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Commentary, analysis and investigations
on issues affecting African Americans
www.blackcommentator.com

July 10, 2008 - Issue 285

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Africa Advocacy & The Zimbabwe Factor
By Netfa Freeman
BlackCommentator.com **Guest Commentator**

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Like some BlackCommentator.com commentaries of the last two weeks, accounts of the situation in Zimbabwe by Africa advocacy organizations are virtually identical to those of corporate media, UK and US government officials. [Solidarity With The People of Zimbabwe](#) by Nunu Kidane, the [quote](#) by featured cartoonist Tony Namate published in the June 26th issue No. 283, and Bill Fletcher's commentary titled, [Mugabe Sworn in Officially...Simultaneously Loses his Legacy](#), in last week's issue No. 284 all depict Zimbabwe as descending to hell in a hand basket at the hands of a despotic Mugabe.

The disproportionate attention on Zimbabwe has intensified in the last few weeks as a result of the presidential run-off that took place Friday, June 27th. African (Black) people should see this attention clearly as a reason for extremely critical analysis on the matter.

Malcolm X warned us that: *"If you form the habit of going by what others think about someone, instead of searching that thing out for yourself and seeing for yourself, you will be walking west when you think you're going east, and you will be walking east when you think you're going west...you'll always be maneuvered into a situation where you are never fighting your actual enemies, where you will find yourself fighting your*

own self."

First let me make it clear that the views and opinions in this commentary are my own and do not reflect the position of the Institute for Policy Studies. What about the facts in this commentary? Well, those speak for themselves. After sharing some of what follows with a work colleague, her response to me was "all I hear you saying is that everything the MDC does is bad and everything Mugabe does is good." This was especially baffling since I had not once mentioned Mugabe's name in what I had said. I've often run into this sort of thing. It shows that hatred for Robert Mugabe has been stirred to such rabid levels that any statement even remotely favorable to him is not judged on merits of veracity but on its political mileage. It's not at all politically advantageous within the US for a person to be seen as favoring the Zimbabwe government, even if it's over imperialism. That is to say it's not the best avenue for an opportunist. African people cannot afford such defective political judgment.

Given the age-old propaganda ploy of demonizing for dubious political ends we must be able to distinguish between blind idolizing and points of fact; between rabid contempt and points of fact. Is it blind idolizing or acknowledging a fact that a ZANU PF led government finally corrected the racist land allocation by redistributing land to over 300,000 indigenous Zimbabwean families? Is it not a fact that a ZANU PF led government has formed legislation to give majority ownership of the country's mines and enterprises to the Black majority? Is it not a fact that a ZANU PF led government jettisoned the imperialists' Economic Structural Adjustment Programs by imposing tariff restrictions and investment performance requirements, nationalizing certain business enterprises, and institutionalizing economic indigenization policies? It is not a fact that imperialism is actively trying to sabotage all of these things and in the process raising Mugabe as the poster child for all that is wrong in Africa?

Bill Fletcher says, "The Bush administration is not in a position to lecture anyone on human rights or genuine elections. This fact, however, should NOT mean that we remain silent simply because President Bush holds President Mugabe in disdain. The enemy of our enemy is not necessarily our friend." While this makes a good disclaimer from the Bush agenda it also manages to reduce the issue to one of mere disdain between individuals (Bush and Mugabe) versus being the reflection of a historical US policy toward Africa intended to preserve Western economic and political domination over Africa. Why does Bill fail to address exactly why the UK and US are targeting Zimbabwe and even more illuminating fail to address what specific methods they are using against her?

Bill insinuates that those of us who say the primary issue in Zimbabwe is imperialism are subscribing to the flawed logic that the enemy of our enemy is our friend. Actually, Pan-Africanists logic and conviction deduces that because imperialism is an enemy of Africa and we are Africans then the enemies of Africa and/or Zimbabwe are our enemies. Right now imperialism's most pronounced and pointed attack on Africa is in Zimbabwe. When imperialism attacks Zimbabwe it is attacking us. This is our logic. The flawed logic of the "my enemy's enemy..." instead applies to the opposition in Zimbabwe since they are the ones working with the enemies of Africa and humanity for a regime change.

Malcolm's statement is too relevant when we consider that the mission claimed by most Africa Advocacy organizations is to affect US policy toward Africa, yet their activities related to Zimbabwe more so resemble them. The solidarity fund for which Ms. Kidane advocates in her commentary is administered by Africa Action, whose stated mission is to "change U.S. foreign policy and the policies of international institutions in order to support African struggles for peace and development...by changing the policies of our

own government, we have proven that we can make a real difference." [1]

Although when it comes to Zimbabwe many of these organizations more than fall short on this mission, never addressing the policy and interests of their own government toward Zimbabwe and certainly taking no action to change it. Tellingly I have yet to see from these Africa advocates any real elaboration or analysis about the opposition party, the Movement for Democratic Change (MDC). What would Malcolm say about that?

