victims of the Gukurahundi cannot legitimately even own mobile phones, as sim cards need to be registered. They are also denied access to employment and they may be hindered from accessing healthcare and taking out health insurance, as identification may be required for these. It may even be difficult for them to register marriages, and to own property and businesses. Not to have identity documents is to be disempowered, disenfranchised, and dehumanised. It is to deny one’s existence (Moyo and Young-Jahangeer 2022). Such experiences are part of the problems that the victims of the Gukurahundi still grapple with.

Presence of Fear

While the Gukurahundi happened more than 30 years ago, the fear it induced in both first-generation and second-generation sufferers still exists. The Unity Accord of 1987 ended the period of massacres but did

not completely wipe away the fear created by the brutalities of this period. The research findings show that the Ndebele people who were affected by the atrocities still feel afraid to express themselves on the issue and share their experiences. As a result, freedom of expression is limited. During the post-performance discussions, an audience member summarised this situation in the following words:

There are so many social ills that happened during the Gukurahundi – almost every story that you depicted in your drama. Everyone, even those who were not victims, the generations that came twenty years, thirty years after they have got a story to tell from that period, from oral whatever or documented, or however it comes down. Eeeh, it's so sad that a section of the society, a section of the people who are supposed to be a people of this country – they are still closed in a jar (*respondent emphasises this with his hands*). They don't have even the freedom of expressing themselves. You know, I don't know how to put it – it's really so sad. (Audience member A 2019)

What emerges from the above quotation is that the second-generation sufferers of the atrocities have found themselves having to confront the fear that emanates from the violence that preceded their birth or that happened when they were very young. The symbolic description of being closed in a jar made by the audience member in the above quotation shows that first-generation and second-generation sufferers do not feel safe discussing the Gukurahundi. Many have been left terrified having witnessed heavy-handed repression by the government of those who have raised their voices on the Gukurahundi. The same audience member pointed out that people are not free to assemble and talk about the Gukurahundi issues. Again, using symbolic language, he said, “You know, it's like those little chicks that are always afraid of the hawk and thus continuously hiding and ducking. That is not good for our nation. It is not good that after assembling you are asking yourself the question “Am I free in this country?”” (Audience member A 2019). As I have mentioned in Chapter 1, the government has recently taken a position that people can freely share their experiences on the Gukurahundi. However, many are still afraid to do so and, therefore, the need for this research that seeks to encourage people to share their stories so as to experience a *langalezo*.

The 5 Brigade soldiers, during the Gukurahundi, deliberately instilled fear in the Ndebele people. This was calculated to destabilise the ZAPU base. As already argued in Chapter 1 and further engaged in Chapter 4, there was a tribal colour to this violence which targeted the Ndebele speakers. What the second-generation sufferers witnessed as children has continued to affect them into adulthood because this fear has not been addressed. An audience member narrated:

I remember vividly that a cloud of darkness enveloped our area/village. During those times people would be gathered together. Some would be shot in the presence of the crowds and those in the crowds were forced to clap their hands when the shooting happened. Our neighbours – we lost our neighbour. Myself I met the soldiers one day at our homestead. I

remember we were gathering our cattle to get them into the cattle pen and the soldiers suddenly appeared. They made funny things – intimidatory things – I was still young by then. They started asking about dissidents and so we started mumbling and said the dissidents are in the bush that is where we last saw them because we had been tipped that if you say you did not see the dissidents then it will be something else. I remember that day that after that they went away and then they started shooting *pha! pha! pha! pha!* in the village. We were asked to go into one of the old huts – there are those black ants [*in swintila*] that bite, do you know it? (*The facilitator responds in the affirmative*) – Oh my my! those things feasted on us that day as we were sleeping on the floor (*The respondent laughs dryly*). Those are the experiences that we went through as young people but which this younger generation is also picking up to tell the story – and the story they are telling is exactly as I witnessed it even if they were not there. (Audience member A 2019)

As reflected in the quotation above, the 5 Brigade soldiers would make villagers witness the shooting of their family members or neighbours. This has the effect of instilling paralysing fear in those who witness such brutality. The message seems to have been clear – we can do the same to you! Children were also intimidated. The fear of such things happening again is still alive in some of those who witnessed the massacres and in those who have received such accounts from family members, friends, relatives, and community members. I would argue here that the account above by the audience member constitutes a *langalezo* ritual. The performance inspired him to open up to the listening group who were in solidarity and narrate this brutal and disturbing account of his experiences of the Gukurahundi. The play, therefore, can be said to have triggered a *langalezo* experience – a theatre of grieving - through telling the stories of what transpired during the Gukurahundi and through post-performance discussions that encouraged the audience members to also share their experiences. As aptly captured by another audience member, “So generally people will not open up to talk about these things even when you give them a platform to speak. So this [dramatising] is one of the things that we can do to encourage people to speak up” (Audience member B 2019). I will engage further with the concept of a *langalezo* later in this chapter.

Trauma is still affecting the Second-generation Sufferers

That the atrocities of the 1980s were traumatic to first-generation sufferers is something that cannot be denied. The second-generation sufferers who experienced or witnessed the violence of this period were also left traumatised. However, there is also another layer to this trauma. The second-generation sufferers who were not yet born during that time have, arguably, inherited the trauma through the transgenerational and intergenerational transference of trauma (Connolly 2011), as argued in Chapter 1 and Chapter 4. Such trauma can also materialise in those who identify with the victims (Rothberg 2019).

It has been observed that successive generations can inherit painful memories of things they did not directly experience (Di Castro 2008; Neri 1982).

While the government authorities, and some people, have sought to build a narrative that the Gukurahundi is a closed chapter, and people should not open old wounds, some people from the affected communities have raised their voices, pointing out that these wounds have not healed and, therefore, need to be addressed. Such sentiments were raised by an audience member who said “So what we are saying is, I am wounded. I, therefore, need healing...I am still wounded” (Audience member C 2019). The second-generation sufferers have been wounded emotionally by the traumatic accounts of the Gukurahundi that they have heard. Another audience member concurred with these sentiments, pointing out that he is still bitter because of the things that were done by the 5 Brigade to his relatives. He said:

Imagine my grandfather [who was coming from South Africa going to his home] was happy that he was going home to see his children and then he met the 5 Brigade soldiers who shot him. I think they told him to drive off and then opened fire on him leading to him speeding trying to escape leading to the car overturning. So we are still very bitter as a people. (Audience member A 2019)

The above quotation shows that the Gukurahundi-induced trauma could be compounding. As Hirsch (2008:107) explains, about the Holocaust, “These events happened in the past, but their effects continue into the present”. Hirsch, in her theorisation of postmemory (2008), argues that a traumatic event that takes place in a certain generation can result in its trauma being transferred to the following generation. Postmemory, therefore, “describes the relationship of the second generation to the powerful, often traumatic experiences that preceded their births but that were nevertheless transmitted to them so deeply so as to seem to constitute memories in their own right” (Hirsch 2008: 103).

The denialism by the government has, for many years, shrouded the Gukurahundi issues in silence. As a result, many second-generation sufferers, in similar ways to the character Youngman in *Speak Out!* Phase two, find themselves wandering in search of themselves. Such experiences are traumatic. Testifying about the presence of trauma in communities that were affected by the Gukurahundi, one audience member said “Concerning what you were showcasing here (*gestures to the stage with a hand*), there are many things that are very important because so many lives were disturbed and so many lives are still disturbed up to now as shown in the drama” (Audience member A 2019). The need to deal with this trauma makes this research relevant and necessary.

The denialism by the government has also meant that first-generation sufferers and second-generation sufferers have been left to manage their trauma or pain alone. Moyo and Young-Jahangeer (2022: 8) argue that those grappling with the Gukurahundi trauma “have been abandoned by the state, and fear of recrimination and personal pain has silenced the remaining family around them”. The pain associated with

this period could still be alive. This is evident in the lives of characters in *Speak Out!* and was also validated by the audience members. An audience member raised this issue while at the same time suggesting that the government should change its attitude so that the traumatised can be assisted in the healing process. He submitted that:

Whereas people that are in the government at the moment should actually accept and come forward and then we sit down and talk and map a way forward. But then where there is no compromise it becomes very challenging because where do you take it from? You sort of lose the base of exactly where to start from. Because we are the wounded – a wounded person cannot actually, I mean, it's like I am being expected to heal myself on my own. Do you see what I mean? (Audience member C 2019)

To expect the traumatised to manage their pain alone is not culturally sensitive nor feasible, mainly for three reasons. First, the *langalezo* experience, embedded in the Ndebele culture, that this research advocates for, favours communal healing. The traumatised need the solidarity of others from the community as the individual identity cannot be separated from the group identity in this context. As Frank Ndubisi (2013: 222) writes “African identity is ‘being-with’ as opposed to the Western individualism, communalism as opposed to collectivism. African ‘self’ is rooted in the family-hood”. The expectation to heal from trauma on your own, therefore seems an impossible – almost absurd task as is evidenced by Audience member C’s last comment. Further, in their article on the social psychology of responses to trauma, Orla T. Muldoon et al. (2020) argue that people prove more resilient in the face of trauma when valued social identities can be maintained or new social identities developed (2020: 311). Second, since the Gukurahundi affected the Ndebele people as a collective, there is a need to seek collective or communal healing. The events experienced during this period happened to many in this region either directly or indirectly. The issue, therefore, becomes a social one with compounding challenges arising out of this violence affecting a far broader section of the population. Third, the government of Zimbabwe has a role to play in the healing processes because some of the issues that trouble the Gukurahundi victims are bureaucratic. The failure of the state to assist surviving relatives and children with official paperwork, for example, death certificates, birth certificates, and identity documents locks those individuals into an ongoing bureaucratic nightmare as well as the practical implications of not having these documents which have been discussed. Such issues require the government to participate in the resolution of the bureaucratic issues emanating from the Gukurahundi issue and in addressing the trauma associated with it.

7.4 Participants Feedback

Towards the end of the research project, there was another Focus Group Discussion and interviews with group members. The main purpose for these was to reflect on the devising and staging processes that had been done. There was a necessity to hear from the participants themselves in terms of what they felt and thought about the processes they had engaged in. Reflecting is very important as it provides a platform to know what worked well, what did not work well, and what could be done differently should another opportunity to do a similar project arise in the future.

The other aim for these discussions and interviews was to use them as a de-roling exercise meant to get the participants out of the characters or roles they had played during the processes of the research. According to Kansas State University (2014: no page) “De-roling is described as taking roles off after rehearsals so that actors and actresses can come back to themselves when their performance is finished”. This is very necessary, particularly considering that the research was dealing with traumatic issues. Victor Osaehidero (2020: 89) points out that, in the absence of de-roling, “stage actors carry the residuals of diverse intense character roles to real-life situations and [...] this poses threats both to the actors and the society”. Such threats include depression emanating from playing intense roles. De-roling in such instances aids in reducing the chance of participants being traumatised by the issues they had embodied during the research.

To begin with, sitting down together to discuss was on its own a remarkable setting for a *langalezo* experience as the Ndebele society encourages the coming together to show solidarity, to comfort each other during times of distress, to discuss sensitive issues, and to map a way forward that can assist in moving out of traumatic circumstances. Again, this opportunity created a platform to evaluate the process of the research. On the downside, it was sad that some of the participants who were there in some stages of the research were no longer part of the team when we reached this stage. In Chapter 2, I explained the challenges that came with the dropping out of other group members from the team. Nevertheless, the research continued. Other members joined the group midway. These settled well in the group and the hiccups of the change of members did not adversely affect the research process.

