

## **THE PAST AND THE PRESENT COLLIDE: A SALIENT CRY TO REDRESS THE WOUNDS OF GUKURAHUNDI IN THE DAWN OF A NEW ERA IN ZIMBABWE**

**Debra Gugulethu Sithole**

Independent Researcher, Dept. Of History, Peace Conflict Studies, Solusi University, Zimbabwe

---

### **ABSTRACT**

*For the past three decades Zimbabwe has been a cradle of all conflictual existence, with a tainted past and an uncertain future under the prevailing socio-political scenery where past injustices of the Gukurahundi-era reared their ugly head. Under the former President Robert Mugabe there was an unofficial ban and silencing on Gukurahundi as well as processes pertaining to it such as proper transitional procedures. Hence within the same vein, the historic ouster of the nonagenarian became a symbolic act of turning a new leaf in the Zimbabwean trajectory in all its facets, hence Zimbabweans across all divides embraced the dawn of a new era with overarching expectations nonetheless the so-called new political dispensation merely facilitated the elevation of “gukurahundists” to dizzying political heights which could be arguably considered an insult to the people of Matabeleland whom the gukurahundi era devoured. In grappling with the same notion, it is imperative for one to note that given the prevailing circumstances, a good section of the grassroots has already discredited the new political dispensation. Be that as it may be, the foundations of the new political establishment are ultimately being shaken by the cry to redress thirty-year old past injustices which still live on. Therefore it is the aim of this paper to assess and analyse the extent to which transitional justice processes equate to sustainable political transition, stability and establishment. It is within the confines of this study that transitional justice frameworks alongside peacebuilding perspectives will be utilised to anchor this paper.*

### **1.0 Introduction**

Following the military-inspired takeover and the ouster of the octogenarian Zimbabwean leader, Robert Mugabe, there was hope that the new regime would usher in a ‘new political dispensation’ under the auspices of a democratic transition. Hopes for a political transition prompted the question “what’s ‘new’ about this new dispensation” or it is simply a case of “old wine in new bottles”. Whatever the legalities, contestations and debates about the new dispensation, there is one issue that continues to haunt it, an issue that stands out like an elephant in the room—the Gukurahundi wounds. One observes that the resurrection of Gukurahundi ghosts in this context

serves to cement the argument that the new political dispensation is built on sinking and shifting sand as it ultimately governs a hurting nation. Echoing the same sentiments, Zivira (2017) alludes to the Bulawayo Justice March and Pretoria Gukurahundi protests as an ultimate withdrawal symptom of the so-called new dispensation. Therefore one ought to recognise that this discourse is theoretically rooted in the notion that transitional justice is a sine qua non for a stable and acceptable democratic government. I contend that Zimbabwe needs to appreciate this symbiotic relationship which exists between justice and governance in a bid to sustain and stabilise the new political dispensation. This paper submits that unless and until past injustices are properly redressed the current government will suffer from a legitimacy crisis and be haunted by the spectre of the gukurahundi.

Some critics hold the view that that the gukurahundi issue has become ‘stuck record’ that is disrupting the tune and melody of a new Zimbabwe. Such a view suggests that the ghosts of the past should remain buried in the past, that society and those affected be it directly or indirectly should exercise a form of amnesia on the issue. Zimbabwe’s recent dramatic turn of events witnessed the grand entrance of a new era which has been christened ‘The Dawn of a New Era’ or the ‘New Political Dispensation’ which saw some of the ‘faces of Gukurahundi’ assuming highest offices in the land. Some of the key architects, lieutenants, planners, executioners and commanders who were in the inner sanctum of the gukurahundi have assumed positions in government. Whilst the new dispensation enjoys its hero’s welcome, one is tempted to suggest that the new government structure is an ultimate insult to history and existence of the Matabeleland people. In a bid to cement this argument, the ascendance of Shiri who hailed himself the “Black Jesus” during the Gukurahundi era to cabinet prompts one to question the nobleness and integrity of the new government, (Ndlovu, 2011). A wave of resistance demanding justice for Gukurahundi atrocities has swirled denouncing the new political dispensation for harbouring alleged “gukurahundists”, hence one is justified to state that unless the past is redressed accordingly the new government is already on a downward trajectory, (Sibanda, 2017).

