

Africa: Moving the Boundaries

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Reflections on the Dilemmas of Feminist Fieldwork in Africa¹

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Abstract

The feminist dilemmas of fieldwork in Africa are explored in this personal retrospective reflection on conducting research in Zimbabwe in the mid-1990s about the role of women in Zimbabwe's anti-colonial liberation struggle. Having grappled with the feminist ethics of doing such research at the time, its enduring legacies provide timely lessons for current and future researchers conducting interviews in the field. In particular, the politics of 'who can speak for whom?' will be (re)examined, and this chapter will ask the question if any "woman" researching in/on Africa has the emancipatory potential to challenge the dominant colonial and postcolonial discourses that have determined historical texts.

Introduction

Twenty years ago Christine Sylvester (1995) both inspired and challenged me to *just go* to Africa, and into the field to conduct feminist fieldwork, but warned me not indulge in "feminist tourism" (p. 945). She outlined a strategy that I implemented, of "empathetic co-operation" for the western feminist doing research about African women. This was based on Sylvester's *world-traveling tips* (p. 957) derived from Norma Alarcón (1990), who was inspired by Alison Jaggar (1983), who cited María Lugones' doubts about white Anglo women research women of colour –

... Before they can contribute to collective dialogue [white Anglo women] need to know the 'text', to have become familiar with an alternative way of viewing the world ... You need to *learn to become unintrusive, unimportant, patient to the point of tears, while at the same time open to learning any possible lessons*. You will have to come to terms with the sense of alienation, of not belonging, of having your world thoroughly disrupted, having it criticised and scrutinized from the point of view of those who have been harmed by it, having important concepts central to it dismissed, being viewed with mistrust... (my emphasis).

Twenty years later, this chapter is a reflection upon my decisions, choices and feminist justifications for choosing to go to Zimbabwe in the mid-1990s to research the roles of women in the anti-colonial liberation struggle and their subsequent experiences in the post-colonial African state. The fieldwork undertaken was specifically conducted to

¹ The title for this chapter was inspired by Diane Wolf (1996), and this chapter is based upon the prior publications of Tanya Lyons (1999a; 1999b; 2004). It will be published in the book, 'Women Researching in Africa', edited by Ruth Jackson and Max Kelly, and is currently at the draft stage.

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achieve a doctorate in philosophy (PhD) through the Department of Politics at the University of Adelaide, South Australia. While my motives were justified by the *best of intentions*, this fieldwork required me to critique my own feminist credentials and objectives, and to assess the strengths, weaknesses and outcomes that this research ultimately produced.

Twenty years ago, “identity politics” (Diaz-Diocaretz & Zavala, 1985; and Keith & Pile, 1993), or the “politics of identity” (Yuval-Davis, 1997, pp. 119-20; Petersen, 1999) was relatively new in political science, informed by feminism, postmodernism and postcolonialism – all challenges to the mainstream theories – and required a declaration of who you are or claim to be – using signifiers such as white/black, male/female, first/third world, etc. (Lal, 1996). However, no matter how I described myself (then or now), and despite my feminist *world travelling* ethical guidelines in hand (Sylvester, 1995), when I finally got into the field – in Zimbabwe in 1996 – Zimbabwean-Australian author Sekai Nzenza-Shand (1997a; 1997b) still criticised me for being just another foreign, middle class white girl choosing to do fieldwork on women in Africa. Indeed, as Gayatri Spivak (1988) has argued, declaring your identity and position as a *gesture* ‘can never suffice’ (p. 271). Linda Alcoff (1991-92) also warns that it is an easy and frequent trap to just ‘speak for others’ without their consent (pp. 5-32).

Frustrated by my own *inconvenient otherness* and too far into my PhD research and field work to change topics and write about something more politically correct – such as issues facing female, white, middle-class university students studying in South Australia – I carried on regardless! Yet, Nzenza did have a point. Why was I writing about the plight of Zimbabwean women who had fought in their national struggle for liberation? The answer lies in the question ‘why?’ and the refining of this question to find a niche angle to explore it. On this question I was influenced by Carol Bacchi’s² *hallway advice* regarding a simple but effective approach to research: to find an answer to the question, ‘what is the problem?’ (Bacchi, 1999; also see Bletsas & Beasley, 2012).