At this stage, all the participants were happy to have participated in the play. What excited them was that they had come to a place of speaking out on the Gukurahundi issues in a public forum with members of the community, a thing they had not done before. Some also pointed out that participating in the research process made them more aware of what happened during the Gukurahundi as they learned a lot from fellow participants and the project motivated them to research more on the issue. One participant pointed out saying:

Mina iproject yanginika i-opportunity ukuthi ngikhulume, sikhulume okuphakathi kwethu ngesakuzwayo ngeGukurahundi. Mina to be honest ngangingakwazi ukuthi vele ngesikhathi seGukurahundi kwenzakalani. Ngangihlala nje ngisizwa ukuthi kuleGukurahundi but ngingazwisisi ukuthi kwenzakalani. So ngangihlala ngizibuza ukuthi kanti vele kwenzakalani. [As for me, the project gave me an opportunity to express myself...to express ourselves on the Gukurahundi stories we have heard. As for me, to be honest, I was not clear as to what transpired during the Gukurahundi period. I used to hear that there was something called the Gukurahundi that took place but I did not understand what happened during that period. So I always had this question of, what really transpired during the Gukurahundi? This project has therefore helped me in learning about the things that happened during the Gukurahundi. I learned about this from my fellow participants]. (Participant C 2019)

This response is important because it emphasises the importance of the communal process of healing and also of learning. The silence around the issue affected some people in the community by denying them the right to know about their history and also the right to participate in the healing of members of their community. The desire to learn more about the fated period to be able to find a way forward was also iterated by Participants D and A:

Such projects are good because we get to understand better the issue of the Gukurahundi. This will help us in finding a solution to this issue. (Participant D 2019)

Through the project *sathola i-opportunity* [we got an opportunity] to express ourselves on the issues of the Gukurahundi. What makes me happy is that the audience was appreciative of what we presented to them. *Sithemba ukuthi labo bazakhuthazeka ukuthi bakhulume ngento yeGukurahundi leyo ukwenzela ukuthi ilungiswe iphele* [We hope that they [audience members] will also speak out on the Gukurahundi issue so that a lasting solution is found and closure happens]. (Participant A 2019)

Participants expressed satisfaction for having participated in speaking out about the Gukurahundi. One participant saw this act as not only done for himself but for the whole community that was affected by the massacres. The participant said "We worked very well throughout the process. As an artist, I am happy that I stood up to speak on the Gukurahundi issue representing other young people (Participant B 2019). Making reference to other young people by the participant quoted above cements the idea of solidarity – because the violence of the 1980s affected whole communities, dealing with its consequences is being articulated in terms that include others as opposed to focusing on self only.

The identity issues came up again during the discussions with participants. This shows that this is a serious concern for those who were, and still are, affected by the Gukurahundi and its aftermath. It is an issue that should be addressed. One participant said:

The issue of identity that we talked about in our play touched me a lot. I wish the responsible Commissions address this issue with urgency. Another thing is this – as young people we need answers as to what happened during the Gukurahundi. We need the truth so that it will assist us in processing the pain and to forgive and forget so that we can move ahead as Zimbabwe. (Participant E 2019)

As part of addressing the Gukurahundi issue, the second generation needs to know what happened during this period. The silence around the issue has meant that little is known in terms of what transpired.

Through the focus group discussions and the interviews, participants reflected on their experiences. The sharing of experiences and stories that had begun during the devising process was further extended and concretised during the focus group discussions. The reflections acted as a way of consolidating the gains of the research. The reflections also provided an opportunity to point out areas of improvement should a similar opportunity to do a project of this nature arise in the future. I observed that during the group discussions, participants exchanged views and debated on which areas of the plays we presented would need re-working if we were to do a similar project in the future.

There were also debates (friendly ones) on which ways can work better in addressing the issue of the Gukurahundi. Friendly debate on issues that affect us is good as it might lead to us coming up with solutions to such problems. As Patsy Rodenburg (2001: 26) argues “our ability or inability to debate is formed by the openness or lack of it in our lives. If it is not encouraged by parents, teachers, political leaders, or even employers the yearning for discussion and openness to opinions other than our own withers”. Public discussions on the issue of the Gukurahundi should, therefore, be encouraged as we seek ways of addressing it. Paulo Freire (1968: 58) also expresses similar sentiments when he advocates for inquiry as a way of creating knowledge, observing that “knowledge emerges only through invention and reinvention, through restless, impatient, continuing, hopeful inquiry men [sic] pursue in the world, and with each other”. Discussions and reflections, therefore, encouraged acts of inquiry and knowledge generation by and for the participants.

7.5 *Langalezo*—Speak Out!

Through comments that they made, the audience members participated in validating the issues presented throughout the performance. This validation helped in showing solidarity with the performers. There was validation and witnessing, elements that are essential for a *langalezo* experience – a therapeutic experience. As Phil Jones (2007: 14) points out, “Essentially, therapy is about the presence of a willing witness/listener... as well as being witnesses, we can also be co-creators”. During reflections, the participants pointed out that they were encouraged and emboldened by the solidarity of the audience

members to continue to speak out. One of the performers said, “The performance [participating in it and the performance as a product] has emboldened me, and hopefully other young people, to speak about the Gukurahundi” (Participant A 2019). Gauging this feedback, participating in the performance played a role in encouraging the participants to speak out on the Gukurahundi issue. As much as it encouraged the participants to speak, it is not unreasonable to suggest that the audience members were also encouraged to speak out.

The post-performance discussions created a participatory space where the performers and the audience members came together to co-author the play and to co-direct it and thus create it together. Arguably knowledge was being co-produced through participatory creative ways. This leads to the creation of a cultural ‘safe space’ where those who have experienced traumatic events do not have to carry the burden of trauma. Instead, they come up with alternative ways of storytelling. Darcy Alexandra (2015: 45) sums it up, “When knowledge is co-produced and shared in participatory and creative ways, people with lived experiences can cease to carry a ‘burden of proof’ and move into a culturally safe space where they can engage in alternative storytelling practices”. The stories that they share in these spaces are not scrutinised by the state apparatus for credibility. I argue that such a space was created through both the performance and the post-performance discussions.

Something important happened during the post-performance discussions. The presentation of Gukurahundi issues through performance and the telling of stories contained therein, triggered a similar action among the audience members. As already argued in this chapter, the audience members were stimulated by the precedent of the performance to share their experiences and stories of pain and suffering relating to the Gukurahundi. Such a scenario creates a *langalezo* experience. During a *langalezo*, the grieving person or people is/are encouraged to narrate their stories of pain as a way of giving a correct account of the events and manoeuvring beyond the pain. In the Ndebele culture, in issues of grieving, the circumstances relating to the death of a loved one must be accurately and repeatedly stated or narrated so that relatives, friends, and neighbours do not remain with unanswered questions. Clarifying the circumstances of someone’s death is believed to aid the process of grieving. Unclear circumstances breed unanswered questions that may exacerbate the pain of loss or suffering, and that may also prolong the grieving process.

Arguably, the absence of clarity on the circumstances around the Gukurahundi has birthed unanswered questions among the victims of the Gukurahundi and their children. The absence of clear information also breeds suspicion, and in such an environment conspiracy theories begin to emerge, as I have already argued in Chapter 1. This has arguably prolonged the traumatic experiences of the victims of the 1980s violence and delayed the healing process for psychological and emotional wounds. It was therefore an aim of this research to encourage the sharing of experiences and stories of the Gukurahundi by both the

participants and the audience members. Sharing of these Gukurahundi experiences and stories also helps in their documentation, something that this research sought to do since a gap exists in this regard. The sharing of experiences and stories happened more in phase two of the post-performance discussions. One of the audience members shared about the circumstances of the death of his grandfather and other family members saying:

That was because of the past because we lost a grandfather, my brother, another grandfather again who was shot when he came into the country with his car from South Africa. The issue of my grandfather who was shot dead was then stage-managed to appear as though he had an accident with his car but I was shocked to learn later that my grandfather was actually shot by the 5 Brigade soldiers and the issue was covered up by the State and our elderly family members were intimidated and forced to say it was an accident. It is only recently that one of our grandfathers revealed that it was not an accident but our grandfather was shot by the 5 Brigade soldiers during Gukurahundi – he was coming from South Africa, coming to this side for Christmas – that was 1984... Imagine my grandfather was happy that he was going home to see his children and then he met the 5 Brigade soldiers who shot him. I think they told to him drive off and then opened fire on him leading to him speeding trying to escape leading to the car overturning. So we are still very bitter as a people. As I said, there is a loss of identity, closure is still needed. But well... (*What follows is a very emotional moment. The speaker is crying. He rubs his eyes, wiping tears...*) (Audience member A 2019)

That the audience member could share such painful experiences with a listening audience and even go to the extent of shedding tears marks the essence of a *langalezo*. The audience member not only got solidarity from the other members present but also managed to publicly grieve – something that has been missing for those affected by the Gukurahundi.

The testimonies like the one quoted above and others that were shared during the post-performance discussions and those that were captured by the play(s), fill the journalistic and history-telling gaps that exist in the area of the Matabeleland and Midlands massacres of the 1980s. The concern of the first-generation sufferers of the Gukurahundi is that their experiences have not been documented. Through performance and post-performance discussions, Gukurahundi's experiences and stories were not only shared but they were also documented. As Walter Ong (1988: 104), who considers performance as both the act of remaining and appearance, aptly points out "It is not presence that appears in performance but precisely the missed encounter – the reverberations of the overlooked, the missed, the repressed, the seemingly forgotten". This helps in writing into history those narratives that had been suppressed and left out. The aesthetic space of theatre and the space created during the performance discussions therefore serve as an alternative avenue to tell and alternative practice to document the Gukurahundi history from the perspective of those who experienced it and their children, friends, relatives, and community members. The potential that lies in theatre to document and archive history is widely documented. The

Holocaust, as I argued in the literature review in Chapter 4, has benefited from this potential. This potential also came to the fore as a response to apartheid in South Africa. As regards art and the Holocaust, Caroline Lenette observes that:

The Jewish Women's Archive's repository of women's art in internment and concentration camps represents a key example. In that context, 'Holocaust art' was a way of documenting unspeakable atrocities and everyday realities, so that these events would not be forgotten. It was also a way of 'escaping' the horrendous conditions of everyday life. Art was recognised as both artistic practice and documentary evidence. (Lenette 2019: 49)

It is the documentary capabilities of art that appeal to this research. As I have already argued above, the *langalezo* space is also a space for documenting the circumstances relating to one's source of grieving. Those who come to show solidarity with the grieving are also in need of the account of events as they unfolded.

While the participants and audience members pointed out that there is still fear when it comes to speaking about the Gukurahundi, I argue that the deployment of theatre and the post-performance discussions, interviews, and focus group discussions provided a 'safer space' for overcoming this fear. Wolfgang K. Mueller-Thalheim (1975) argues that when real fear is converted to fictional fear it becomes easier to be faced, talked about, and dealt with.