Following such a lead by "advocates for Africa" is not thinking for ourselves or fighting the enemies of Africa. We cannot let the enemies of Africa and enemies of all humanity dictate how we see the world or Africa. They've become extremely sophisticated in how they advance their misinformation so we must become that much more sophisticated about where and how we get our information.

For example the bio accompanying Tony Namate's cartoons brags that, "Zimbabwe's politicians...have described (his work) as treasonable and unpatriotic" as if this were an unreasonable accusation. But several of the media institutions accredited to him do belong to governments hostile to Zimbabwe and that are openly working for regime change against his country. Such as the US government funded Voice of America's Studio 7, Britain's BBC World, and Swedish TV. The intrinsic job then of these media regarding Zimbabwe can only be to attack her sovereignty and right to national self-determination through propaganda.

Based on the African experience should we trust media that is so egregiously wrong on Iraq and historically has never acknowledged immoral and illegal imperialist government agendas? Right now this media are complicit in hushing up the blatant double standard in the US' undeclared asylum for notorious terrorist Luis Posada Carrilles and its unjust imprisonment of five courageous men (a.k.a. The Cuban Five), whose only crime was attempting to thwart the terrorism by the likes of Posada. Yesterday, this regime change was directed at Ghana, Congo, and Vietnam to name only a few. Today it's Cuba, Venezuela, Bolivia, Iran, North Korea and Zimbabwe to name another few. Anywhere such an agenda is in place, a critical thinker knows to believe none of what we read or hear and only half of what we see.

Zimbabwean journalist and filmmaker Olley Maruma demonstrates how...

"On 6 February 2002, [The Zimbabwean Independent](#) carried an article titled, *My Ordeal as Mugabe's Prisoner*, written by Basildon Peta. In the piece, Peta claimed that Zimbabwe's State security agents had wrongfully jailed him. The article was subsequently reproduced in many other newspapers in the West and elsewhere. It later turned out that the Zimbabwe police or state security agents had never arrested Peta. The fictitious article, in which Peta described vividly his "holding cell," an imaginary blocked toilet and the coarse behavior of Zimbabwe's security agents, was in fact the result of his fertile imagination. Yet he did not seem to feel any shame for having passed this off as truthful, fair and objective journalism. When his lies were exposed, Peta was dismissed from his job as a "special projects editor."

"He fled Zimbabwe in disgrace to South Africa only to claim to the sympathetic Western media there that he had been 'hounded' out of Zimbabwe by a repressive state for his 'fearless reporting.' Thus, a dishonest man, who had been exposed to the world as a shameless liar, was hailed by the Western media as a hero. In no time, he was snapped up by the white South African media for whom he continued to write his false and vituperative stories demonizing the government of the 'dictator, Robert Mugabe'" [2].

Now let us compare Guinea and Zimbabwe, both countries having a head of state who

has been in power since early-mid 80's; Lansana Conte in Guinea and Robert Mugabe in Zimbabwe. Conte, however became leader through an imperialist backed military coup following the death of the democratically elected, Pan-Africanist President Sekou Ture. Mugabe on the other hand was democratically elected after earning his place as a freedom fighter in the struggle against British settler colonialism. But only Mugabe receives a heavy degree of patent denunciations for being "in power too long". Not blind idolizing but a point of fact.

A little over a year ago, both countries experienced some internal unrest but not equal consideration by the media or civil society advocates for Africa. As part of a terrorizing spree in Zimbabwe by opposition members who had been firebombing public buses, kombis and police dormitories, and attacking citizens and police on the streets, the MDC with civil society organizations disguised a protest as a prayer vigil during a temporary ban on demonstrations. When an outnumbered group of police - who are rarely armed with guns - were attacked by the mob they were provoked into fatally shooting one of them. The police still received a brutal beating and had to flee [3]. The incident earned a flurry of attention from the international media that spun its coverage as a Mugabe crackdown on dissent completely omitting the actions of the mob. The imperialist governments and "civil society activists" all chimed in unison with condemnations of Mugabe and ZANU PF.

However, the brutal and unprovoked attack by Conte, which mind you occurred roughly at the same time, went relatively unnoticed. Advancing on a crowd with tanks, Conte's forces sprayed a peaceful demonstration of thousands with rapid-fire automatic weapons killing over 60 people and some reports were as high as 200 killed [4]. The same benevolent Western governments and their NGO agents uttered hardly a critical murmur.

Nevertheless Ms. Kidane says: "From news sources, teleconferences and the Zimbabwean Diaspora in the U.S. we hear of violence directed at opposition members who threaten President Mugabe and the current leadership of the Zimbabwe African National Union (ZANU)."