Meanwhile the so-called new government has turned a blind eye to the actions of the people and turned a deaf ear to their salient cries for justice thereby prescribing a high dosage of forced amnesia as a panacea for Gukurahundi atrocities as affirmed by the proclamation “Let bygones be bygones”, (McKenzie and Swails, 2017). As a result one is compelled to state that these ignorant

utterances are erasing possibilities of transitional justice within the new dispensation, which can be further argued as a step in the wrong direction. Hence it is without further ado that this paper advocates for the past and present to be reconciled so as to form a firm foundation on which the new political dispensation may be firmly established, thus echoing a call justice to prevail before it is ‘justice too late’

In this paper, I am cognisant that there is need to appreciate the three-fold nature of transitional justice as it remedies the past, stabilizes the present and creates a roadmap for the future, (Gready et.al, 2010). The premise of this paper therefore is that the solution to the Zimbabwean crisis requires redressing the past which is a prerequisite for positive, durable, sustainable peace as well as peaceful co-existence.

In expanding the view, focus and scope of this discourse one is justified to pick lessons from the Cambodian experience in extrapolating the issue at hand. According to Lambourne (2009) harbouring genocidal criminals in government institutions ultimately leads to a lack of respect for the rule of law, institutions of the rule of law, accountability and in the process undermines the government. It is therefore in this vein that the new Zimbabwean era has not proven immune to similar past-present collisions and resulting governmental complications hence calling for robust transitional approaches to remedy the situation. The Zimbabwean 1983 ethnic fall-out was the ultimate brainchild of the then government alongside its command element, (Murambadoro 2014). Nevertheless, the imposition of forced amnesia has replaced traditional transitional approaches to redress and soothe the wounds of Gukurahundi hence the issue has become a time bomb that has timed-out.

### **Transformative Justice and Lederach’s Pyramid of Peacebuilding**

To cement and concretise the views and contestations within this study, the paper adopts the Theory of Transformative Justice by Lambourne (2009) which will be buttressed by the Lederachian Pyramid of Peacebuilding (1997), thus these two comprehensive frameworks will be triangulated to ensure that the study is effectively anchored, theorised, analysed and forward-looking study. The theory of transformative justice as postulated by Wendy Lambourne (2009) seeks to facilitate the initiation of trans-formative transitional justice during an era of political or government transition, (Gready and Robins 2014). Be that as it may be, the applicability of this

theory in this particular study stands unchallenged as it comes at a time when Zimbabwe is still in a state of political transition whilst faced with countless justice dilemmas which pose a threat to the stability of this new political dispensation. Lambourne (2009) exposes the four pillars of this model to include accountability, truth, socioeconomic justice and political justice. Thus this model unquestionably becomes a watershed from which all analysis and critique of the Zimbabwean case will be rooted so as to lay a firm foundation for the new government.

Succinctly Lambourne (2014) posits that transformative approaches should be utilised when faced with a quest to rebuild democracy and the rule of law, hence in the Zimbabwean case of a transitional state with a tattered past this model ought to compliment any transitional efforts. Furthermore Rama (2002) cited in Lambourne (2014) states that justice in all its facets lays a political foundation on which fractured relations and institutions ought to be amended; as such this critical view affirms the position of this paper in echoing similar sentiments that justice should precede any governmental process so as to ensure both its acceptability and sustainability.

In as much as the Zimbabwean socio-political fabric has been reduced to shreds one may be justified to contend that transitional justice alone may not be enough to remedy the prevailing socio-political dilemma because it might be justice too late. Nevertheless the adoption of a transformative strategy may be a viable turn around strategy as it further incorporates insights and tenants of peacebuilding and conflict transformation alike, (Gready and Robins, 2014). Tentatively, this cocktail of a transitional antidote ought to wholesomely, inclusively and comprehensively redress the roots and atrocities of Gukurahundi thereby creating impermeable bedrock on which the new political dispensation may find its footing.