War is the problem, and women appear to suffer more and/or differently during wars, compared to men. Hence, applying a feminist historiography to the issue, the researcher can easily explore and report on something that probably hasn’t been studied in depth before, and thus make an original contribution to the academy, which is required to achieve that academic recognition. Thus, I could have been, ‘the arrogant perceiver [who] does not countenance the possibility that the Other is independent, indifferent. ... coerc[ing] the objects of his [or her] perception into satisfying the conditions his [or her] perception imposes’ (Frye 1983, p. 67), thereby, ‘discovering it and bringing it back home through colonial and imperialist activities’ (Sylvester, 1995, p. 947) to serve my own ends. I hope I wasn’t. I hope I have respected the women I interviewed and their stories and voices in this history told through my research.

I wonder if any of my male counterparts at the university would have worried about this issue, or if it was just something peculiar to the feminist perspective subscribed to by

² Carol Bacchi was an academic where I undertook my Honours degree and later my PhD in the Department of Politics at the University of Adelaide. Although at the time, I didn’t appreciate it, her *hallway* advice to me was invaluable to my research development. She is now Emeritus Professor in the School of Politics and International Studies, University of Adelaide.

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female scholars in the 1990s? Would the men have gone to an African country to interview women on their experiences of war? The fact is they didn't (see Youngs, Jones & Pettman, 1999). Indeed, it has only been in more recent years that some male academics have included a gendered lens in their examination of war (e.g. Lahai, 2012; Dureismith, 2012; Hills, 2015), but it is obvious that women researchers led the academic brigade in this challenging and important field of research (eg. Addis, Russo & Sebesta, 1994; Cock, 1989; 1991; Cooke & Woolacott, 1993; Enloe, 1983; Nordstrum, 1999; Pettman, 1996; Tetreault, 1994) and we need to acknowledge their legacy, and/or our part in it.

This chapter will, therefore, retrospectively reflect upon my experience of conducting feminist fieldwork in Zimbabwe in the late 1990s, and will question the ethical position of doing such research and its enduring legacies. In particular, this chapter will examine the politics of 'who can speak for whom' and why *anyone* researching in Africa has the emancipatory potential to challenge the dominant colonial and postcolonial discourses that have determined historical texts.

The Seven Dilemmas

Twenty years ago when I travelled from Australia to Zimbabwe to research the issues facing women and war in Africa, I was young and naïve. Nonetheless, I was concerned enough to want to avoid being viewed as an interfering or patronising foreigner in Africa, and did not want to be labelled as culturally insensitive or dare I say "colonial".

***Dilemma 1:** How can the western, feminist-Africanist locate her work without being situated within the neo-imperial or Africanist/Orientalist discourse (eg. Mikell, 1997; Said, 1978; Mudimbe, 1988)?*

Australia hadn't colonised any African states, so I felt rather confident the latter would not apply, but I remained the white/foreign/female/other throughout, and the perception was that I had many advantages, such as access to funding. Although I was lucky enough to hold an Australian Commonwealth Scholarship to conduct my PhD and research, I was not financially rich – nor the stereotypical privileged middle class white girl – so I busied myself with organising fundraisers in order to purchase a return airline ticket from Adelaide to Harare. Such perceived advantages, however accurate, were negated when this researcher was met with the 'scepticism, defensiveness, and ambivalence' of some postcolonial feminist scholars who argued that this research only served to 'silence' African woman (Nzenza-Shand, 1997, pp. 170-1; Mohanty, 1988, pp. 61-88).

As an Australian woman harbouring feminist tendencies and with a strong sense of social justice, I was (and remain) dedicated to African Studies and was fortunate to have been a student of the late Professor Cherry Gertzel (Buswell *et al*, 2015). However, up until my fieldwork I hadn't yet set foot upon the African continent, and acknowledged that that was a problem that had to be rectified. In consultation with other women researching in Africa, I carefully considered my positionality, my purpose and reasons for going, and bravely (or arrogantly?) declared that my research was worthwhile, and that not going would not benefit anyone. However, despite applying in advance, my Zimbabwean research permit had not been issued by the week of my departure.

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Dilemma 2: Do I stay or do I go?

Christine Sylvester, who happened to be visiting Adelaide University at the time (in 1995), advised me to “just go!” She said it quite sternly, so I did! I entered Zimbabwe on a tourist visa, and organized my research permit when I got there. Sylvester provided the best advice I had received from anyone about doing fieldwork in Africa. The other dilemmas I was to face when I got there... Sekai Nzenza argued that when white women speak their voice is valued but when black women speak their ‘speech is denigrated in academic circles because [they] lack the language of theory’ (Nzenza 1995, p.103). She explained that there are culturally insensitive ‘obstacles to understanding’, which contribute to the silencing of African women.