It is naïve not to be skeptical of recent reports that pin blame for all the violence on ZANU-PF given the frequent threats of violence from the MDC and civil society and reports from SADC, the UN and Human Rights Watch that point to violence on both sides. Further, it seems the violence is primarily committed by individuals and small groups taking action on their own, because passions on both sides are inflamed. Why are they inflamed? The West's proxy provocateurs and sanctions have deliberately brought the situation to a boiling point.

Mugabe has publicly scolded supporters of ZANU PF who've perpetrated violence, saying on one occasion, May 17 "Such violence is needless and must stop forthwith." He added, "Support comes from persuasion, not from pugilism. Genuine support for the party cannot come through coercion or violence" [5].

However, MDC's Morgan Tsvangirai has publicly declared that if Mugabe didn't go peacefully he'd be forced out violently [6]. Five years ago Tsvangirai was exposed on video through meetings in London and Montreal, Canada in what was more than likely a plot to assassinate Mugabe and stage a coup d'état [7].

Tendai Biti, the MDC's Secretary General threatened Kenya-style electoral violence if Mugabe won this years election [8]. A glimpse of the handbook being used in all the anti-Mugabe euphoria is revealed when outspoken Mugabe critic Archbishop Pius Ncube says "I think it is justified for Britain to raid Zimbabwe and remove Mugabe..." We

should do it ourselves but there's too much fear. I'm ready to lead the people, guns blazing, but the people are not ready." [9]. Ncube's solution for Zimbabwe is for the former colonizers to intervene militarily. Is that not telling?

What happens when we apply Malcolm's insistence on independent scrutiny to Kidane's request for contributions to a solidarity fund? Kidane says the fund is "organized by civil society organizations in the US who are directly linked to civil society groups on the ground - not political opposition groups *as such*." But assurances that recipients of the funds aren't political opposition cannot be true because if one is opposed to a government and engaged in work to change a political landscape then that is a political opposition. Thus Kidane uses the qualifier "as such."

All the organizations supported by the fund: Zimbabwe Congress of Trade Unions, Crisis In Zimbabwe Coalition, and the Zimbabwe National Student Union were members of the National Constitutional Assembly (NCA), a coalition formed in 1997, which gave birth to the MDC [10]. We would be remiss in our analysis if we did not acknowledge that external forces like Britain's Westminster Fund for Democracy and the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) mostly funded the NCA [11]. Now let us examine a couple of the fund's recipients individually to show just how deep the rabbit hole goes.

One group the money would go to is the Crisis in Zimbabwe Coalition, which is already funded by the US' National Endowment for Democracy (NED) [12], a supposedly private non-profit organization serving to maintain US global hegemony in the name of promoting democracy and human rights. We all know how the US promotes global democracy and human rights. The NED is funded by a US congressional appropriation and is used as a federal conduit to fund "civil society" organizations around the world.

To illustrate just how non-political and nonpartisan Crisis in Zimbabwe Coalition is, one should know that its chairperson, Arnold Tsunga, is a lawyer for the MDC. Its vice-chairperson, Collin Gwiyo, is a founding member of the MDC [13].

Another recipient of the fund is the Zimbabwe Congress of Trade Unions (ZCTU). Who wouldn't sympathize with the rights of the working class? But please follow me on this.

Kwame Nkrumah warns us that "mechanisms of neo-colonialism" often work through the labor movement. He explains:

"In the labor field, for example, imperialism operates through labor arms like the Social Democratic parties of Europe led by the British Labor Party, and through such instruments as the International Confederation of Free Trade Unions (ICFTU), now apparently being superseded by the New York Africa-American Labor Center (AALC) under AFL-CIO chief George Meany and the well-known CIA man in labor's top echelons, Irving Brown" [14]

Philip Agee, former CIA operative and author of *Inside the Company: CIA Diary*, corroborates this in his thorough paper, [Terrorism and Civil Society As Instruments of US Policy In Cuba](#), when he revealed that:

"...the successes of revolutionary movements in Ethiopia, Angola, Namibia, Zimbabwe, Grenada, Nicaragua and elsewhere brought 'cold warrior' Democrats and 'internationalist' Republicans together to establish in 1979 the American Political Foundation (APF). The foundation's task was to study the feasibility of establishing through legislation a government-financed foundation to subsidize foreign operations in civil society through U.S. non-governmental organizations. Within APF four task forces

were set up to conduct the study, one for the Democrats, one for the Republicans, one for the U.S. Chamber of Commerce, and one for the American Federation of Labor-Congress of Industrial Organizations (AFL-CIO)" [15].

Thinking for ourselves, I am sure Malcolm would again refer to Nkrumah's understanding that in Africa it is optimal, revolutionary and Pan-Africanists for African workers to "...link the African workers' movement organically to the struggle by determining specific intermediary objectives so that whatever progress is achieved in the workers' struggle will mean progress in the whole anti-imperialist movement, and the promotion of socialism on a continental scale..."[16].