The decentralisation of this particular model in remedying past-present collisions ought to be applauded as it promotes a bottom-up approach as it actively advocates for local participation and empowerment to ensure the effectiveness and efficiency of any transitional processes, (Lambourne 2014). Hence this allows the disgruntled populace to deal with their pain and loss in their own context without the imposition of initiatives. Hence one is justified to posit that local ownership ensures that the perpetrators are not the ones prescribing solutions to the problems which they created in the first place. Thus one can arguably state that this model best affirms the

position advocated for by this paper that redressing the past should precede any governmental process in the best possible way.

The Lederachian perspective (1997) has been employed in this paper to augment the transformative justice framework to ensure that all facets of the study are done justice to. Lederach (1997) recognises that a comprehensive peacebuilding framework ought to be stratified into three symbiotic levels that timeously interact for efficient peacebuilding and conflict transformation, (Musorowegomo, 2013). Hence, this assertion complements the transformative perspective as it advocates for a joint and multi-stakeholder effort to improve community cohesion efforts. Moreover, the Lederachian perspective adopts grassroots-oriented approach which renders it sustainable in remedying and redressing the wounds of Gukurahundi so as to lay a firm foundation for political establishment, (Lederach, 1997). In the same mosaic Musorowegomo (2013) affirms that peacebuilding by nature is justice oriented, hence in Zimbabwe's quest for transitional justice, sustainable peace and political establishment this all-encompassing perspective ought to usher Zimbabwe to its desired destination and curb unforeseen socio-political disasters.

### **Justice Delayed is Justice Denied- political implications of thirty year old Gukurahundi ghosts**

Establishing the nexus between transitional justice and political establishment remains a contestable field as it tends to possess a dichotomous nature i.e. it has the propensity to build or destroy a nation. Within the same loop, Teitel (2003) posits that transitional justice processes are intertwined with periods of political change, thus justice ultimately becomes a pre-condition for political establishment/ stability. Despite the illusive nature of the issue under scrutiny the 'new political dispensation' has ignorantly ignored transitional processes which could hasten the demise of the new political dispensation. Cognisant of this assertion socio-political tensions of this magnitude have the propensity to compromise proceedings and outcome of the forthcoming electoral process which could shake the entire Zimbabwean political establishment. In the same mosaic, one is justified to postulate that the government is adopting 'strategic amnesia' on the issue with the implementation of intelligent strategies to suppress any potential resurgence of the issue. Be that as it may, the incumbent has been seen marrying politics and economics as the

mainstay of Zimbabwean stability, establishment and development. In the light of this background one ought to question the new government's turn around strategy as it does not seek to sew together Zimbabwe's tattered and tainted historical fabric.

From a Marxists' perspective which is rooted in the notion that all worldly trends and dynamics are centred around economics one may be justified to state that the incumbent is supposedly adopting an 'economic transitional approach' which can seem justifiable within the Marxist parameters as it can simply be seen as utilising an economic route to cultivate a conducive environment for transitional justice. However, the applicability of this approach is however questionable in the Zimbabwean context as the Zimbabwean case is need-based thereby seeking to address the immediate and felt needs of the aggrieved communities. Therefore, it is of essence to note that there shouldn't be an imposition of a blanket panacea which will eventually benefit the regime as compared to redressing past injustices. In summation, in response to the approach being adopted by the government of prioritising economics above justice it is therefore undoubtable that Transitional Justice is not a dependant variable of economics but a simple appeal to one's conscience.

From a Transitional perspective, Gukurahundi wounds have been neglected for three decades hence their infestation and odour cannot be concealed anymore and call for urgent attention yet the government seems to be repeatedly prescribing economic solutions to social problems. ([www.newzimbabwe.com](http://www.newzimbabwe.com)) quotes Dabengwa stating that "...Gukurahundi is a serious threat to national security if not handled properly..." hence the continued neglect of the issue by the responsible authorities' poses as a threat to the social, economic and political existence in Zimbabwe. It is therefore against this background that this paper maintains the position that without proper Transitional Justice Processes in response to the 1983 genocidal massacres there can never be a meaningful political establishment.