Through theatricality, it became possible to say things that participants would find difficult to say in real life. Presented with the dramatised slice of real life, audience members were emboldened to comment. This encouraged the speaking out on the Gukurahundi issue. As African popular culture theorists Liz Gunner and Graham Furness (1995: 24) observe, with art "a number of boundaries previously solid begin to dissolve". I argue that boundaries of fear and silence were pushed back through the deployment of theatre and the associated processes. As a result, the participants and audience members were encouraged to speak out, and they did speak out. However, for participants, some of these boundaries took a long time to break, and for audience members, there was an acknowledgment that fear was still there. This research, therefore, does not claim to have eliminated all the boundaries but comes across as part of the broad efforts to do so.

Post-performance discussions provided a democratic space for audiences to express their views on the Gukurahundi experiences. One audience member revealed that he and his drama group were being harassed by members of the security sector for participating in theatre works that speak of the Gukurahundi, labelling this as unfair treatment. Walter Mignolo and Rolando Vazquez (2013) argue that decolonial art exposes injustice, challenges domination that colonises and is determined to bring about change. Through *Speak Out!* I believe we challenged oppressive structures that refuse people the chance to speak about their Gukurahundi experiences. The silencing of the Gukurahundi victims was challenged

through devising and staging theatre, post-performance discussions, interviews, and focus group discussions. The theatre space on the margin became a democratic space to create works that can shift consciousness (hooks 1990). In line with hooks's observation, the place at the margin became a place of radical openness (hooks 1990). *Speak Out!* is an attempt to speak truth to power, and by doing so to challenge oppressive, silencing structures and to create democratic spaces for speaking out on the issues of the Gukurahundi.

Phil Jones (1996) sees theatre as a way of actively participating in the world and not just imitating it. He also sees theatre as full of healing potential. I argue that participating in devising and staging theatre, post-performance discussions, interviews, and focus group discussions offered healing potential for the participants – something that is part of a *langalezo* experience. The idea behind a *langalezo* experience is that talking to others who provide a listening ear and a supportive attitude, aids healing. It assists in dealing with traumatic events. During a reflection session, one of the participants remarked, in response to the question of how he felt after participating in the project:

I feel relieved. Because *bayatsho ukuthi* [they say that] a problem shared is a problem half solved so *lami ngangifisa ukuthi ngizuze ithuba lokuthi ngikhulume ngama pains ami lokunye engangikuzwile* [so I always longed for an opportunity to share my painful experiences and the other things I had heard], of which *ngasizuka i-space sakhona* [of which I got that opportunity through this project], I-load *engangiyithwele kimi ngibona angathi yahafuleka* [I believe the load I had been carrying has been halved]. I, therefore, realise that though we did not get safe spaces of publicly speaking about this thing [the Gukurahundi] before this project, the project afforded us that space to speak out. (Participant A 2019)

Other participants also shared similar sentiments. The audience members also expressed their views to the effect that performing the plays was a good thing to do. They saw it as a bold step that is contributing to addressing the Gukurahundi issue. One of the audience members said:

First of all, I would like to commend the aspect of the young people showcasing the aspect of the Gukurahundi because I believe that it is coming from...this perspective coming from the young people even if they did not experience the Gukurahundi first hand - the drama brings out the truth about what really happened because when the play was presented I could visualise what really happened during that time. (Audience member B 2019)

The post-performance discussions therefore served as a space for expressing solidarity to each other by both the participants and the audience members. Solidarity is one of the important aspects of a *langalezo* experience. The audience members encouraged the participants in their efforts to speak out on the Gukurahundi issue. I believe that the presence of other audience members also played a role in creating a 'safer space' and encouraging other audience members to speak out. At the beginning of the post-performance discussions I observed that only a few people would be bold to say something but towards

the end of the discussions there would be more hands shooting up, something that makes me believe that the more people spoke the bolder they became. Equally, I am of the view that the more we have projects like this research, the more people are likely to be encouraged to speak out. The prolonged public silence on the Gukurahundi issue may have conditioned some people to keep quiet and unlearning the silence and learning to speak out may take time.

Deploying collectively devised popular participatory theatre as a methodology for this research worked well in creating a *langalezo* experience by encouraging the victims of the Gukurahundi to share their experiences – to tell their own stories. By telling their stories the victims of the Gukurahundi were resisting the dominant narratives on the issue and offering alternative narratives. The dominant narratives have sought to silence; yet the alternative narrative offered by the victims of the Gukurahundi seeks to speak out. This is in line with Lenette's observation that:

Adopting an arts-based research paradigm can offer a haven to Knowledge Holders, not in terms of fully addressing the difficult realities that often remain beyond the aims of the inquiry, but as points of resistance where meaningful and unique counter-narratives are created through storytelling. (Lenette 2019: 43)

The use of art in this way is similar to what happened in South Africa during the apartheid era. During this time playwrights like Athol Fugard, Mbongeni Ngema, Percy Mtwa, Simon Barney, and others created theatrical works that resisted the apartheid system (see Kavanagh 1985; Morris 2007). These theatre works were not only resisting the oppressive system but were also providing alternative narratives of life under it. The dominant narratives had sought to paint a good picture of apartheid yet these alternative narratives revealed the ugly truth. Theatre continues to offer alternative narratives that counter the dominant ones. In Zimbabwe theatre has functioned as an alternative media (Mpofu and Moyo 2017). With theatre projects like *Speak Out!* theatre continues to offer an alternative space for telling stories from the margin, in the process writing these stories into history and thus filling some erased gaps.

7.6 Where To From Here?

During the post-performance discussions, the audience members raised several concerns that they have relating to the issue of the Gukurahundi. Below I discuss the research findings from the research about suggestions for addressing the Gukurahundi issue.

The Need to Address the Gukurahundi Issue

One of the chief findings of this research was the expression of the desire by the second-generation sufferers (and also the first-generation sufferers) of the 1980s atrocities to see the Gukurahundi issue addressed. The second-generation sufferers revealed that they are tired of continuing to carry the inherited burden of the Gukurahundi. They desire to move past this pain. They see speaking out about the issue as an important ingredient in the ways of processing the trauma from this period. An audience member aptly expressed himself saying:

I think *kuhle sikhulumenini* because we can't be bitter forever, *angeke siqhubeke lama* burdens *awemuva kudala le. Kulilungelo lethu ukuthi sikhulume ukuthi si feeler njani, sikhulume futhi lokuthi i-way forward singenza njani ukuze vele into leyi eyeGukurahundi iphele lama issues ayo aphele. Ngoba vele kudala inzondo. Loba into leyi yenzakala singabantu sonke, singabeZimbabwe sonke, sindawonye singaya phambili.* [I think it is proper that we speak about the Gukurahundi because we can't be bitter forever. We cannot afford to continue carrying burdens from the past. It is our right to say how we feel and to suggest a way forward to address the Gukurahundi issue so that all the issues emanating from it can be dealt with permanently – because there is a lot of hatred. Despite the Gukurahundi having happened, we are still people – all of us, we are still all Zimbabweans. Therefore we need to find each other and move forward]. (Participant E 2019)

The sentiments expressed by Participant E were echoed by Participant B who also pointed out that there is a need to move forward, saying:

What happened, happened. We have to move forward. *Kumele siyephambili – yithi ama* future leaders [we have to move forward – we are the future leaders]. *Ngokuzondana awukho umehluko esingawudala elizweni* [with hatred we cannot make a difference in our nation]. We have to work together for peace and unity. Violence is not our culture, tribalism is not our culture. Peace and unity are part of our culture. (Participant B 2019)

In the above quotations from Participants E and B, the desire for unity and peace in the country was emphasised. Notably, both the participants and the audience members felt that for unity and peace to flourish there is an urgent need to address the issue of the Gukurahundi. As already pointed out, the participants and audience members emphatically pointed out a need to speak out on the Gukurahundi issue as part of the efforts to address it. There was a unanimous agreement that silence on the issue was not the solution. The path to effectively addressing the issue, as the participants and audience members argued, cannot and should not avoid public speaking out on the issue for those who may want to do so. Granted, some may prefer to just leave it in the past and avoid or choose not to speak out on the Gukurahundi, but those who desire to speak about it should be free to do so. These are sentiments that were expressed during post-performance discussions. The need to see the Gukurahundi issue addressed can be viewed in the context of what is happening in other parts of the world. It is not an

isolated issue. Many kilometres away, in the United States of America, such issues are also there. According to the New York Times (2021), there was a genocide that took place in Tulsa in 1921 which killed around 300 people and displaced 10000. The genocide was based on racial grounds. The white Americans attacked African Americans. This genocide, like the Gukurahundi, was shrouded in silence afterward. Things have, however, changed and after 100 years, the survivors are looking for the graves of the victims.

Contrary to the 'mainstream' narratives that those who want to speak about the Gukurahundi are bent on opening old wounds, it emerged that those who want the issue of the Gukurahundi to be addressed and spoken about openly genuinely desire unity, love, peace, and progress in Zimbabwe. Theirs is a quest for healing and closure of a protracted problem that continues to pose a threat to victims, their children, and their communities. The second-generation sufferers of the Gukurahundi are concerned that if this issue is left unaddressed there are chances of its trauma being transferred to the coming generations. One participant said:

I don't know how my view would be taken but I have a question. Are we going to drag this Gukurahundi issue to the next generation that is yet to come? That is what I want to ask. I think the first mistake which was made by our parents' generation was not to deal with the Gukurahundi issue and conclude it within their generation. As for me I was not there when the Gukurahundi happened – and I believe some of you were not there as well – but you hear someone saying he hates Shonas yet that person did not witness, it's all based on those things that we were told. So I think if this issue is not addressed and concluded in our generation it will continue dragging on from generation to generation until it reaches our children and our children's children and it will then cause a lot of conflict. That way I don't think we may have a stable country because of this – because you hear someone saying "I hate Shonas" because of certain issues that happened when he was not there. So I think it is important for us to come up with means of discussing this Gukurahundi issue so that closure may be found and the issue concluded before another generation comes on the scene and suffers the same fate as our generation. (Participant A 2019, speaking during post-performance discussions)

The audience members and the participants are concerned that *gukurahundiality* – the after-effects of the Gukurahundi, has continued long after the signing of the Unity Accord in 1987. Equally worrying is the threat of its continuance. Decoloniality advocates for the exposing and dismantling of such structures. Through the post-performance discussions and reflection sessions, the audience members and the participants sought to find ways of moving forward. To some extent, the theatre provided this space. However, as Miranda Young–Jahangeer (2009: 93) observes "participation in both process and performance is 'no real guarantee of positive change'". Nevertheless, theatre is important in building self-confidence, putting pressure, mobilising solidarity, and for mobilising collective action for self-determination. As John McGrath writes:

The theatre can never *cause* social change. It can articulate the pressure towards one, help people to celebrate their strengths and maybe build their self-confidence. It can be a public emblem of inner, and outer, events and occasionally a reminder, an elbow-jogger, a perspective-bringer. Above all it can be the way people find their voice. (McGrath 1981: xxvii)