The difficulty is compounded by the problems and possibilities of high theory, which at the present is the chosen mode of articulation. On the one hand, I recognize its enabling potential and the fact that it cannot be shut out of African thinking. On the other, it is very distant from our experience, and it is, after all, understood only by a small elite, largely in the Western world (Nzenza-Shand 1997b, p. 215).

Academic theories are usually generated for academic audiences. It is not simply high theory that uses and thus silences (in this case) African women’s experiences. The perception in the late 1990s was that the position from which the “white woman” researcher spoke guaranteed an audience, and that her work was more likely to be read in academic circles where (the subject) African women were rarely located. Nzenza concludes that ‘the issue is not that the women have been silent, but that they were not heard or understood’ (ibid., p. 216). African women were speaking in other ways within their communities, but the western world was incapable of hearing, hence also confirming Spivak’s subaltern thesis, they *can speak*, it is just that no-one is listening (Spivak, 1988).

Nzenza suggests that the –

future [for] feminist methodologies rel[ies] on oral forms of evidence. The only problem is how this data should be collected and how it is presented ... The researcher still retains the power to select questions, and to silence those words she feels are not important to her research. Clearly her ideological position also determines the way conclusions are drawn from raw data. The African woman remains a static, silent object of research, while her life is ‘spoken for,’ and about, in feminist academic circles (Nzenza 1995, p. 104).

Reina Lewis offered a strategy to search for the subaltern voice within ‘orientalist discourse’ which she argues is, ‘an uneven matrix of orientalist situations across different cultural and historical sites in which each orientalism is ‘internally complex and unstable’’ (1996, p.4). Lewis defines the subaltern voice as, ‘embryonically counter hegemonic ... [which] may contest and to varying extents transform the power relations of hegemonic discourse’ (Lewis 1996, p.4). This meant that the subaltern voice would be audible within hegemonic discourse, and appear clearly in the cracks of the latter. Thus, we begin the task of searching in the cracks of hegemonic discourse until we hear

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the voice of the subaltern (the African woman).

***Dilemma 3:** Assuming we are successful in finding it, how can we then project her voice to ensure it is heard by a wider audience, both inside and away from academia?*

John Beverly questioned whether we can actually represent the subaltern either mimetically – speaking about – or politically and legally – speaking for – without confronting the dilemma of subaltern resistance to elite conceptions and without ignoring the ways she can speak, if she is just ‘spoken for’ (1998, pp. 305-319). Beverly asks, ‘what would be the point after all of representing the subaltern as *subaltern*?’ The aim of my research was clearly not to represent the *subaltern* as subaltern, but to re-present them as a subject of Zimbabwean history from the ‘welter of documentary and historiographic discourses that [had] den[ie]d the subaltern that power of agency (Beverly 1998, p. 306).

In this case, it was about the Zimbabwean liberation war and postcolonial Zimbabwean gender politics, which had silenced the female guerrilla fighters, and denied them as “women ex-combatants” a right to be acknowledged for their contribution to Zimbabwe’s liberation from Rhodesian white minority rule. In my research I did not claim to *represent* the subaltern, but to acknowledge the absence of subaltern representation. To be unrepresented means to be unheard. To be heard means to be no longer subaltern. To represent the subaltern in this way meant that they became actors and agents of their own history. The point was not to be the voice of the subaltern, but to engage in a *dialogue* with her, and thus I aimed to privilege her voice in the context (and restraints) of academic research (Marcus 1994, cited in Lal 1996, p. 206).