### **Letting Bygones be Bygones**

The dawn of the new political era in Zimbabwe has been ear-marked by a landmark statement "Let bygones be bygones", which one may interpret as open declaration and proclamation of justice denial in a bid to eradicate any hope to have the Gukurahundi issue redressed. De Greiff (2012) contends that to ensure that stability prevails in any setup, victims of atrocities ought to be

recognised and should not be subject to neglect and forced amnesia, hence the notion of letting bygones be bygones ultimately shakes the foundation of every national structure. One is therefore prompted to question if the hatchet can be forcibly buried without implications particularly political implications which are bound to hasten the crumbling of the superstructure inclusive of political establishments. ([www.newzimbabwe.com](http://www.newzimbabwe.com)) shares similar sentiments with the author when he echoes Mbuso Fuzwayo's concerns;

“.....Thirty years of bearing this painful burden cannot be dismissed by the words bygones be bygones.....

Hence such utterances affirm the notion that unless proper transitional justice protocols are observed and victims recognised, (De Greiff 2012). In the same vein, the current dispensation will remain an alien element to the people of Matabeleland and such reckless utterances play a catalytic role in the destabilisation and denunciation of the current political dispensation. In the same light Lambourne (2014) pioneers the idea that justice is the bedrock upon which political foundations ought to be set, hence Zimbabwe is no exception but should conform to the Lambourdinian school of thought if stability is to be attained.

In the light of the Transformative Justice framework, accountability is an ultimate pillar upon which transitional justice and political justice may be pioneered, however as failure by the previous Zimbabwean government to own up and assume accountability of its transgressions has birthed a generational curse passed from one generation to the next, (Zivira, 2017). As a result, the current philosophy of letting bygones be bygones by the incumbent is reinforcing the culture of justice denial while enraging Gukurahundi scarred generations at all levels. Hence the infantile political dispensation is fast falling out of favour with the grassroots which is an ultimate drawback to political development; as such this justifies the employment of the Lederachian framework which prioritises the grassroots as the cradle for political stability and sustainable peace.

In grappling with the notion of justice delayed and adverse political implications, Coltart cited in McKenzie and Swails (2017), unveils that amnesia has been enforced in a bid to suppress Gukurahundi from rearing its ugly head as it is ultimately considered “a too loose thread that if pulled would unravel the entire garment”, ironically the opposite is proven to be true the denial of

Gukurahundi-oriented justice has ripped the national fabric apart. Hence from a critical perspective, the previous and current government alike have timelessly trodden a self-destructive path, nonetheless one is justified to contend that it may not be too late to detour and rewrite the tales of the Zimbabwean justice course. Given this background, it might not be justice delayed but never denied if the current dispensation redresses the wounds of Gukurahundi, which may be able to set Zimbabwe on an entirely new political course.

Dabengwa cited in ([www.bulawayo24.com](http://www.bulawayo24.com)) contends that the new political dispensation is bound to encounter acceptance hurdles as it emanates from the ashes of the previous establishment which is responsible for the massacres and denial of post-Gukurahundi justice. Hence Dabengwa airs out a cocktail of concerns among them being governed by the perpetrators and offenders of the Matabeleland people to whom justice and closure has been denied;

“We continue to suffer silently, we continue to live in fear and the same crocodiles which devoured our people are still in power and they recently changed faces and names .....Yet remain the same...”

It is therefore within this discourse that justice denied is not only suffice to destabilise the current political establishment, but the mere composition of the dispensation is lethal to the political future of Zimbabwe thus unless the past is accounted for in all the right ways. In the same vein, the controversial composition of the new dispensation is testimony that the victim as an entity has been neglected such that their thoughts and emotions are marginalised yet they should be the heart of the society, (Bloomfield, 2003).