Theatre is also important in encouraging people to speak on sensitive issues and imagining a better future. The point of theatre being the way people find their voice is very important. The absence of public discussions on the Gukurahundi means that those who have had the desire to speak about this issue publicly have had their voices stifled and their desires frustrated. Theatre can therefore play an important role in helping such people find their voice. Theatre can inspire confidence in people to speak out. Rodenburg (2001) argues that when we are confronted with pressing issues, we should not retreat into silence. Rather, that is when we should raise our voices even louder. Issues like the Gukurahundi are not to be dealt with through silence. They require people to speak out. During the post-performance discussions of phase one, an audience member challenged people to speak and not to wait to be allowed to do so but rather to take a bold step to create opportunities and platforms for speaking themselves. His remark was:

The way we can assist each other and ourselves is to be defiant and speak out. Speaking out means that you are radical! Speaking out means you are not easy to silence. Even if they haunt you or do whatever to you, just speak out! Just be your self – a radical. What is interesting is that art on its own is radical! Art on its own is crazy! Art on its own speaks out! So you just have to be radical...be crazy, keep on being crazy, be radical! (Audience member D 2019)

After the audience member had said the above words, others broke into applause and cheering. They agreed with what had been said. It was as though the member who had spoken had voiced what was in their mind. I believe that is what people want – to speak out. Traumatic events like the Holocaust and the Rwandan genocide have been discussed openly. I submit that open discussions on the Gukurahundi are also important. They are likely to play a positive role in contributing towards finding closure to the emotional wounds of this period and in mapping out ways of addressing *gukurahundiality*. Plunka (2009), writing on the Holocaust, has advocated for speaking out as opposed to silence. It is speaking out that offers the potential for healing, closure, a *langalezo* experience, and a united nation. Silence, on the other hand, breeds mistrust, frustration, and hurt. Postcolonial feminism has advocated for speaking out and for filling erased gaps. Where the dominant centre makes this difficult or impossible, theatre provides a platform for those on the margin to speak truth to power, raise their voices and, like Antigone in Sophocles' play of the same name, do 'small' but powerful acts of resistance – refusing to be stopped and to be silenced when doing the right thing.

Suggestions for Compensation

There were suggestions for compensation of victims and economically empowering the Matabeleland communities as part of the solution. Calls for compensation come on the backdrop of the fact that, as argued earlier in this chapter, the Gukurahundi brought social and economic disruption to the lives of the Ndebele speakers. An audience member pointed out that:

So, okay, way forward? Umm, it's a bit challenging. Yeah, there is a lot that we need to consider. Eeh, one I would say (*The speaker keeps quiet for some time and then shakes his head saying "eey"*³⁸) Of course we cannot take out the issue of compensation. Because we are coming from different backgrounds and some of the people who were wounded – when you talk of wounded people these are the people who lost their breadwinners and therefore who caters for those beneficiaries? That's the compensation that we are talking about. We cannot just leave it like that and then we...no! (Audience member B 2019)

It cannot be denied that some families lost breadwinners, as pointed out in the quotation. As a result, the children of such people have failed to go to school leading to reduced employment opportunities. Spouses of the deceased have been affected by poverty and, in some instances, have failed to inherit the savings or properties of the deceased because there are no death certificates. Some members of the affected communities feel that the government should find ways of assisting these people. While it is not clear how the compensations are to be handled, it is rather clear that this is something for consideration as part of the efforts to resolve the Gukurahundi issue and its aftermath.

The 'if' Question

The post-performance discussions also raised what I would call an 'if' question. The if question (and there were many of them) proceeds on the premise of saying "if...". Using this line of questioning a concern was raised regarding the composition of the National Peace and Reconciliation Commission (NPRC), a central Commission in addressing the issue of the Gukurahundi. This Commission was not formed primarily to address the issue of the Gukurahundi but issues that pertain to peace and reconciliation generally. The Gukurahundi issue is viewed by many as within the scope of this Commission, and arguably one of the pressing issues deserving its attention. The question raised was if this Commission is expected to address the issue of the Gukurahundi, will it be addressed effectively considering that people from Matabeleland have a very small representation in this Commission? An audience member pointed out the following:

³⁸In this instance, eey is an expression of worry – being weighed down heavily by troublesome thoughts. It shows that the speaker is emotionally touched by the issue of the Gukurahundi.

As a way forward... currently, there is a Commission [National Peace and Reconciliation Commission] that is running – which is trying to help come up with a solution to this Gukurahundi issue. But I do have a problem with the composition of this Commission itself because you will notice that as we are speaking we are saying that it's a matter of language, umm, which is Shona and Ndebele. But if you look at the people who comprise that Commission there is only one person (sic) who represents the Ndebeles and the rest are Shonas so he actually becomes overwhelmed because he is the one who is supposed to stand up and represent the Ndebele people. So in terms of the structure of the Commission, something has to be done because they have tried to move around the areas that have been highlighted – Tsholotsho, Lupane, Nkayi – they have tried to create dialogue with the people and they have heard the side of the people – the victim – but that issue of having one person (sic) being part of the Commission...then it means his input will be less powerful because others will override his views of what needs to be done. So that is the starting point – yes. (Audience member C)

The respondents pointed out that the Commission is dominated by people from other provinces as compared to Matabeleland provinces. At the time of the discussion, there were actually two people from Matabeleland as the Chairperson of that Commission was also from Matabeleland. This number was seen as too low. The sentiments during discussions were that if the Gukurahundi issue is to be dealt with sufficiently, the Commission should have a good number of people from Matabeleland. The feeling was that those from the affected communities could not be left out in addressing this issue. Granted, the Commission in question was not formed solely to address the Gukurahundi issue. However, there are high expectations from people from Matabeleland that this Commission should play a big role in addressing this issue.

The other concern centred on the issue of underdevelopment in Matabeleland areas. The respondents pointed out that the Gukurahundi affected infrastructural development in Matabeleland. The 'if' question was, if this is the case what is being done to address it? Many such similar questions arose. What was clear was that there is an expectation by the people of Matabeleland and those parts of the Midlands that were affected by the Gukurahundi to see deliberate and clear steps being taken to address *gukurahundiality*. The line of reasoning was if there is a willingness to find a long-lasting solution to the Gukurahundi issue then there should be clearly spelled out approaches and initiatives by the government. The use of the subjunctive mood instead of the declarative mood in this instance shows that the people who were affected and continue to be affected by the effects of the 1980s atrocities have doubts regarding some of the interventions that have already been made. Through the theatrical ritual of the *langalezo*, the victims are imagining a possible future where the Gukurahundi is addressed with the seriousness it deserves.

Respondents also pointed out that the Gukurahundi marginalised the people of Matabeleland as it caused development to lag. They further pointed out that if the Gukurahundi issue is to be addressed then there

should be efforts to address issues that the people of Matabeleland see as marginalising them so that feelings of marginalisation are not further entrenched. One respondent observed:

People are not able to freely participate in the socio-economic activities of their districts – where they live – so much that most of them now feel comfortable with fleeing outside the country. That's why you will realise that most people of Matabeleland are not in the country – they are outside the country. It's because of those issues. Furthermore, right now if you go to schools in Matabeleland, primary schools and ECD (Early Childhood Development) you will still find people who are not conversant with the language [iSiNdebele and other local languages like Tjikalanga, Sesotho, Tonga, Venda, and Xhosa]. Therefore people have a feeling that it's a continuation of that 1983 [the Gukurahundi] even up to now. So until we have our brothers saying, okay why not live in harmony with our fellow citizens in this country? (Audience member A 2019)

The above response shows that there is a need for the government to address issues of economic and social marginalisation that people feel are affecting them. Those who were affected by the Gukurahundi may view such injustices as a continuation of the Gukurahundi in another form. To achieve peace, security, and harmony in the country there is a need to address such issues.

Issuing of Identity Documents

As already pointed out in this chapter, one of the administrative hurdles arising from the Gukurahundi pertains to the difficulty in obtaining identity documents in the form of birth certificates and successive documents like national identity cards and passports. Second-generation sufferers of the Gukurahundi suggested that, as a way forward, the government should take corrective steps to make identity documents easily accessible for the victims of the Gukurahundi and their children. During post-performance discussions, an audience member raised the issue by saying:

The question that then comes to me is 'How do we engage the service providers or the stakeholders or the offices in charge so that they give people their identity by relaxing a bit the laws that they have or the policies so that people...like the one in the drama who was troubled about his surname... how can he be assisted to get his identity?' We then have to think further in terms of how we can engage the authorities and stakeholders in terms of how such challenges can be solved. (Audience member C 2019)

From the above quotation, it can be noted that the respondent spoke of people being given their identity. This shows that people's identity documents are tied to their identity. Identity documents are, therefore, necessary for the enjoyment of full citizenship rights for all Zimbabweans.

Change of Attitude

Ultimately, the desired solutions for the Gukurahundi will work to the maximum if there is a change of attitude. The findings of the research point to this. This change of attitude is envisaged at two levels. First, at the level of the government. Second, at the level of those citizens who were not (and who are not being) affected by the Gukurahundi issue. Respondents of the research advocated for this change of attitude. One respondent said:

The attitude of the government – are they accepting what they did? If that was done what are they doing now as a sign to show that there is a change in the mentality of the government? If they are not coming forward to show some remorse then that means it's still in existence [Gukurahundi] but played underground...So there is no way we can move forward unless the attitude of the government changes. (Audience member C 2019)

Another respondent added that the attitude of those who were not (and are not) affected by the Gukurahundi should also change. The respondent said, “Now, way forward – which from the look of things and the attitude from our brothers is very far unless the section of our brothers in this country – the whole section, changes its attitude and mentality towards the other brother which is on the other part of the country” (Audience member A 2019). That the respondent refers to citizens of Zimbabwe as brothers, itself shows that the speaker is not speaking from a pedestal of animosity but from that of love and togetherness in pursuit of peace, harmony, and unity.

7.7 The Role of Theatre in the Creation of a *Langalezo* Experience

The performance of *Speak Out!* and the post-performance discussions that followed thereafter demonstrate the potential of theatre to play a role in the creation of a *langalezo* experience as envisioned by this study. Augusto Boal (1995) argues that fiction penetrates reality and by doing so art becomes useful in the reflection of real life and its transformation. Such theatre mirrors real life. Society sees itself in theatre. The intent of theatre that mirrors real life is so that society can see those things that need to be transformed and thus take action accordingly. Boal (1979) expresses a desire for the Spect-Actor in a forum theatre setting to take on the role of the character on the stage and to offer solutions to himself. In our case, the audience members did not get on stage to act to transform their situation, but the post-performance discussions gave them this opportunity to witness that indeed the things presented are real and to go on and offer solutions.

The idea of *Speak Out!* was to encourage the audience members to join the actor in speaking out. This is similar to Jonathan Fox's (1981) playback theatre which works on an audience member's story and

then plays it back to him/her. By performing the Gukurahundi stories we were playing them back to the members of the community that have experienced these painful happenings. This is important for creating a platform for sharing stories, witnessing and validating traumatic accounts, and aiding those involved to grieve and process the traumatic experiences. Such an atmosphere encourages a *langalezo* experience as the performers and the audience members share their experiences, empathise with each other and strategise for a healthy way forward.

