

Zimbabwe Vigil Diary – 8th September 2007 London



Tracy Sibanda leads the singing



Chipo Chaya introduces the readers



Dumi Tutani leads the singing



Patson Muzuwa



Ian Pocock



Rejoice Mahwada

READERS OF ELINOR SISULU'S INTRODUCTION TO "GUKURAHUNDI IN ZIMBABWE"



Soneni Baleni reads Chenjerai Hove's "Nights with Ghosts"



Phyllis Magagada reads poems by Chirikuré Chirikuré



Fungayi Mabhunu reads "Oracle of the Povo"



Netsai Matambanadzo reads "Rats for Sale"
POEMS BY DAMBUDZO MARECHERA



Ethel Zowah reads "In Jail the only . . ."

The main feature of today's Vigil was our participation in a worldwide protest to raise awareness of the plight of Zimbabweans struggling for freedom and democracy. The protest was organised by the International Literature Festival of Berlin which selected poems and prose written by Zimbabweans to be read in public in more than 40 countries. The readings were also to be broadcast around the world. Some of our event was recorded by Tererai Karimakwenda of SW Radio Africa. He also interviewed the participants. Some of the most famous writers in the world have supported this event, including Margaret Attwood, Andre Brink, J M Coetzee, Don DeLillo, Gunter Grass, Nadine Gordimer, John Updike and Mario Vargas Llosa.

The readings were introduced by Chipo Chaya who said Vigil supporters knew at first hand of the pain of our people. The first reading was Elinor Sisulu's introduction to a new edition of "Gukurahundi in Zimbabwe: A Report on the Disturbances in Matabeleland and the Midlands 1980-1988". (The Vigil was well-represented at the launch of the book at Chatham House, London, on Tuesday.) Elinor Sisulu said 'Speaking about Rwanda, South African President Thabo Mbeki said: "A time such as this demands that the truth, the whole truth and nothing but the truth should be told. It should be told because not to tell it is to create the conditions for the crime to recur."' Her essay was read by Patson Muzuwa, Ian Pocock and Rejoice Mahwada.

It was followed by Soneni Baleni reading a poem by Chenjerai Hove – "Nights with Ghosts - A Child's Letter from the Rubble" (written after Operation Murambatsvina, in which the Zimbabwe government destroyed 700,000 houses). "dear samueri, my friend, i will never see you again; maybe i will. but i shall not know until father finds us a new address. addresses! we have none anymore. we are of no address. now that i have written this letter, where do i post it to? shall i say, samueri, care of the next rubble harare?"

Phyllis Magagada read two poems by Chirikurú Chirikurú: "Salt" ("Don't think that I am mad – You and I know who is mad – Don't think that I can't plan – We know who the poor planner is") and "Let's cry with Hope".

Our final readings were three poems by Dambudzo Marechera: "Oracle of the Povo" read by Fungayi Vincent Mabhunu, "Rats for Sale" ("Show me another. Okay. Now, this one is the sly type. It eats colonialism so that it can shit in pure malice on its own") read by Netsai Matambanadzo and "In Jail the only Telephone is the Washbasin Hole: Blow and we'll hear!" read by Ethel Zowah.

Between the readings there was singing led by Dumi Tutani and Tracy Sibanda.

There was no way we could overcome the noise from a busy London thoroughfare but there was rapt attention for the readings and many passers-by become deeply involved including a man from the DRC who was initially very hostile but was won over after a good talking to.

We were glad to have with us two young men, Stendrick Zvorwadza and Justin Shaw-Gray, just over from Zimbabwe. They told us about their work for a new organization called "Restoration of Human Rights in Zimbabwe" (ROHRZim). They explained that their aim was to work with people to counter the fear of the intimidatory tactics of the authorities. This fear needed to be removed for opposition to the Mugabe regime to be effective. They have already had some success – Stendrick has personally intervened when people were being beaten and given other people courage to confront the authorities. He says even some of the police were won over.

News of our friends in Bristol: they report that they are still protesting regularly on the street with their banners and information and are fundraising for Zimbabwean causes.

A special word of thanks to Caroline Witts who comes all the way from Devon whenever she can and was rewarded today by being asked to spend the whole Vigil at the front table dealing with passers-by while we were involved with the readings.

For latest Vigil pictures, please see the link in the updates column.

FOR THE RECORD: 119 signed the register. Supporters from Bedford, Birmingham, Bolton, Brighton, Canterbury, Corby, Coventry, Exeter, Hastings, Leeds, Leicester, Liverpool, Luton, Manchester, Plymouth, Sheffield, Southampton, Southend, Stoke-on-Trent, Wigan, Wolverhampton and many from London and environs.

FOR YOUR DIARY:

- Monday, 10th September 2007. The Zimbabwe Solidarity Campaign in Belfast, as agreed with Ian Paisley Jnr, are presenting a petition to Stormont, the Northern Ireland Parliament. They plan to do a presentation to the assembly members in the long gallery and then get as many members as possible to sign the petition in front of the press. Meet at the gates of Stormont at 2 pm. Contact: Mark Marais, Zimbabwe Solidarity Campaign, 0771 424 6769, mark@chakatravel.com
- Monday, 10th September 2007 – Central London Zimbabwe Forum. A special planning meeting for the 5th Anniversary of the Vigil and social event. We need lots of help so those who would like to be involved in the organisation of this event please come. We are sharing the platform with Jenni Williams of WOZA. The usual forum venue is not available so we will be meeting at the Strand Continental Hotel (first floor, main bar), 143 The Strand WC2R 15A. From the Vigil, a 10-minute walk along the Strand away from Trafalgar Square after Waterloo Bridge but before Somerset House. Nearest underground: Temple (District and Circle lines) and Holborn (Piccadilly and Central lines).
- Saturday, 13th October, 2 – 6 pm. Zimbabwe Vigil's 5th Anniversary followed by a social event.