Chilla Bullbeck (1996) has argued that this approach could be perceived as ‘Orientalism’, or exoticizing the Other. That is, representing the same images, voyeuristically retelling the same colonized stories, and recapturing the same exotic images for the Western gaze (Said, 1978). Indeed, Nzenza (1995) was concerned about this and offered a critical methodology for the white Western woman to research the African woman – simply acknowledge that you are coming from a position of power. Indeed, as an Australian woman heading off into Zimbabwe to do fieldwork, it was necessary for me to consider and challenge these critiques of my potential perception as a white woman of privilege. Yet, there were already a sizable number of western women academics and activists researching women’s issues in Africa, and critiquing Women and Development (WAD) and Gender and Development (GAD) perspectives (*eg.* Parpart, 1989; Chowdhry, 1995; Parpart & Marchand, 1995; Mbilinyi, 1993, cited in Christine Sylvester 1995, p. 956; Razavi & Miller, 1995). Their voices were given authority to speak within the discourse of “women in/and development”, and it enabled them to pursue the needs of African women. While it was true that those pursuits were perceived and paid for by the West, were they fulfilling Bullbeck’s Orientalist critique of just exoticising the Other, and had they reflected on Nzenza’s concern to simply acknowledge their positions of power? Either way, here lies the next dilemma.

***Dilemma 4:** Is it better to *speak for* rather than to ignore?*

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Although my particular research in Zimbabwe reported in my PhD and subsequent book (Lyons 1999b; 2004) was not conducted with the vast global funding and resources assumed by and within the Women in Development (WID) field of research in the 1990s (Sylvester 1995, p.956), these critics are solemn reminders of how feminist theory and research can easily shift into colonial gear despite their efforts to highlight resistance to colonial power relations. So how did I avoid being criticised as “colonial” in my research on women in Africa? I have to admit I was not altogether successful.

Up to the mid-1990s it was not uncommon for women’s lives and their histories to be diminished or even excluded from historical texts. My research found that Zimbabwean women’s voices and, therefore, their experiences had been excluded from mainstream history in Zimbabwe. When consulted (by other feminist researchers), their stories provided valuable insights into this country’s history (Barnes, 1992). The feminist researcher is, therefore, not only justified in this approach, but can provide an essential service in the collection of oral histories, and as in this particular case study, to centralize them in the discourse and or history of war (Staunton, 1990).

In my research I firstly considered women’s oral histories as central to these significant events (Bozzoli 1994). Of course, I was not the first feminist researcher to have this epiphany, and a number of feminist historians had documented women’s voices to reclaim their pasts. I was particularly influenced and inspired, and fortunately mentored by the late Canadian academic Susan Geiger who worked in this area (*see* Geiger 1992). In my particular research however, I found that the volumes of women’s *herstories* remained either unpublished or silenced by mainstream history as they gathered dust on archival shelves, deemed irrelevant to the wider political debate or academic discourse. However, even this strategy was not sufficient on its own when considering Jayati Lal’s (1996) ‘uneasy’ concerns about using the voices of the subject as ‘garnishes and condiments’ to the researchers’ main course (p. 205). Indeed, Sylvester (1995) has labelled this ‘garnish’ approach as a type of “feminist tourism” preoccupied with proving that we have been there and done that, ‘leaving us with baseball caps affixed with tourist decals – ‘I climbed Mt. Kilimanjaro with Tanzanian National Feminists” (p. 945). Baseball caps don’t suit me anyway, so this wasn’t my path.

How many international relations theorists have stopped to consider if their utilisation of a particular case study supports a particular theoretical point which then relegates a whole gender to condiment status or the whole research as a type of voyeuristic tourism? I am convinced that no self-respecting feminist would want the “narrative” to be all about “themselves”, but to utilise their effort to expose the stories that need to be told. Yet, in the 1990s there was almost too much self-reflexive caution and concern about researching “other” women. For my research, without the voices of women ex-combatants, the research would have been an unappetising aperitif with no main course on offer. Simply, there would have been no point.

Dilemma 5: Can any fieldwork or research (feminist or not) centre the subject’s voice to the exclusion of theory?

In using the voices of women to explain theory, we are not “capturing” the Other, ‘via new technologies of inscription: tapes, surveys, interviews, word processing,’ but

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providing an opportunity for these women to, ‘shape [her] own self-representation’ (Lal 1996, p.204). That is, the researcher cannot begin to claim that she can control the participants’ responses. For example, interviewees may decide to *misrepresent* their socio-economic situation or embellish the truth of their stories in some way. Indeed, during my fieldwork interviews in Zimbabwe, some of the women recreated their own histories either by not mentioning, avoiding or denying some painful aspects of the war. In many cases the women did not stick to the prepared questions, but talked freely of their experiences. They were asked why they joined the struggle and to describe their experiences of war as women. The questions I asked the women ex-combatants were divided into three sections: 1) before the war; 2) during the war; 3) after the war. Initially, I had a list of twenty-seven questions. However, after three interviews with these questions, I realised that it was too lengthy. The women just did not have the time to sit down for the whole day to discuss them, and most were too busy to agree to second and third interviews. Hence, the questions were reduced to eleven. In most cases, one formal interview was conducted with each woman ex-combatant and informal contact was maintained with some of the women.