7.8 Conclusion

This chapter has presented and analysed data relating to post-performance discussions and interviews held toward the end of the research process. Post-performance discussions played an important role in encouraging both the participants and audience members to speak out on the Gukurahundi. Through these discussions the audience members became co-creators and co-directors of the performances, thus shaping the narratives. The audience members, encouraged by the performance, also shared their own experiences and stories of the Gukurahundi. This led to the post-performance discussions, just like the performances themselves, acting as ways of documenting Gukurahundi experiences. This aligns with the Postcolonial feminist view (Mohanty 2003) of filling gaps by writing into history those stories that have been marginalised by the dominant narratives.

Focus group discussions and interviews towards the end of the research project further encouraged the participants to speak out on the Gukurahundi. These also provided an opportunity to reflect on the research journey – through evaluation, identifying what worked and what could be improved in case a similar project is undertaken in the future. The discussions and interviews also encourage openness which is necessary in addressing issues that affect people like the Gukurahundi. While healing cannot be confirmed to have taken place among the participants and audience members of this study, it can be argued that their participation in the study became some of the efforts contributing towards healing which takes time to happen.

CHAPTER 8: SUMMARY OF FINDINGS AND CONCLUSION

8.1 Summary of Findings

As part of the newly elected ZANU PF strategy to destabilise PF ZAPU and to deal with the dissident problem, there was a government-sanctioned operation in Matabeleland and Midlands provinces which became known as the Gukurahundi. The atrocities of this period ended in 1987 with the signing of the Unity Accord between PF ZAPU and ZANU PF represented by J. M. N. Nkomo and R. G. Mugabe respectively. Following the signing of the Unity Accord in 1987 in Zimbabwe, the Gukurahundi issue has been shrouded in silence, with those raising their voices on the subject facing government repression. It is only recently that the Second Republic has shown some movement in creating a new trajectory by decriminalising speaking about the Gukurahundi and announcing that people can now publicly share their experiences of this period without fear of consequence.

Due to the silencing of discussions on the Gukurahundi by the state, the victims of the atrocities have been hindered from speaking out publicly on this issue. This has hindered the grieving process – making it difficult for the victims to have a *langalezo* [grieving] experience as described in chapters 1 and 7. Central in the *langalezo* practice, as it exists within the Ndebele culture, is the sharing of experiences of loss through narrating the accounts of bereavement or calamitous events often through creative forms of song and poetry. This process demonstrates solidarity within the community through words and deeds and facilitates creative and communal processing of pain. This taps into what Muldoon et al. (2020: 312) term social identity resources, explaining these as “social psychological capacities that flow from internalised group memberships such as support, solidarity and belonging”. The communal processing of pain and healing is important since the 1980s violence was experienced at a collective level, affecting the Ndebele-speaking communities.

This research set out to inquire into how collectively devised popular participatory theatre, through the creation process, staging, and post-performance discussions, can encourage the second-generation sufferers (and to a certain extent, the first-generation sufferers as they were also part of the audience members) of the Gukurahundi in Zimbabwe to speak about the Gukurahundi and share their experiences that relate to it. The research also set out to examine the efficacy of the devising process, staging of the plays, and post-performance discussions in encouraging sufferers of the Gukurahundi to speak out and share their experiences. This comes against the backdrop of a silenced past. Thirdly, the research sought to identify how the second-generation sufferers of the atrocities identify with the Gukurahundi experiences of their parents and relatives. Lastly, the research set out to record stories of the Gukurahundi and

document how the second-generation survivors in Zimbabwe feel about its effect on them. I also took a critical look into the role of a facilitator and the role I played in the process.

The research used a qualitative approach (Given 2008; Leavey 2017) and deployed Participatory Action Research (PAR) (McIntyre 2008) as a methodology within the emancipatory paradigm (Freire 1970; Matarasso 2019). PAR seeks to do research with the people and not for the people. This worked well for my research which sought to encourage the participants to share their experiences with agency. In PAR, participants and researchers actively participate in the co-construction of knowledge, in the promotion of self and critical awareness that leads to individual and social change. In PAR the researcher and participants work together in the planning and implementation of the research processes (McIntyre 2008). These qualities made PAR suitable as a methodology for this research. The research also used autoethnography (Creswell 2013) and community autoethnography (Toyosaki et al. 2009) within the interpretive paradigm (Leavey 2017). Autoethnography and community autoethnography fit this study since the research focused on a cultural and linguistic group that I am part of and also analysed the product of the research in the form of the play(s) produced. In pursuit of its objectives, the research deployed collectively devised theatre (Felseghi 2017; Syssoyeva and Proudfit 2016; Haagensen 2014; Thorpe 2014; Oddey 1994) as a way of generating data. Devised theatre offers democracy and freedom in the working process, a kind of democracy and freedom that may not be available in a conventional play written by one author (Oddey 1994). This quality of devised theatre made it attractive for this research.

The research participants were purposively sampled to make sure they were Ndebele speakers from Matabeleland provinces or parts of the Midlands province that were affected by the Gukurahundi. These included experienced performers and those with little or no previous experience in theatre. The participants took part in the process of collectively devising theatre which resulted in the production of plays entitled *Speak Out!* Phase one and *Speak Out!* Phase two. *Speak Out!* Phase one was performed at Nkulumane in Bulawayo to a full house of mostly young people. *Speak Out!* phase two, which resulted from reworking the phase one play, was performed at Hope Centre in Bulawayo's Central Business District (CBD) to an audience of about a dozen people. Participants also took part in interviews and focus group discussions that generated data for the research. Post-performance discussions were held after the two performances and data generated from these was analysed and interpreted to address the research objectives. As a researcher, I also played the role of the facilitator, both for the research as a whole and the processes of devising, staging, post-performance discussions, interviews, and focus group discussions.

Theoretically, the research deployed decoloniality anchored on decolonial theory (Mignolo and Vazquez 2013; Mignolo 2018; Gaztambide-Fernández 2014; Quijano 2000, 2007; Ndlovu-Gatsheni 2013a,

2013b), particularly the concepts of decolonial aesthetics and aesthesis as envisioned by Walter Dignolo and Rolando Vazquez (2013). Decoloniality seeks to address coloniality, the effects of colonisation which continue to linger long after colonisation has ended and come to align with the capitalist ethos (Decolonizing Humanities Project 2022: no page). In the research, I took this understanding of coloniality and used it to frame the issue of the Gukurahundi in Zimbabwe. I argue that while the Gukurahundi ended in 1987 with the signing of the Unity Accord in Zimbabwe, its effects have continued to exist, creating a problem of 'gukurahundiality'. Gukurahundiality can be understood as the interconnected effects that the Gukurahundi had on the region and its people including economic and psychological depression due to the inability to process past trauma and residual fear of the regime. This research has therefore deployed collectively devised popular participatory theatre as a way of breaking the silence on the issue of the Gukurahundi. Silencing of public discussions on the issue of the atrocities by the government has been one of the major hurdles of 'gukurahundiality' as it has blocked the grieving process of the victims and their children.

The research also made use of some aspects of Postcolonial Feminist theories (Mohanty 1988, 2003; hooks 1989; Spivak 1988). These theories emphasise a need for the marginalised to tell their stories and fill in the gaps missing from official versions of history. While these erasures can be due to global systems such as patriarchy or racism this, I have argued, can be extended to regimes founded on tribal or ethnic nationalism. This is something needed for the victims of the Gukurahundi whose stories of pain and suffering have been side-lined from public spaces and distorted by the 'official' narratives that seek to silence and marginalise them. Also important is the fact that during the Gukurahundi the female body was a site of oppression (Card 1996; Brown 2012; Eriksson and Stern 2013) as rape and bayoneting of pregnant women were common during the atrocities. Since the research prioritises the voicing of marginalised stories of the 1980s violence from the perspective of victims, I also draw from popular memory (Dawson 2015; Popular Memory Group 1982).

The research also made use of Hirsch's (2008) concept of the Generation of Postmemory which emphasises the need for traumatic past events to be dealt with (partly through grieving) so that the trauma is not transferred to the next generation(s). Hirsch, in her analysis of the Holocaust, also argues that the traumatic memories and stories from the past pose a threat of displacing the current generation's stories. I have argued, in this research, that this threat is increased by the fact that the issue of the Gukurahundi has not been conclusively dealt with and therefore closure has not happened for many victims. For closure to take place, people should be free to talk about the Gukurahundi and to grieve the way they want. Within this cultural frame, a *langalezo* is necessary to facilitate healing and closure. Without this, there is a danger that this major traumatic event will eclipse the stories of the current generation of Zimbabweans from the region. There is also a danger, as I have argued in chapters 3 and 7, for the

following generation to carry the repressed anger and resentment into further generations with possibly dangerous consequences. Feedback and discussions with the second generation indicated that they are still angry but they would like to see the Gukurahundi issue addressed so that this anger does not continue. They pointed out that they are tired of being saddled with the burdens of the past and are willing to leave them behind and move into the future unhindered by past pains (Discussions with participants and audience members 2019). This research, therefore, deployed devised theatre as a way of encouraging people from the affected areas to speak out on the Gukurahundi and share their stories relating to it.

The research findings show that people want to speak on the Gukurahundi and need platforms to do so. The research provided a platform for telling the Gukurahundi stories though fear is still present. Starting with the interviews and focus group discussions that were held at the beginning of the project, participants shared their experiences and stories relating to this period. They pointed out that they heard the stories from parents, family members, friends, relatives, and other community members. While they have spoken about these issues in private spaces with trusted individuals, they have found it difficult to speak about these issues in public. The common response was that speaking about the Gukurahundi in public can get one into trouble, particularly “*kuyatshayisa*” [you can be beaten for it] and “*kuyanyamalalisa*” [you can disappear for doing it]. These sentiments were aptly captured in the play *Speak Out!* which was created, in part, using material from interviews with participants. This provided an opportunity for the experiences of the participants to be shared with others through performance as they are being documented. As a result of the silence surrounding the public discussion of the Gukurahundi, some of the participants were hesitant to speak out at the beginning of the project. However, as the process progressed, the participants became noticeably bolder and were more confident to express themselves. Participants testified to this towards the end of the project, as detailed in Chapter 7.

The devising process played a critical role in encouraging the participants to share their experiences of the Gukurahundi and the stories they had heard. This was made possible largely due to the nature of devised theatre. I, therefore, argue that collectively devised popular participatory theatre is an effective form of theatre for addressing sensitive issues like the Gukurahundi and for aiding the grieving process for the victims of past traumatic events and their children. To begin with, devised theatre is centred on innovation and experimentation. This gives ample room for the participants, who themselves are second-generation survivors, and the researcher to explore different ways of addressing the issue at hand. The possibilities are plenty. Another strength of devised theatre that proved useful for this research is the fact that theatrical work is a product of collective effort. No one imposes the script on the group but members of the group are involved in coming up with the script so that the product is owned by the group. This gives room for the contributions of the participants to be part of the final product unlike in a play authored

by a single author where one individual controls the narrative. Further, using a collective creative process is emancipatory for the participants (Lenette 2019). I observed that as participants settled into the project and took control of the creative process, they became more eager to share their experiences. Another important point is that devised theatre is not only made collectively but is also experienced collectively. This serves well in underlining the trauma that happened to a community and, therefore, it makes sense that its' healing should happen that way. It is communal trauma. Therefore, suffering should not be experienced in isolation.

