

The Zimbabwe Pan African Youth Agenda: Constructing Activist Synergy in Zimbabwe

A December 6, 2011 interview of the Zimbabwe Pan African Youth Agenda
by Itibari M. Zulu, editor, *The Journal of Pan African Studies*

Why was The Zimbabwe Pan African Youth Agenda created, and what is your central focus or issue?

The Zimbabwe Pan African Youth Agenda (ZIPAYA) was born out of the need to defend Africa in general and Zimbabwe in particular against the imperialist onslaught. As patriotic youth who believe in the morality of African resources being owned and used for the benefit of Africans, we strongly defend the Zimbabwean government position to give land back to the original owners.

So land is a central issue in Zimbabwe today?

Yes, and contrary to British and US sponsored misinformation Zimbabwe is a leading nation in the struggle for continental unity and democracy. Zimbabwe was born out of a bitter armed struggle against British settler-colonialism. What led to the waging of this struggle was land. At the end of the colonial period (1980), the minority of white farmers owned 75% of the best arable land, while millions of Black people were rendered landless and jobless.

Thus, the historical injustices of colonialism and racial privilege ignited and fueled the wars of liberation known as the First (1896), Second (1966-1979), and Third (2000-2002) Chimurengas. Britain and U.S. responded to the Third Chimurenga immediately by initiating an international campaign to demonize President Mugabe and the people's movement. And furthermore, the cowardly, yet consistent use of economic sanctions was imposed on Zimbabwe by the U.S., Britain and the E.U., and it persists to this day.

What effect has global pessimism and sanctions had on Zimbabwe?

Nowhere is Pan-Africanism being severely tested in Africa than in Zimbabwe. The current tidal wave of global pessimism and sanctions against the people of Zimbabwe has made life excruciatingly challenging for the common folk. Unemployment is reported to be over 70%. The government of Zimbabwe sought to unlock the value of its people by freeing land to most of the people in an exercised dubbed "The Third Chimurenga – Our Land Is Our Economy" which was a code for the Land Redistribution Exercise.

Resistance to this exercise has been fierce as both the former colonial settlers (who happen to be Whites) and their sympathizers sought to discredit it as illegal and not consistent with human rights. Undaunted by this criticism and isolation, the Zimbabwe government successfully resettled many people and preached the gospel of self-sustenance and nation building.

What strategies will ZIPAYA use in defense of Pan Africanism in Zimbabwe?

Our number one strategy is the use of proper propaganda. Hence, we plan to establish the Zimbabwe Support and Solidarity Network website as a worldwide network of Zimbabwe volunteers and global Africans dedicated to bringing positive and unbiased news and information about Zimbabwe free of charge to counter the negative propaganda about Zimbabwe. The West's media coverage of the Zimbabwe situation is blatantly biased, with the aim of shaping publics' opinions over the situation.

In this regard, we are also connected to some media outlets, internet news portals (Mathaba News Network, Black Star News), black radio stations (GAP Radio, Lib Radio, Pacifica Radio) print media (Positive Action Bulletin, Black Panther Newsletter, African Link) which is willing to coordinate efforts with us to disseminate positive news about Zimbabwe such as in New York, and some of these organizations in the US have been working with the Zimbabwe Embassy in Washington DC to produce a newsletter, to tell our story. Plus, we have also been doing individual efforts to defend the country through an electronic group formed and moderated by us called Afrimedia (www.africa2020.com/Afrimedia) which has an African global membership of about 500, scattered all over the world.

What is ZIPAYA specifically proposing in Zimbabwe in reference to youth development?

Mental decolonization workshops will be held across the country, most of the young people are like bottles filled with dirty water, and what is needed, is to empty the bottles and refill them with clean water. These workshops will help to reinforce a sense of identity, patriotism, and racial pride. We will thus work on changing the mind set by instilling Black pride, Black capability and Black success. So some of the topics which will be covered will examine the grand agenda of imperialism and its manifestations in institutions such as the IMF, the World Bank, NATO, the UN and mainstream media outlets such as CNN, BBC, Fox etc. Also, the youth will be taught why Pan Africanism is the only true and practical ideology to solve African problems, in addition to lessons on African history, civilizations, culture, and liberation.

Will ZIPAYA be involved in other arenas?

Yes, in health. Our youth are the most affected by the AIDS scourge, so there is a need to educate our youth about the HIV/AIDS dangers. Here, the youth of Zimbabwe must ask UN Secretary General what he plans to do about the claim of the former director of UNICEF Carol Bellamy when she called for attempts to prevent Zimbabwe from having access to the resources of the Millennium Fund for HIV/Aids persecution of the poor. A country cannot be denied humanitarian aid because of their political choices and direction. ZIPAYA will expose this fascist and inhumane effort to use political leverage to deny Zimbabwe access to resources to fight the pandemic.

Second, we will be involved in entrepreneurship, because of the economic sabotage by Britain and its allies, jobs are now hard to come by. ZIPAYA will therefore form projects where youth will be involved in income generating projects, and help to create employment. We will also lobby the government to give more land to youth. And other projects are lined up that will position the youth out of the dungeon of poverty and into self-sustenance, wealth creation and nation building.

Farming has been identified as project number one because of the current support that the land usage revolution is enjoying. These projects cover public transport, carpentry, brick molding, fence making, walling, advertising, marketing and filmmaking. All these projects will include training on small medium entrepreneurship, leadership and supervision, motivation and HIV/Aids awareness.

In short, what are the objectives of ZIPAYA?

To build Pan African socialization systems and practices that will encourage a strong identity and commitment to the practice of the divine principles of MAAT which consist of truth, justice, righteousness, order, harmony, balance and reciprocity. Second, we are working to promote a widespread and collective ideological training/teaching of the theory of anti-imperialist struggle based in the case for African unity and the building of socialism. To provide an organic link with the people of Africa, Asia and Latin America who are struggling against imperialist machinations, to organize and encourage African businessman in the Diaspora to invest in Africa (especially in Zimbabwe), to disseminate positive news about African nations and other socialist countries under the media onslaught by imperialism; to work closely with other Pan African youth movements doing the same efforts in the spirit of unity to eliminate and fight imperialism that include the exchange and sharing of knowledge and experiences pertinent to the development of African people, to create a network of people and institutions committed to achieving real change for African people, as mentioned before, to promote holistic health care services that would improve access to reproductive health information and counseling for HIV/AIDS.

I also understand that you have a library project wherein you are asking for the donation of revolutionary Pan African literature? Can you give us some details about that project, particularly, how we can help?

On behalf of the Zimbabwe Pan African Youth Agenda, I am kindly appealing to my Pan Africanist comrades to support us with revolutionary Pan Africanist literature for our youth and student study group .We are also hoping to establish an African Study Centre where youth and students will have access to that collection. Our youth need constant and ongoing political education to keep them aware of our urgent tasks in our struggle for total liberation. We are open to any suggestions which can help to strengthen this initiative; even those who wish to visit Zimbabwe for speaking engagements are welcome. The mailing address is Cde Kwanisai Mafa (cdemafa@yahoo.com), Zimbabwe Pan African Youth Agenda, P.O Box 123, Gweru, Zimbabwe.

In conclusion, do you have any parting words for our readers?

Yes, African people must not allow imperialism to hypocritically dictate how and with whom we engage with in Africa! Our people's movement for land reforms in Zimbabwe must be supported and spread throughout Africa!

Thank you.