Remembering their experiences during the war was difficult for many women ex-combatants. Most women did not feel comfortable talking about the political situations that occurred during the war, either because it is still too politically sensitive to discuss or they were unsure of the facts, so the interviews related to personal experiences. These experiences, reflected the political and emancipatory strategies that concerned or involved women. The participants, ‘are often not just responding to our agendas and to our questions, but they are also engaged in actively shaping their presentations to suit their own agendas of how they wish to be represented’ (ibid.). Therefore, participant interviews or any other method of collecting women’s oral histories for any research focusing on women is central to feminist discourse and research, and it must be shaped by both the researcher and the researched. It must be collaborative. Any prior misrepresentations can be avoided by representing the voices of the women involved with consideration of the above dilemmas of feminist methodology. The thesis I undertook, therefore, evolved into an examination of the juxtaposition between Zimbabwean women ex-combatants’ voices – their oral histories, stories and representations of their experiences – and the prior representations of women as guerrilla fighters predominantly featured in the various discourses of Zimbabwe’s liberation war. These women’s voices *captured* in the researcher’s text signified that they were no longer Spivak’s “subaltern”, because the women had represented themselves and challenged their subordinated status in the discourse of/on war.

There is no doubt that *my fieldwork* in Zimbabwe benefitted from some women speaking out about how their roles in the liberation war had been represented and misrepresented. Indeed, some women participants used this research to re-represent their situation and reinvent themselves as “heroines” of the liberation struggle, rather than succumb to the negative stereotypes of women guerrilla fighters that affected their demobilisation and post-independence compensation for their roles – compared to their male counterparts. Others simply took the opportunity to discuss their roles in the war with someone (another woman), perhaps for the first time since independence. These women were the heroines of their own stories, and I was privileged to be able to listen, transcribe, analyse and publish them.

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To ensure my obligation to the *collaboration*, and to avoid any accusations of “feminist tourism” or “arrogance”, I ensured that copies of my final manuscript were deposited in the National Archives of Zimbabwe and the Women’s Resource Centre in Harare, for future Zimbabweans to be able to access. This was in a time before the World Wide Web, Google and online social media. I considered it important at the time to include the full text of the women’s interviews in appendices – not as “garnishes” – in order to preserve their voices to the full extent possible in a written form. For many it was their only opportunity to speak about their experiences. Therefore, I deposited the de-identified interview transcripts in the Zimbabwe National Archives and later they were included in an online open access database entitled *Struggles for Freedom – South Africa* (see JSTOR, *nd*). Nonetheless, trying one’s best to take into account all of the postcolonial considerations of identity and the politics of one’s own position does not automatically exempt one from the neo-imperial discourses. I began my own fieldwork with all of these considerations, concerns and questions in my mind.

The Zimbabwe National Liberation War Veterans Association (ZNLWVA) provided much assistance and enthusiasm for my project and introduced me to a small but vocal group of women ex-combatants. Each woman ex-combatant I interviewed was given a copy of the questions before the interview and a description of my research objectives and university affiliation. Each woman was also offered the choice of remaining anonymous and most preferred this. However, the women who were already in the public eye were named with their permission.

During my interviews with women ex-combatants in Harare I was sensitive to their possible stereotyping of me as privileged and powerful. I tried to show them that I was just a student, keen to connect with them without being perceived as colonial. After discussing my life experiences with them they felt more relaxed to tell me theirs, as they realised I was not a “powerful other”, and agreed this was an opportunity for *collaboration*. However, this led to another dilemma for me as a foreign student researching in Zimbabwe.

Dilemma 6: Should I have paid the women for their interviews?

Already uncomfortable about my perceived position of power as a white, western middle class woman in Africa, I felt pressured to meet most requests for financial compensation for conducting interviews with the women ex-combatants. For example, during a focus group interview with women ex-combatants held at the ZNLWVA offices in Belgravia, Harare, I was required to pay for their travelling and food expenses. Although I did not have additional funding from my university to pay for interviews and research assistants, and knowing that some other foreign researchers in Zimbabwe (mostly American and some British PhD Students) did not consider it ethical to pay for interviews, I nevertheless did so. These women had come out of their way to meet me and talk to me. I did, however, make a point of purchasing enough copies of the local oral history publication, *Mothers of the Revolution* (Staunton 1990), and gave each woman I interviewed a copy of this as well, which I hoped would contribute to the sharing of all of their stories.