During the devising process, participants shared their experiences and also went on to make decisions as to how those experiences (theirs and those they have heard through stories shared with them) should be presented on stage. Improvisations that were done during the play creation process helped stimulate the participants' creativity and encouraged them to share their stories. As they improvised, they shared their stories and views. I also encouraged participants to compose poems as part of sharing their experiences and views. During the improvisations, we would stop the process to reflect on the improvised pieces. During these discussions, I noticed that participants would share their experiences and stories related to the improvised piece. Through these improvisations, discussions, and reflection sessions, experiences and stories of the Gukurahundi were shared. Participants also collectively directed the improvised pieces that later formed the whole play, of course even though I was also there to play the directorial role. I therefore argue that through the process of devising theatre, a *langalezo* experience was created. Participants spoke out on issues that they had previously not discussed in public.

Oddey (1994) points out that devised theatre offers a democratic process of playmaking or play creation. This is one of the qualities that made the devised theatre effective in this project. During the devising sessions, I made it clear that all members were welcome and free to make their contributions and comments. Their views were not censored. All participants were treated with respect. I noticed that the participants did increasingly speak their minds during the process as they came to trust the process and me as the facilitator. As Felseghi (2017: 67) aptly puts it, "Regarding theatrical collective work, this kind of theatre is based on a matter of trust". As a facilitator of the discussions, I encouraged the participants to be free to explore the issues of the research and suggest ways of addressing them through theatre.

However, the democratic nature and flexibility of devised theatre is not an all-powerful antidote. The theatre form also has some challenges or shortcomings. The more vocal members can, as I observed during this research, dominate the process and side-line the views of others. Further, views that do not fit with the aims of the research may be side-lined even if they are important for those expressing them. As noted by Forster (2016: 37), because there are many dynamics at play during the research process, "the resultant accounts, therefore, risk silencing those stories that do not fit with the aims of the research, not to mention those altogether less desirable voices. Communities themselves are not necessarily stable

and authentic". When I noticed that the vocal members were dominating the process to the risk of sidelining others, I stepped in as a facilitator to refocus the discussion. This would settle the issue though at times it was a challenge. Although we were there to speak about the past in the present, the participants often had more 'present' and pressing issues they wanted to engage in. The role of the facilitator is important in devised theatre. He has to be able to sensitively and firmly direct the whole process and the product.

Staging the performances in front of the audiences marked a milestone in the research process. Two performances were held. Through these, the participants claimed their space to speak and share their stories, through performance, with the audience. This depiction of life experiences in front of an audience creates an environment where witnessing and validation of these accounts become possible (Jones 1996). It should also be noted that as the audience members engage with the performance through post-performance discussions, an opportunity for them to co-direct the performances arises. I therefore observed that the audience members did not only engage with the content of the performances, but they also made suggestions on how these accounts should have been presented. This indicated that the audience members saw themselves as part of the ongoing process. They fully engaged with the presentation. Their reactions also showed that they were thinking actively and creatively. Arguably, they saw the possibilities for alternative narratives that demonstrated ideas around empathy and multiple perspectives. There was a shared desire to keep sharing the Gukurahundi stories.

The findings of the research indicate that disturbing effects of the Gukurahundi are still being experienced today, sexual violence was used as a weapon, family structures were threatened or destroyed leading to a breakdown in Ndebele communities to some extent, fear is still present, the trauma continues to affect the second-generation and there are unresolved identity issues that emanated from the Gukurahundi. Given these, suggestions were made as to how victims of the Gukurahundi and their children can move forward. One of the suggestions raised was that the second-generation sufferers and the first-generation sufferers of the Gukurahundi should openly have a *langalezo* where they share their experiences publicly and should be left to grieve in their preferred ways without any silencing attempts. This shows that the survivors desire a permanent solution to the Gukurahundi issues. There were also suggestions for compensation of victims and issuing of identity documents to the affected. The participants and audience members pointed out that for the Gukurahundi issue to be effectively dealt with, there is a need for a change of attitude in the Zimbabwean government and those who were not affected. The government should be seen to act in ways that promote healing and closure.

I argue that during the research, the processes of collectively devising a participatory theatre piece that uses Ndebele popular performance forms and staging it for an audience created a *langalezo* experience. During this experience, participants and audience members openly spoke about their Gukurahundi experiences. This, I observe, constituted an act of breaking the silence and making public the discussions

that have previously been confined to private spaces. This is a bold act of resisting gagging. The findings of the research, therefore, indicate that a participatory theatre process embedded in African popular and cultural practice can become a theatre of grieving in its ability to elicit the same responses as a *langalezo* practice. Since personal experiences provide a launch pad for devised work (Felseghi 2017), participants were encouraged to share their personal stories and they responded positively, for example, with one of the participants sharing a story about his great grandfather who was killed by the 5 Brigade for being a member of ZAPU and being an ex-ZIPRA combatant. Audience members also responded openly and shared their personal experiences. The sharing and documenting of experiences and stories of the Gukurahundi through theatre, post-performance discussions, interviews, and focus group discussions, therefore, provided a way of validating these experiences, filling gaps, and creating an archive for the coming generations. Documenting the atrocities also serves as a reminder to humanity about human beings' capacity for violence – the consequences of it and the dangers of 'othering' of any kind such as tribal, racial, gender, and so on.

I argue that, in this research, art was used to create a communal archive of the Gukurahundi experience for reference by future generations. Art plays an important part in documenting history and creating archives for the transfer of memories to the coming generations (Taylor 2003; Roach 1996). While Phelan (1993) views performance as becoming itself through disappearance, when it comes to the memories of a community and historical trauma there is a need to archive. One of the big issues with the Gukurahundi was the lack of 'evidence' – for a long time, the CCJP & LRF (1997) report was the main document of reference. This research, therefore, is part of the efforts to document and create an archive of the community – to tell the stories of who died and who survived. It is a place to store memory. There is an acknowledgement that theatre can document and create an archive, keeping the memory alive (Schneider 2001).

The role of art in processing, engaging, and documenting painful history so that people may continue to 'bear witness' has been widely acknowledged most notably with 'Holocaust art'. As Caroline Lenette (2019: 49) points out, art is a way of "documenting unspeakable atrocities and everyday realities, so that these events would not be forgotten". Documenting the atrocities is important because, arguably, silence nurtures suffering and carries more chances of aiding the transference of trauma to the following generations. Boal (2000), when discussing the Theatre of the Oppressed, argues that oppression is felt and lives in the body. This can be inherited too since we often follow or mimic our parents' body movements and gestures. Theatre of the Oppressed involves theatre games of 'knowing the body' to release oppression. The use of theatre games in this way was done in this research, as discussed in Chapter 5. Freire's (2005) concept of the 'culture of silence' helped in understanding and breaking this

culture during this research. As Freire frames it, liberatory education and critical awareness are important in breaking the culture of silence. Critical awareness was cultivated during this research.

The research showed that the second-generation survivors of the Gukurahundi identify with the Gukurahundi experiences of their parents and relatives by association. Because these atrocities were committed against their parents, relatives, and community members, the second-generation sufferers see themselves as having been, by extension, targeted as well. They view the silencing of the Gukurahundi public discussions by the state as something that not only affects the first-generation sufferers but something that affects them. This way, the second-generation sufferers feel the pain of 'gukurahundiality'. Some of the participants also pointed out that the stories of pain and suffering related to the Gukurahundi that have been shared with them by their parents, relatives, friends, and community members have traumatised them. This points to the possibility of the transference of trauma having taken place between the first-generation and the second-generation sufferers of the Gukurahundi, a situation that Hirsch (2008) laments in her writings on the Holocaust. This also indicates that there is a possibility for the trauma to continue being transmitted to the coming generations if the Gukurahundi issue is not sufficiently addressed. The necessity of this research and the need for more similar research of this nature is therefore self-evident.

During the research, young people who belong to the second-generation sufferers of the Gukurahundi expressed their frustration with the lack of concrete action towards addressing the Gukurahundi issue. Their desire, as aptly articulated during the research processes, is to see this issue addressed. The frustration understandably comes from the threat posed by the Gukurahundi burden from the past to displace their own stories (Hirsch 2008). They feel that the pending question of the Gukurahundi is making it difficult for them to tell their own stories unique to their generation.

Yet, the second generation is in a dilemma because the pending Gukurahundi issue has to be addressed as it threatens their future, as I have already argued. Faced with such a threat, the second generation cannot remain silent. They feel they have a responsibility to address this issue. The experiences of the second-generation survivors can be likened to those of the survivors of the massacre in Tulsa, United States in 1921 where white Americans descended on an African American neighbourhood, killed 300, and displaced 10 000 people (New York Times 2021). The New York Times records that this incident was never officially spoken of, a situation similar to that of the Gukurahundi. However, in 2021 the City of Tulsa had started work on investigating the graves of the massacre that happened in 1921. The website of the City of Tulsa has a quotation of the Mayor saying:

The only way to move forward in our work to bring about reconciliation in Tulsa is by seeking the truth honestly. As we open this investigation 101 years later, there are both unknowns and truths to uncover. But we are committed to exploring what happened in 1921 through a

collective and transparent process - filling gaps in our city's history, and providing healing and justice to our community. (Mayor G.T. Bynum 2021)

The second-generation survivors of the Gukurahundi can take a leaf from the survivors of the Tulsa massacre and raise their voices so that the issue of the 1980s massacres in Zimbabwe is addressed. As Plunka (2009) argues in the context of the Holocaust, artists and survivors must speak out on the atrocities. Cementing such a standpoint, Levi (1988) argues that remaining silent in such circumstances is tantamount to surrendering agency into the hands of the perpetrator. Desiring to claim their agency and to contribute to the transformation of their society, the second-generation sufferers of the Gukurahundi pointed out that they believe participating in this research has the potential to steer the ship in the right direction – to ignite discussions both as a way of dealing with trauma that confronts them and as a way of encouraging broader discussions that seek to map the way forward.

8.2 Conclusion

Speak Out! Phase one and two should be understood and viewed as part of the larger efforts to encourage the victims of the Gukurahundi, their children, and their community members to speak out on this issue and also to document and archive stories associated with this period. *Speak Out!* extends the efforts of other theatrical works in Zimbabwe that have addressed the Gukurahundi. These were not collectively devised. This research therefore brought a fresh approach of theatrically addressing the Gukurahundi issue by using devised theatre as a form and approach. Again, my research included post-performance discussions that were not there for the previous theatrical works. In doing all this, this research was driven by a desire to encourage both the participants and the audience members to speak out on the Gukurahundi and share their experiences and stories associated with this period. Speaking out has the potential to aid grieving, a *langalezo* experience. As already argued, the research sought to document and archive the Gukurahundi stories. Documenting and creating an archive is important because it provides a reference point for current and future generations on what transpired during this period, and in the aftermath.

What emerged from the research showed that the emotional and psychological wounds of the Gukurahundi are not yet healed and remain in memory, both experienced and inherited. The victims and their communities are frustrated that their pain and suffering are not publicly acknowledged and public discussions of the issue are being silenced. The issue of the Gukurahundi is a sensitive issue that should not be trivialised. Efforts to address it and to find closure are necessary for the sake of the victims and the sake of unity, peace, and progress in Zimbabwe as a country.

