

**McGregor, JoAnn and Ranka Primorac (eds.). 2010. *Zimbabwe's New Diaspora. Displacement and the Cultural Politics of Survival*. New York, Oxford: Berghahn Books. 268 pp. Hb.: \$80 / £47.00. ISBN: 978184546580.**

At the time of writing, the tragedy of Mugabe's Zimbabwe, which has resulted in the displacement of several million Zimbabweans, remains to be resolved. This topical multidisciplinary collection focuses on the lives of Zimbabwe's new diaspora based in South Africa and Britain since 2000. Events in Zimbabwe, not least among them, the notorious 2005 state mass urban demolitions, Operation *Murambatsvina* ('Remove the Filth'), form a poignant background to the analyses offered here. McGregor's comprehensive introduction to the volume evocatively sets the scene for the discussions that follow and delineates the ways in which the Zimbabwean case might illuminate broader discussions about diaspora and transnationalism. McGregor highlights the manner in which the collection 'retains an emphasis on human agency and creativity, conveyed through its focus on the 'cultural politics' of survival in new locations' (p. 5.) and outlines the ways in which Zimbabweans have taken up the terms 'diaspora' and 'diasporans'. She points to the complexities that lie behind such terms with particular reference to the relevance of class and 'race' in experiences within the diaspora.

The volume is divided into three parts: *Zimbabwean Diasporic Communities in South Africa*, *The Cultural Politics of Survival in Britain* and *Diasporic Identities and Transnational Media*. Contributors are from various backgrounds, including academic disciplines such as geography, social anthropology, media and migration studies and postcolonial Zimbabwean literature, along with policy analysts, journalists and a writer. In a brief review of this kind, it is impossible to do justice to the twelve short chapters.

In the first section, Muzondidya draws particular attention to the role of class, gender and education in the historically differentiated experience of Zimbabwean migrants' experiences. He highlights the degree of xenophobic violence and racism experienced by both skilled and unskilled Zimbabweans, encapsulated in the term *Makwerekwere*. In the following chapters, Rutherford and Kriger explore the contested legal status of, first, farmworkers in Limpopo Province, and then Zimbabweans more generally in South Africa. Kriger documents public debates about whether Zimbabweans should be defined as 'labour migrants' when they 'do not fit the conventional legal definition of refugees' (p. 94).

Turning to Britain, Pasura's analysis is supported by a wealth of ethnographic detail, gained by participant observation, of activities, of homes and of social haunts in his demonstration of how diaspora may be made and unmade. He identifies several types within the membership of the diaspora. There are those described as visible and intensely active in political and diasporic life, the 'epistemic', intellectuals who may confine their involvement in the diaspora largely to cyberspace, the 'dormant' and, lastly, the 'silent' members. The latter, both black and white, are a minority, who choose to 'conjure an alternative belonging' (p. 107). Pasura documents varying degrees of political engagement by Zimbabweans living in London, Coventry, Birmingham and Wigan and describes such activities as the Vigil outside the Zimbabwean embassy in London, where white Zimbabweans play a prominent role that can become contentious.

In the next chapter, McGregor draws upon interviews and upon her own involvement with a Zimbabwean asylum-seeker support group. She highlights a particular aspect of life in Britain for most, though not all, Zimbabweans – ‘the acute loss of status’ (p. 122) and the subsequent experience of ‘abjection’. McGregor demonstrates the ways in which Zimbabweans who arrive in regular ways become criminalised, by overstaying or by breaching work restrictions and, most particularly, by the asylum system itself in which it has become increasingly difficult to make claims or appeal negative decisions. However, she also notes a range of diasporic associations that provide support and other organisations, such as burial associations (described in some detail by Mbiba in a subsequent chapter), football clubs and churches.

In her account, Chinouya draws attention to the complexities and particular demands of transnational families for HIV positive women with a particular focus on stigma and yet also on faith and the support that such women gain in Zimbabwean church fellowships. Recognising the importance of remittances, and offering a nuanced account of the role of intimacy, she highlights ‘the economic and emotional content of long distances exchanges’ (p. 168). Chinouya offers a nuanced account of emotional support of kin back home, and also of their continuing demands, and of the complexities around disclosing HIV status.

The third and last part of the volume offers accounts of contrasting internet forums, first by Mano and Willens, and later by Peel. The former analyse online debates of national identity and citizenship. They suggest that exchanges about the participation of a Zimbabwean nurse, Makosi Musambasi, in the British version of the television show *Big Brother*, revealed Zimbabwean understandings on such matters as identity, morality and womanhood. Drawing upon Habermasian concepts of public discourse, Peel focuses on ‘internet sites that bring together sub-national collectivities and serve particular sectional interests among Zimbabweans abroad’ (p. 229) – in this study those who identify as Ndebele and those who identify as Coloured. He demonstrates the role of the public sphere in which ‘validity claims’ are traded and contested.

Primorac first analyses twenty-first century diaspora-related narratives revealed in novels and autobiographies. Her stated aim is ‘to show how recent texts by displaced authors who claim white Zimbabwean identities... may be related to (gendered) blueprints for the performance of “white African” identities reminiscent of the colonial era’ (p. 204). Later in the volume, Primorac introduces a short story (*One Dandelion Seed-head*) by Brian Chikwava, a Zimbabwean living in London. The final chapter offers an interview that Primorac conducted with Chikwava, which, together with his story, draws out many of the themes of the volume.

It is unfortunate that this informative and timely volume has been poorly served by inadequate proof-reading. The book is littered with typographical errors that at times threaten to distract the reader’s attention.

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