In grappling with this mosaic of justice denial and political establishment, McKenzie and Swails (2017) expose that Gukurahundi victims swore to defy the current political dispensation, thus maintaining a shredded grassroots which ultimately weakens the foundations of the current establishment. Moreover, one should appreciate that the root of defiance emanates from festering Gukurahundi wounds which have spread and affected the emotional and psychological wellbeing of generations prompting a snowball effect. Be that as it may be, one Mr Mwale attested that;

“We cannot trust him (the president) as he was involved in the killings.....so for me to see Mnangagwa as president, I don't know that the future is like....”

It is therefore within this train of thought that the epicentre of this paper is rooted, as the past is ultimately taunting perpetrators and victims alike in the wake of the “new dawn of a new era” as the past and present collide. It is therefore in this light that Bloomfield (2003) advocates for victim-offender reconciliation in a bid to eradicate existing tensions and lay an impermeable foundation for sustainability and stability, which can be said the Zimbabwean situation. In setting a bottom-line for this discourse, ([www.newzimbabwe.com](http://www.newzimbabwe.com)) exposes that Gukurahundi should be redressed within the parameters of healing and justice, thus the presidium should not force people to forget but should allow people to heal through genuine national healing and reconciliation processes. Hence it is against this background that this section of the paper advocates for closure, denouncing forced amnesia and denial of justice rights as well as its adverse political implications in the Dawn of a new era.

**The voice of the people is the voice of God: Are Gukurahundi victim’s voices any different?**

The new political dispensation marked the beginning of its era with a religion-plated banner in the words of the current president, “the voice of the people is the voice of God” in a bid to chastise its establishment and gain public trust. Nevertheless, the instrumentalisation of religion in this context remains a bone of contention as one may view it as plain abuse of religion in the best interest of the ruling elite. Within the context of this paper, the voice of gukurahundi victims has been clamouring for justice to be done as far as Gukurahundi as concerned. However contrary to the acclamations of the president these salient cries have been ignored, thus prompting the rhetoric, are the voices of gukurahundi victim’s any different? Nkosi (2017) shares similar sentiments with the author in questioning whether the voice of the people ceases to be the voice of God when it does not serve the interests of the so-called new dispensation. Suffice to say, this assertion compliments the thrust of this paper as to how the ignored and suppressed cries of the Matabeleland people has the propensity to negatively affect the political establishment of the new political dispensation. Further divulging the incumbent’s speech, he further stated that;

“The Voice of the people is the Voice of God....If you ignore the voice of God, the end result is demolition and total oblivion....”

Ironically, the above statement ultimately issues a ‘sentence’ if ever the voice of people is to be ignored i.e. ‘total oblivion’, paradoxically the statement was issued by the incumbent himself.

Thus one ought to be justified in stating that in order to save his new establishment the incumbent should ultimately take heed of his own warning and answer the calls and cries of the Matabeleland people. Moreover, ([www.newzimbabwe.com](http://www.newzimbabwe.com)) asserts that if ever there should be stability, closure should ultimately become a forerunner especially within the context of the Gukurahundi issue. Furthermore, the voices clamouring for justice have not only been ignored but repressed as evidenced by the use of state machinery to suppress the Mthwakazi Republic Party (MRP) youths as the military was unleashed upon them, ([www.bulawayo24.com](http://www.bulawayo24.com)). Hence from a critical point of view one ought to contend that the use of repressive apparatus in the context of Gukurahundi by the new dispensation ultimately sends an intimidating message to the Matabeleland people as they might interpret it as a preview of Gukurahundi part 2. Ultimately from this angle the acceptability and stability of the new dispensation given the current socio-political climate will be impossible. Therefore, unless the past injustices are properly redressed, with perpetrators showing remorse for their actions, the current government which harbours those implicated will never find its footing.

### **5.0 Transitional justice by whom, for who, how and when**

In the event that an unpleasant past and present collide it is always wise to find common ground in a bid to secure the future. Be that as it may there is no future if a nation is still a captive of its past, hence transitional justice processes must be effectively and efficiently utilised to bridge this gap. Nonetheless, one might argue that it might be justice too late as the situation has surpassed its state of ripeness such that there might be need for intensive damage control. Thus proper transitional justice processes are to be initiated and should adopt a comprehensive and all-encompassing approach to ensure that both the past and future are accounted for in the best possible way in a bid to build a firm socio-political foundation. In the same train of thought Weber (2012) postulates that in order for transitional justice to be transformative it should be both backward-looking and future-oriented in what he terms retrospective and prospective justice. As such in a bid to simultaneously redress the past and secure the future, it is a necessary panacea to employ transitional justice processes especially political establishment in the dawn of the new era.