When I began interviewing women ex-combatants in Harare, my initial aim was to get a

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better understanding of what the liberation war meant to them, how they had fought differently to men, and how they represented themselves, especially in their roles as the *Guerrilla Girls*, a label that was ascribed to them during the struggle. What I found was that they had very different interests, and me making token payments for the interviews did not affect this outcome. Most of the women indicated that they were concerned with getting access to government compensation, funding, or rehabilitation schemes in recognition of their liberation war activities. They were rather less worried about how they had been represented in the mass media, novels, or by academics. As Nzenza (1995) has argued, it is clear, ‘that while the Western feminist is concerned with the oppression of African women, *they* are much more concerned with the urgent needs of day-to-day living’ (p. 102).

While my research was necessarily academic and required a certain demonstration of academic traditions, this did not preclude the creation of dialogue and an “empathetic cooperation” which accounted for the “politics of identity”. The outcome of my research was that it did make a contribution to the wider discussion about women and war in Africa, in particular to the debates concerning the position of women ex-combatants in Zimbabwe, who had been disadvantaged (or advantaged – for example *Teurai Ropa*³) economically, socially, and politically through their roles in the liberation war. Without the critical feminist tools discussed above and, therefore, without any sense of accountability to the subject, it might be necessary to just *stay at home* and not go anywhere. With these tools, it remains possible to confront and begin to resolve the dilemmas of feminist fieldwork in Africa.

The story of women’s experiences and history of the liberation war in Zimbabwe can never be just one story. There are thousands of stories to be told. The eighteen interviews I conducted with women ex-combatants sixteen years after the end of the war, are together only pieces of the historical puzzle. They do not make up the authoritative history of women’s experiences, nor do they have more or less authority than other collections of women’s oral histories in Zimbabwe (eg. Nhongo-Simbanegavi 1997; 2000). For many of these women, the memory of war was an individual and painful experience, and they did not want to make their histories political.

There was no ongoing collective identity of *Guerrilla Girls*, or subsequently a group called *women ex-combatants*. There was no women’s section within the Zimbabwe National Liberation War Veterans Association (ZNLWVA) or outside of it, although the term *women ex-combatant* existed in public discourse. Most women who had fought as *Guerrilla Girls* did not benefit from post-independence rehabilitation programs designed to integrate ex-combatants into society.

Dilemma 7: In hindsight, would I have done any of it differently?

Hindsight is a lovely thing, but at the time I did my best and I have no regrets. Over the years I have received a handful of letters or emails from Zimbabweans thanking me for my contribution to their women’s history. For example, one unsolicited email from a

³ *Teurai Ropa* (guerilla war name for Joice Mujuru, became the Minister for Women’s Affairs after independence, and went on to become the Vice-President of Zimbabwe (Lyons, 2003). She is now in 2016 the leader of opposition party Zimbabwe People First.

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Zimbabwean living in exile declared the following –

To say I was impressed and intrigued by the depth and breadth of your thesis would be an understatement, as it touches parts of our history, a history which was not taught to us growing up in Zimbabwe, but was experienced by real people who remain(ed) silent for reasons you well-articulated. (name withheld)

This speaks for itself and does not require further critical feminist reflections to justify my role within the research. I can't help but think that the next generation of women academics involved in African Studies, who are following me through the university sector in Australia and elsewhere, whether focusing on feminist concerns or not, are the embodiment of the successes of global feminism and will indeed make ongoing and valuable contributions to global social justice and peace, through their contributions to knowledge and understanding of African issues (see Balaton-Chrimes 2008; 2011a; 2011b; 2013; 2014; Balaton-Chrimes & Haines 2015; Burke 2012, 2013; El-Gack 2016; Jakwa 2016; Meger 2010; 2011; 2014; 2015; Mertens 2016; Mertens and Pardee 2016; etc). These women researchers involved with Africa (both African and non-African) have the emancipatory potential to challenge the dominant colonial and postcolonial discourses that have determined historical texts. I am also confident that in the future they will resolve the dilemmas of the past and create a better understanding of and for the future.

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