Theatricality in the form of devised theatre offers the potential to create a social and aesthetic space to speak to and about the issue of the Gukurahundi in Zimbabwe. Techniques such as improvisation, storytelling, the use of the Spect-Actor concept in rehearsal, the use of songs as commentary, and the use of personal experiences as material for the creation of the play helped in achieving this. The nature of collectively devised theatre, which requires people to discuss and work together in creating a play, makes a *langalezo* experience possible. The post-performance discussions showed the potential of enhancing the creation of a *langalezo* experience which, within the Ndebele culture, is a grieving experience.

Deploying devised theatre to encourage a *langalezo* experience (grieving) through the creation of a democratic social and aesthetic space for addressing the Gukurahundi was not always a smooth process. There were challenges here and there, as discussed in the body of the thesis. When the project started, during the first interviews and focus group discussion and early devising days, I observed that some participants were very uncomfortable with speaking about the Gukurahundi. They cited fear of state repression. Some participants even enquired as to whether I had a backup plan in the event of them being arrested. That they were asking about a backup plan is testimony that they felt there was a danger that may befall those who talk about the Gukurahundi. This even justifies the necessity of this research. People do not feel safe talking about the Gukurahundi.

Another major challenge was that most of the participants were new to devising. They were used to acting in plays where they would be given a script. As a result, at many points when they felt frustrated by the process of devising, they would request that I just write the script and give them ready copies. Through negotiations, we managed to steer the ship to the intended destination. Despite the challenges, the research process moved forward and the results show that indeed the efforts did not go to waste. As much as claims for a total transformation of the situation cannot be made, a celebration of these little victories would not be misplaced. I believe that more such research can make a difference. As some Ndebele sayings go “*isifula sigcwala ngezifudlana*” [tributaries are what make the river full] and “*ithunga ligcwala ngomphehlo*” [the repeated milking of the cow is what gets the milk container full].

Participating in both devising and performing theatre created a platform for the young people of Matabeleland to voice their frustrations, concerns, pain, and suffering from the Gukurahundi experiences. Most of these experiences were passed down to the younger generation through stories told by their parents and other relatives, or by community members. Devised theatre offers an alternative platform to build democracy by providing alternative spaces for the subaltern to speak. Through theatre and the discussions associated with it, stories of the Gukurahundi were voiced, shared, and documented. This helps in filling gaps and bringing to the centre the narratives that have been marginalised for long. This is important for a *langalezo* experience.

While participating in the processes of devising and staging theatre encouraged the participants to speak out on the issue of the Gukurahundi, there is no guarantee that this will cause a noticeable change at a national level. However, these efforts are worth celebrating. That the participants and the audience members openly discussed the Gukurahundi is encouraging. This demonstrates efforts towards healing through creative expression. This way, efforts towards healing are situated within the Ndebele culture in particular and the African culture in general. Viewed from an African perspective, the research shows that we can hurt each other but we can also heal each other. The research also shows that fear and repression are impossible to live with. Openness and honesty are necessary in addressing the Gukurahundi issue. Through arts, an environment for openness and honesty can be created, as was the case in this research.

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Appendix A

SPEAK OUT! Phase two script

SCENE 1

The scene opens with two young people of marriageable age, a male and a female playfully chasing each other onto the stage as romantic music plays in the background.

YOUNG WOMAN: *(Laughing): Kanti awula jubane lejubane?* [Ah, you don't even have speed! Do you?]

YOUNG MAN: *(Laughing too): Ah, udlala ngami wena, ngingumtshina mina!* [You are joking, I am as fast as a machine!]

YOUNG WOMAN: *(Avoiding him): Manje awungibambi!* [You can't catch me!]

YOUNG MAN: *Man'ubone!* [We will see about that!] *(He dives for her and the young woman ducks).*

After playfully chasing each other for a while, the young man catches the young woman. They are both giggling and panting.

YOUNG MAN: *Bambiyani isikhukukazi sami* [I caught you, my hen!]

YOUNG WOMAN: *Ayi suka wena!* [Get away!] Stop being naughty. *Uliqhude kanti wena?* [Are you a cork?]

YOUNG MAN: *Ngihlanyiswa luthando layibuhle bakho lobu* [Your love and beauty drive me crazy]. That is why I have planned to marry you in a white wedding. Imagine the two of us standing there at the altar and the Pastor saying "You may kiss the bride".

YOUNG WOMAN: *Ayisuka! Yikho vele okujahileyo?* [Get away! Is that all you are rushing for?]

They both laugh.

YOUNG MAN: *Imagine sesilabantwabethu laphana...* [Imagine when we have our children...]

YOUNG WOMAN: *I first born yethu ithiwa nguNomhlekezi...* [Our first born's name being Nomhlekezi...]

YOUNG MAN: *Ah, phela libizo lenkazana lelo* [But that is a girl's name].

YOUNG WOMAN: *Yes, ngifuna amankazana mina* [Yes, I want girls].

YOUNG MAN: *Mina ngifuna abafana, imagine oBrian, laboSipho, laboJabu* [Imagine when we have boys called Brian, Sipho, Jabu...]

YOUNG WOMAN: *Ah, boys are naughty. Ngifuna amankazana mina* [I want girls].

YOUNGMAN: *So sizaba labafana lamankazana* [Then we will have both boys and girls]. One girl, five boys.

YOUNG WOMAN: (*Laughing*) Yes, that one is a good idea. After all it is God who gives children and all children are precious.

YOUNGMAN: Amen Pastor!

They all laugh.

YOUNG MAN: (*Taking her by the hand*). Come let us do our wedding dance.

(More giggles from the two)

They hold each other romantically as they dance to the soft music. They are doing a wedding dance. The climax of the dance is at a point when Young woman falls on Young man's embrace.

YOUNG WOMAN: (*Looking up to Young man happily*). I am so happy that in a few days' time I will be Mrs Dhlamini.

Young man changes abruptly and become cold. He disengages from the young woman, walks away and stands at a distance gazing into the empty air, worried. Young woman remains standing on the same spot, confused and watching Young man in an effort to understand what is happening.

YOUNG WOMAN: What's wrong? *Kutheni my love?* [What is it my love?]

Young man looks at her and looks away without answering?

YOUNG WOMAN: Hello?

The other dancers (abakhaphi) come in from a lunch recess. As they walk in they are finishing their drinks and throwing away empty containers. They are in a jovial mood.

DANCER 1: *Kuyahamba yini Dlams?* [Is all well Dlams?] I hope *awusoze uwise umakoti* on the wedding day [Let's hope on the wedding day you will not let down the bride by making her fall].

YOUNG MAN: (*Recollecting himself and pretending that all is well*). *Ungesabi bro* everything is perfect now. *Ungambuza laye uSindie* [Don't worry my buddy, everything is perfect now. You can even ask Sindie].

DANCER 2: *Akakuwisanga Sindie?* [Sindie, did he not miss you and let you fall down?]

YOUNG WOMAN: Let's get back to business guys. Lunch is over.

The dancers start rehearsing their dances as Young man and Young woman take seats on the right side of the stage, watching the dances. Young woman is very engaged with the dancing while Young man is uninterested and looking away most of the time. It is Young woman who keeps trying to get his attention.

YOUNG WOMAN: *(Pointing to the dancers)* Khangela my love! [Look my love!] Isn't that beautiful?

Young man looks at the dancers and then looks away.

YOUNG WOMAN: Oh my my my *kuhle lokhu*. [Wow! This is beautiful]

YOUNG WOMAN: *Lathi sweetie kumele sigide kahle kanje angithi?* [We also have to dance like them my love, isn't it?]

No response

YOUNG WOMAN: Sweetie?

YOUNG MAN: Yeah, *ngiyakuzwa* [Yeah, I am listening].

YOUNG WOMAN: *Wena uyayithanda yini kodwa i dance leyi?* [Do you like the dance moves?]

No response

YOUNG WOMAN: My love? *(She notices that he is looking away and not interested).*

The young woman, annoyed, gets up and pulls the young man aside.

YOUNG WOMAN: What's wrong sweetie? What's wrong?

YOUNG MAN: Ah, never mind.

YOUNG WOMAN: Oh I see, there is another woman. You don't want to marry me. You are thinking of someone else

YOUNG MAN: It's nothing like that...

YOUNG WOMAN: Then cancel the wedding, cancel it. *Angithi awufuni ukutshada lami* [It seems you are not interested in marrying me].

YOUNG MAN: No my dear, understand.

YOUNG WOMAN: What is there to understand? *Awujabulanga ngomtshado wethu?* [Are you not happy about our wedding?]

YOUNG MAN: Sweetie *(He crosses in front of her and sits at centre stage)*. *Yindaba leyana eyesibongo sami* [It's that issue about my surname].

DANCER 1: *Isibongo sakho? Angithi wena unguDlamini* [Your surname? But you are a Dlamini]. What's wrong with that?

DANCER 2: What's wrong with being a Dlamini? *Ususithini kanti Dlams?* [What are you saying now Dlams?]

YOUNG WOMAN: Okay, *leyana owawuyihambele kuCommision?* [Okay, that issue that you took to the Commission?]

YOUNG MAN: Yes, *yona leyana* [Yes, that one]. (*To the dancers*) Guys, *isibongo sami ngesakoNdlovu ayisiso sakoDlamini* [Guys, my surname is Ndlovu not Dlamini].

DANCER 2: How Dlams? Sorry, I mean Ndlovu.

DANCER 2: *Angizwisisi mina, so iCommission ingena ngaphi khonapho?* [I don't understand this. So how does the Commission come in there?]

YOUNG MAN: *Isibongo sakoDlamini ayisiso sami, ngesika mama. Ubaba wadlula emhlabeni, ngendlela ebuhlungu kakhulu. Asizange senelise ukuthola ideath certificate. Ngokunjalo ibirth certificate ngayithathiswa ngumama esebenzisa isibongo sakhe esakoDlamini. Yikho nje ngangihambe ku public hearing yeCommision ukwenzela ukuthi bangisize. Phela ngiyatshada in two weeks' time. Kungenzeka kanjani ukuthi abantwabami bakoNdlovu babizwe ngoDlamini, umkami uMrs Ndlovu abengu Mrs Dlamini? Mina besengisiba ngubani? Vele ngingubani? NginguNdlovu kumbe nginguDlamini? Akwenzi lokhu, no!*

[Dlamini is not my surname. It is my mother's surname. My father passed away, in a very painful manner. We failed to get a death certificate for him. As a result, it is my mother who took a birth certificate for me using her maiden surname. That is why I took my issue to the public hearings that were conducted by the Commission so that they assist me. Look, I am getting married in two weeks' time. How can it be acceptable that my children who are Ndlovus use a Dlamini surname, and my wife Mrs Ndlovu becomes Mrs Dlamini? And then who do I become? Actually, who am I? Am I Ndlovu or Dlamini? That is not right! No!]

DANCER 1: *Manje bathini kuCommision?* [So what did they say at the Commision?]

YOUNG MAN: *Bathi bazangisiza ngithole ibirth certificate eqondileyo. Ngabatshela konke lokuthi ubaba wafa njani* [They said they will assist me to get a correct birth certificate. I told them everything concerning how my father died].

DANCER 2: *Wafa njani ubaba?* [How did your father die?]

YOUNG MAN: *Bambulala ngesikhathi seGukurahundi!* [They killed him during the Gukurahundi].

All: *Oh, iGukurahundi [Oh, the Gukurahundi].*

Gunshot sounds fade in. Everyone starts screaming, panicking and running around until they all exit the stage. Gunshot sounds continue for a while and screaming also continues backstage.