### **Transitional Justice- Whose mandate is it, the victims or the perpetrator**

It is an African norm that a perpetrator cannot provide a solution to a problem that he initiated; nevertheless to a calculated extent academia refutes this point of view. In the light of this assertion, Elster (2004) cited in Kaminski et.al (2006) advocates for endogenous transitional processes which are locally owned and initiated so as to ensure social cohesion, grassroots empowerment and reconciliation. Dabengwa quoted in ([www.bulawayo24.com](http://www.bulawayo24.com)) shares similar sentiments with Elster as far as the Zimbabwean situation is concerned when he opines that;

“The Solution to Gukurahundi lies within the people and not the government....., the perpetrator can never be the solution...”

Hence in the light of these sentiments, one can excavate that a cleavage still exists between “the government” and “the people” thereby reinforcing the gist of this paper that due an unresolved past the new dispensation will encounter acceptability and establishment hurdles. That being the case, one is justified to contend that in the light of the Zimbabwean situation transitional justice processes should be grassroots pioneered and grassroots-oriented as a means of providing the populace with a platform to heal in their own way. Therefore, the implicated government ought to cooperate with whatever the affected communities have proposed as this will ultimately facilitate the reconciliation process and anchor the new political dispensation.

Taking a paradigm shift, Hayner (2001) cited in Machakanja and Mangure (2013) advocates for a government oriented approach as far a transitional justice and national stability is concerned. In grappling with the same notion, Hayner opines that governments emerging from violent conflicts should account for past abuses to achieve stability and democracy. It is therefore within this mosaic that one has to appreciate the synergy that exists between Hayner and Lambourne’s schools of thought which advocates for implicated governments to institutionally redress past in a bid to build the a firm foundation for stability and democracy. Hence the same can be said for Zimbabwe, in a bid to strengthen democratic institutions in the country, anchor the new political dispensation as well as foster national cohesion.

### **Way Forward- What should be done and by Who**

Adopting a biblical perspective to unpack this paper, one ought to appreciate the holy book as it reiterates that the truth shall always set one free. Therefore, it is against this background that one is justified to contend that the doorway to utopia is truth, nothing else but the truth. Hence, in order for the new political dispensation to attain political freedom, establishment and stability the truth should forerun all due processes. Be that as it may be, one should bear in mind that the truth is the most feared aspect in transitional processes as its outcome tends to be Janus-faced, volatile and unpredictable as it can either make or break the entire transitional process. In the same train of thought De Greiff (2012) contends that though truth telling may emerge as a viable transitional mechanism it should not be used as a white-wash were no one pays for it, hence one ought to conclude that there is always a price tag attached to the truth. Suffice to say, this prompts one to question whether the perpetrator is willing to pay the due price either in reparations or in prosecution. Given the Zimbabwean scenario reparation would sound more enticing to the incumbent government which harbours alleged perpetrators, but would that (reparations) suffice to the victims?

In a reactionary stance Coltart cited in McKenzie and Swails (2017) prescribes apologies and communal reparations as a possible panacea to bridge the socio-political cleavage and for unprecedented forward looking trajectory to be achieved. However, Coltart did not consider the fact that reparations have the propensity to be wrongfully misinterpreted as buying-off the conscience of the victims. Thus reparative initiatives have the propensity to be repulsed by the victims and affected societies. Hence, in critically examining the brewing situation, in the light of “victim-prioritisation” advocated for by Bloomfield and De Greiff one could posit that prior to any transitional process, the implicated government is obligated to consult and comply with the victims and affected societies such that initiatives pioneered will be contextual and well accepted thereby laying foundation for mending fences between the government and its people. Complimentary of this view point, Fuzwayo cited in ([www.bulawayo24.com](http://www.bulawayo24.com)) postulates that Zimbabwe can only have a future if the presidium could cooperate with the needs of the region and set up healing and restorative mechanisms in a bid to take the country in an upwards trajectory. Hence in extrapolating such views, there is only one way forward in this context i.e. redressing the past to remedy the present and secure the future. Be that as it may, the dawn of a

new era without addressing and redressing the wounds of Gukurahundi is as good as the dusk of a fading era.