An anti-imperialist character is clearly missing from the program of the ZCTU and consequently any commitment to Pan-Africanism. They erroneously define their tasks as those delineated for them in guides and manuals, training and so forth given to them by neocolonialist elements. The fact is that the AFL-CIO, which I have established above has a history of being used by the CIA, has an international arm called The Solidarity Center. The Solidarity Center works directly with ZCTU, advising them and advocating for them in the US [17].

To further illustrate how the Solidarity Center is an extension of imperialism we need only acknowledge where they themselves say their main support comes from. The Solidarity Center's "funding sources include the U.S. Agency for International Development, the National Endowment for Democracy, the U.S. Department of State, the U.S. Department of Labor, the AFL-CIO, private foundations, and national and international labor organizations" [18]. Let's not also forget that Morgan Tsvangirai was once Secretary General of ZCTU until European trade unions handpicked him to be the leader of the MDC.

Readers of Kidane's appeal commentary are asked to contribute money to a Zimbabwe Solidarity Fund as if funds from the US and UK governments aren't enough. Not only do we find that fund recipients are tied to the political opposition MDC - which is directly tied to European governments trying to execute regime change in Zimbabwe - these solidarity fund recipients also have ties of their own to the Western governments hostile to their own country. So why try to claim there are not ties between MDC and the civil society activists?

The political shenanigans of the MDC have become so embarrassing and its shameless cooperation with imperialism so overt that it is a common practice for other anti-Mugabe organizations to claim distance from them. But this distance can only be a deception when civil society opposition groups claim not to be linked to the political opposition, and only engaged in fostering democratic participation, the mantra of the NED. Once you call Mugabe a dictator, working to open democratic space logically becomes the same as working to give Mugabe and his government the boot.

Before ending please indulge me to address one more piece of misinformation. Kidane says, "When a democratic space such as this (with all its shortcomings) has been closed for the millions of Zimbabweans who had eagerly been awaiting a change in regime..." This seems to echo the media distortion that the people of Zimbabwe in the majority are chomping at the bit for regime change. What it ignores is that, despite the considerable pressures placed on Zimbabweans to boot out Mugabe's government, ZANU-PF did win the popular vote in the March 29 harmonized elections involving the presidential, parliamentary, senatorial and local authority elections.

The pressures I am referring to are the - rarely, if ever mentioned - sanctions and economic crisis, pirate radio stations and "independent" media funded by the US,

Britain and Netherlands to turn popular opinion against the government, and the provision of millions of dollars to civil society groups to oppose the Mugabe government.

So to be faced with a sustained program of vilification and regime change methods for nearly a decade and to still win the popular vote, the idea that the majority of Zimbabweans are eager to be free of Mugabe's government is absurd. In the March 29 presidential round of voting the margin of votes Tsvangirai received over Mugabe was just 4%. Also, ZANU PF won more seats in the senate, an absolute majority within five provinces and a simple majority within one. The MDC, on the other hand won only two provinces with an absolute majority and two with a simple majority.

While the website of Nunu Kidane's Priority Africa Network believes "Africa has never been top agenda to the US", history might disagree. Remember Patrice Lumumba? Remember that the CIA overthrew Nkrumah and that the US government once bombed Libya? Sounds like a top billing to me. And even if it isn't, do we really want to be at the top of such an agenda?

We've established that the recipients of the Zimbabwe Solidarity Fund really are political opposition. It should be understood that supporting these organizations makes one more in common with the US and UK government's Africa policy than with African (Black) interests and progress. We are not hearing a whole lot about Zimbabwe right now because it's the worst case in Africa. We're hearing about it because it is top agenda for the US, UK, and EU.

As a result of a previous BlackCommentator.com commentary I wrote, a reader sent me an appreciative email. After reading Nunu Kidane's commentary the same reader sent me the following message, which I share with his permission. *"Africa has over fifty countries but the Mugabe government receives the lion's and tiger's share of criticism directed at governance on the continent. How is it possible for no Black American intellectual to condemn Meles Zenawi for overthrowing the first government in Somalia to bring some semblance of peace and order in almost twenty years? Is it possible that none of our observers have seen the destruction in the great lakes region perpetrated by Kagame of Rwanda? The French government has warrants outstanding for Kagame's role in the assassination of two African presidents; yet Black American thinkers have made no mention of this! The international criminal court in The Hague found Museveni of Uganda guilty of looting natural resources from the Congo. He also has about a million of his countrymen in concentration camps. Many of us are well traveled and well read but we only see what the master sees."*

In conclusion as we say, there is clearly a striking double standard between the treatment of other countries in Africa and Zimbabwe.

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