SCENE 2

Actors come back on stage as different characters in a flashback scene as gunshot sounds continue on the background. In this flashback, we see two 5 Brigade soldiers pushing in a man in his 50s. They kick him and beat him up and force him to sit on the ground. Three women are also force marched by one of the soldiers onto the stage. They are crying and screaming. They are kicked around and forced to sit on the ground.

SOLDIER 1: *Nyarara, dissident! [Be quiet you dissident!]*

SOLDIER 2: *We will kill you today.*

OLD WOMAN: *Please don't kill him.*

Soldier 1 produces a match box from his pocket, looks at it and smile. He beckons to Soldier 2 with his hand and then shows him the match box. Moving aside, he lights the match, watches its burning flame and then blows it out.

SOLDIER 1: *Comrade, let's burn this thing (referring to the man on the ground) right there in that hut (pointing to the side).*

The man screams "No, Please!"

SOLDIER 2: *Good idea, let's burn the dissident.*

*The two soldiers laugh and start beating up the man dragging him out. The women are also kicked around and marched to the direction of the hut. They are screaming and begging for mercy. Screams continue backstage and later die out. The actors come back on stage and stand at their previous spots as the song *Senzeni na? [What have we done?]* plays in the background. When actors are in their positions, the song fades out.*

SCENE 3

YOUNG MAN: *This is what I told them at the Commission.*

DANCER 1: Let's hope they will assist. Let us get back to the rehearsal, time is not on our side...

YOUNG WOMAN: (*Who had become lost in thought*) Not too fast. I also have something that I want to tell you guys.

DANCER 2: About what?

YOUNG WOMAN: About Gukurahundi. The horrible things that happened.

ALL: *Kwenzekalani?* [What happened?] What happened?

YOUNG WOMAN: This is my story..... (*Other actors sit down on stage and listen attentively as Young Woman narrates her story. The song Senzeni na? continues in the background*). It was 1983 when they came with their guns and their red berets. The 5 Brigade soldiers had invaded our village *khonale ekhaya eTsholotsho* [in my rural home area Tsholotsho]. They started running. Some people were shot and some were killed. My aunt could not run very far because she was pregnant, *ezithwele* (pregnant), 8 months pregnant. One of the soldiers caught up with her and said to her....

SOLDIER 1: (*One of the male actors has transformed into this character of a soldier by putting on a red beret*) So tell me, you are trying to run away with that child of a dissident? So it's simple, Comrade come this side (*He beckons with a hand to another actor who has also quickly transformed himself into a soldier. The soldier stands up laughing scornfully and moves closer to the woman who is still kneeling down. The two soldiers have put her between themselves. Young woman has transformed to the character pregnant Aunt*).

SOLDIER 2: Now Comrade we are going to rip open this stomach (*pointing to her stomach*) and remove this ugly son of a dissident. And you are going to be an example to those other dissidents who are running away.

The soldiers characters remove their berets and transform back to their young people characters. They sit down at their previous places.

YOUNG WOMAN: (*Back to her Young woman character*): So he took his bayonet and he....

All: (*Wailing in agony*) Awuu!

Young woman also curls in agony, holding her stomach as if in deep pain.

Pause.

DANCER 3: (*Standing up*) *Ngamanga lawo!* [Those are lies!]. These are all fabricated stories.

ALL OTHERS: (*Standing up*) *Uqinisile! Kwenzakala!* [She is telling the truth! All this happened!].

YOUNG WOMAN: *Ngqiqinisile* [I am telling the truth!]. This is my aunt's story. *Umamomncane, uphuma ngiphume kamama* [My mother's sister].

DANCER 3: *Wena wakuzwa ngobani khonokho njengoba wena wawungakazalwa ngo1983?* [Who told you about those things since you were not yet born in 1983?]

YOUNG WOMAN: *Ngezwa ngomama* [I heard it from my mother]. I believe this is how my aunt would have narrated the story if she got a chance...*(sadly)* but she never gone one. She died on the spot.

DANCER 2 and DANCER 4: *(Sadly)* Eish. So what about the baby?

YOUNG WOMAN: She died on the spot too. She was a girl, the only niece I could ever had.

The other characters move closer to the Young woman to console her.

ALL: *(To Young woman)* *Langalezo* [Condolences].

Pause.

Young woman starts the song "Hamba nhlizyo yakhe uye ezulwini" and they all sing it in unison. They sing only the first stanza.

Lyrics of the song

First stanza

Hamba nhlizyo yakhe, uye ezulwini x2 [May her soul go to heaven] x2

Akukh'ukuphumula lapha emhlabeni x2 [There is no rest on this earth] x2

Second stanza

Lumhlaba asikhaya lami, khayalami lisezulwini [This earth is not my home] x2

Akukh'ukuphumula lapha emhlabeni x2 [There is no rest on this earth] x2

There is a pause after the song. Everyone is in deep thought.

DANCER 1: Guys, me too, I did not get the chance to see my grandfather because *bambulala, bamtshisa ephila* [they killed him, they burnt him alive] because they claimed that he was an ex-ZIPRA soldier.

DANCER 4: Guys, I also heard a very bad story, a terrible one – this story about *abantwana abancane ababegigwa ngesikhathi seGukurahundi* [young children who were pounded to death using pestle and

mortar during the Gukurahundi] but when I tried to share it with my family they told me to shut up because *bathi lindaba ayikhulunywa, bathi iyatshayisa, bathi iyabulalisa, bathi iyanyamalalisa* [they said such a story cannot be shared because those who share it risk being beaten, killed, kidnapped and made to disappear].

What follows is a poetic exchange in poetic language and form.

DANCER 4: Now that they say we may speak and we are speaking – *hatshi ukuvinjwa, hatshi ukwethuselwa* [no to silencing and gagging of our voices, no to intimidation. We may forgive and forget but without answers *eish ngiyasola* [eish I have doubts]...

DANCER 1: Yes, how can we forgive, how can we heal, how can we reconcile? Yes, I mean heal. It may be something that belongs to the past for them. It may be history to some of you but to us the victims, the people of Matabeleland the wounds are still fresh, the pain is still deep within...

DANCER 4: Tell us we are listening. Explain to us the children of Matabeleland. *Silambe iqiniso...*[We are hungry for the truth...]

DANCER 1: Bhalagwe is full of our fathers, our mothers, our brothers and our sisters. But still they say it was a moment of madness. What kind of madness is associated with brutality, forced disappearances, not to mention the killing?

DANCER 4: For how long will we continue being scared to tell our stories? For how long will we continue to carry all these burdens from the past? *Koze kube nini sikhala ziphelela esifubeni?* [How long should we continue to bottle in our hurt and grief?] Tell us the truth. *Hatshi ukucatshisa umzimba izigamba zisegcekeni* [No to pretence and hypocrisy].

DANCER 1: Its high time we heal, it's high time we reconcile. It's high time we know the truth. *Tshela abantu iqiniso* [Tell people the truth].

DANCER 2: They came to our land bearing bludgeons of war.

They came and found us unarmed, for the war was done

And the sword had been bent to a ploughshare.

They came, seven days faster than the loins of the weak,

While the forest and our hearts still stank

With corpses of brothers and white men
Whom time had sacrificed for the gestation of freedom.
We were mourning our brothers lost in the wilderness,
And the children they left were told they sounded like their fathers

We were mourning the cost of peace when they came;
Welcoming old brothers-in-arms whose palm enfolds harm
They took us by the arms
Twirled us in the dance of the falcon,
We were the hares forced to scare into the forest.
Forced to run, to run from the soldiers of our flag,
Forced to run, they would not listen when we begged.
They came for us, armed for war when we thought peace.

I gave my hand you cut it to slap my face,
Crushed my nose with the symbol of black power.
I was not there but these stories were told to me
They are our stories, my story, our experiences, my experiences

DANCER 4: May their souls...

ALL: Rest in peace...

DANCER 4: But my question is...

DANCER 1: *Pho babebulawelwani odadewethu?* [Why were our sisters killed?]

DANCER 4: *Zazibulawelwani izihlobo zethu?* [Why were our relatives killed?]

DANCER 1: *Izingane ezincane ezazikhasa pho zazibulawelwani?* [Why were little crawling babies killed?]

DANCER 4: *Ingane encane eyayisesiswini isono sayo sasingesani?* [What was the unborn child's sin?]

The song "Isono Sami" [My Sin] fades up.

DANCER 4: I hear they said Gukurahundi was a moment of madness.

OTHERS: What? Who was mad then?

DANCER 1: *Ngizwa kuthiwa* [I hear] they also claim that Gukurahundi was the rain that washed away the chaff...

OTHERS: Who was the chaff then?

In a moment of rage they all show disgust and frustration, shouting "Ayi suka!" [Get away!] They start walking away.

DANCER 4: *(Stopping them)* Guys!

Everyone stops and turns back.

DANCER 4: Let us get back to our rehearsal. *Buyani guys, umtshado ususondele* [Come guys, the wedding day is fast approaching].

YOUNG MAN: *(Angry and showing frustration)* what's the use? My life is upside down. *NginguNdlovu, nginguDlamini. No, angisoDlamini, angisoNdlovu. No, ngiyikhokonke. No, I mean akukho engiyikho – ngisemoyeni nje. Yingxabangxoza nje kuphela.*

[My life is upside down. I am Mr Ndlovu, I am Mr Dlamini. No, I am not Mr Dlamini, I am not Mr Ndlovu. No, I am all that. No, I mean I am not any of that – I am just nowhere, floating in the air. Everything is just chaotic].

DANCER 4: *Hayi, hayi bro. Ipast yakho yiyo eyingxabangxoza kodwa ifuture, hayi hayi bro, isingalunga (As he says this he moves closer to Young man and holds his hand. Others follow the proceedings quietly, occasionally nodding in agreement), isingaba bright, isingaba snux uyabo?*

[No, no buddy. Your past is what is chaotic but your future no no no! It can be better *(As he says this he moves closer to Youngman and holds his hand. Others follow the proceedings quietly, occasionally nodding in agreement)*, it can become bright, it can become nice].

YOUNG MAN: *Ucabanga njalo?* [Do you think so?]

DANCER 4: Yeah. I believe *iCommission izokusiza uthole ibirth certificate eqondileyo* *(He moves closer to comfort Young man. Looking up he realises that the others are still standing there and not taking any action and he addresses them).* *Guys libukeleni? Asiqhubekeni nge practise.*

[Yeah. I believe the Commission will assist you to get a correct birth certificate (*He moves closer to comfort Young man. Looking up he realises that the others are still standing there and not taking any action and he addresses them*). Guys, why are you standing there doing nothing? Let us continue with the wedding step rehearsal).

ALL: Yeah, *asiqhubekeni*. [Yeah, let's continue].

The wedding step song starts playing. Dancers get to their positions and resume the wedding step rehearsal. Dancer 4 stands up and join others on the dance floor while Young woman sits down next to Young man. After dancing for a while, the dancers turn to the couple to be and genuflect. The couple claps for them. They turn to the audience and genuflect. When they genuflect for the third time, Young man and Young woman have done their own bit and joined them.

END OF PERFORMANCE, BEGINNING OF POST-PERFORMANCE DISCUSSIONS.