The reconciliation equation has always been as simple as acknowledgement+ truth telling+ apology+ forgiveness= reconciliation. On the same note Zivira (2017) shares the same sentiments as he argues if Mnangagwa is ushering in the new dispensation he should come forth with an apology. Nevertheless, Nyathi (2017) refutes this notion as he argues that the situation has mutated and “...there can never be an apology for pre-meditated murder that is why they haven’t bothered to apologise for thirty years”. On the basis of this assertion, one is prompted to argue that this ‘open declaration’ ultimately nullifies any present and future transitional approaches, nonetheless such is expected of a hurting society and the government in a bid to strengthen its establishment ought to dance to the tune and melody of the society. Taking advantage of the current state of affairs, Dabengwa quoted in ([www.bulawayo24.com](http://www.bulawayo24.com)) stated that as the victims and affected society they had set August 2018 as the day for reburials, “.....We will not ask for permission from home affairs, they were given 30 years to do the right thing but they did not, this time we do it our way. No one will stop us...” Hence when one critically dissects Dabengwa’s proclamation, it is a direct denunciation of the current dispensation coupled with a “community prescribed” panacea to redress festering wounds of Gukurahundi. If ever the new dispensation is to be accepted with both hands it ought to comply with the community initiated transitional processes and not to obstruct community initiated justice. Therefore, it is against this background that one is justified to contend that the solution to post Gukurahundi justice lies within the people and the government role is merely ceremonial compliance. Albeit this route overrides the government’s mandate, it is however necessary to preserve the much needed peace, in buttressing this view Mutandwa (2018) opines that the past will haunt us unless we do the honourable thing, face up to the evil of the past, deal with it once and for fall... ignoring it will not bury it.

In the light of this paper, it has been proven beyond reasonable doubt that the new political dispensation can never be wholly accepted and established until and unless post-gukurahundi justice prevails. Furthermore, to ensure the success of any transitional process both the victims and affected societies ought to be the watershed from which all transitional remedies should flow from thereby advocating for the bottom-up approach pioneered by both Lederach and Lambourne.

## **6.0 Conclusion**

In a bid to smooth-out the edges and corners of this paper, it is imperative to note that transitional processes hold the key to the success of any political and democratic establishment, (Lambourne 2009). Hence given Zimbabwe's 'dawn of a new era' the political transition circuit remains incomplete unless transitional justice processes are employed to properly reconstruct state institutions and legitimise the new government (Machakanja and Mungure, 2013). Hence the notion remains uncontested that proper establishment of the new political dispensation is at the mercy of transitional justice through proper implementation channels.

## **7.0 REFERENCES**

- Bloomfield, D. (2003). *Reconciliation after a Violent Conflict: A Handbook*. International Institute for Democracy and Electoral Assistance. Stockholm, Sweden.
- De Greiff, P. (2012). *Theorising Transitional Justice*: American Society for political and legal Philosophy. Vol 51 pp 31-77
- Gready, P, and Robins S. (2014). *From Transitional Justice to Transformative Justice: A new Agenda for Practice*. International Journal of Transitional Justice Vol. 8
- Kaminski, M, Nalepa, M, O'Neil, B. (2006). Normative and Strategic Transitional Justice: The Journal of Conflict Studies. Vol.50 No.3 pp 295-302
- Lambourne, W. (2009). *Transitional Justice and Peacebuilding After mass violence*. International Journal of Transitional Justice. Vol. 3 pp 28-48
- Lambourne, W. (2014). *Transformative Justice, Reconciliation and Peacebuilding* In Buckley-Zestel, S etal (Eds) *Transitional Justice Theories*. Oxon, Routledge pp. 19-39
- Lederach, J.P. (1997). *Building Peace: Sustainable Reconciliation in Divided Societies*. Washington DC, United States Institute
- Machakanja, P and Mungure, S. (2013). *Mapping Transitional Justice Actors In Zimbabwe*

Mckenzie, D and Swails, B. (2017). For Zimbabwe's New President, a past tainted by a brutal Massacre.

Murambadoro, R. (2015). *We Cannot Reconcile Until the Past Has Been Acknowledged: Perspectives on Gukurahundi from Matabeleland Zimbabwe*, University Of Pretoria

Musorowegomo, C. (2013). *Dynamics of Post Conflict Peacebuilding in Zimbabwe since 2008*, Case Study of Bindura. Bindura University of Science Education

Mutandwa, G. (2018). Gukurahundi Genocide, History shall judge us harshly. <https://www.zimeye.net-gukurahundi-genocide-history-shall-judge-us-harshly/&hl=enZW-02/01/18>

Ndlovu, R. (2011). The face of Zimbabwe's Military brass. Mail and Guardian <http://mg.co.za/article/2011-07-01-the-face-of-zimbabwe-military-brass/accessed-31/12/17>

Nkosi, R. (2018). Mnangagwa Crushes the Voice of God. <http://africa-live.info/mnangagwa-crushes-the-voice-of-God/accessed-04/01/18>

Nyathi, P. (2017). Let's Bury Gukurahundi Victims by Force. [www.thezimbabwean.co/2017/12/lets-bury-gukurahundi-victims-by-force/accessed-28/12/17](http://www.thezimbabwean.co/2017/12/lets-bury-gukurahundi-victims-by-force/accessed-28/12/17)

Sibanda, S. (2017). Jonathan attacks President Mnangagwa and Gen Chiwenga: "Gukurahundists". [www.thezimbabwean.co.zw-johnathan-attacks-president-mnangagwa-gen-chiwenga-gukurahundists/accessed-20/12/17](http://www.thezimbabwean.co.zw-johnathan-attacks-president-mnangagwa-gen-chiwenga-gukurahundists/accessed-20/12/17)

Teitel, R. (2003). *Transitional Justice Genealogy*. Harvard Human Rights Journal. Vol. 16, pp 70-94

Weber, J. (2012). *Forms of Transitional Justice*. American Society for political and legal philosophy. Vol 51 pp 98-128

[www.bloomberg.com/news/articles/Zimbabwe's-Mnangagwa-discusses-economy-land-debt-transcript-2018-01-23/accessed-02/02/2018](http://www.bloomberg.com/news/articles/Zimbabwe's-Mnangagwa-discusses-economy-land-debt-transcript-2018-01-23/accessed-02/02/2018)

[www.bulawayo24.com/Dabengwa-takes-aim-at-mnangagwa-gvt-28-12-2017/accessed-30/12/2017](http://www.bulawayo24.com/Dabengwa-takes-aim-at-mnangagwa-gvt-28-12-2017/accessed-30/12/2017)

[www.bulawayo24.com/staff-reporter-Mnangagwa-told-to-address-Gukurahundi-22-11-2017/accessed-30/12/2017](http://www.bulawayo24.com/staff-reporter-Mnangagwa-told-to-address-Gukurahundi-22-11-2017/accessed-30/12/2017)

[www.newzimbabwe.co.zw/news-40809-Gukurahundi+-a+time+bomb+Dabengwa/news.aspx accessed-24/12/17](http://www.newzimbabwe.co.zw/news-40809-Gukurahundi+-a+time+bomb+Dabengwa/news.aspx accessed-24/12/17)

Zivira, T. (2017). Gukurahundi: A problem Mnangagwa's new government cannot wish away. [www.thestandard.co.zw-gukurahundi-a-problem-mnangagwa's-government-cannot-wish-away-2017-12-24/ accessed 26/12/17](http://www.thestandard.co.zw-gukurahundi-a-problem-mnangagwa's-government-cannot-wish-away-2017-12-24/ accessed 26/12/17)