Interviews with Anonymous Women
Ex-Combatants, Zimbabwe


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**Interviews with Anonymous Women Ex-Combatants, Zimbabwe**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Author/Creator</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Date</td>
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<tr>
<td>Description</td>
<td>These are thematically organized excerpts from thirteen interviews with female ex-combatants from the Zimbabwe national liberation struggle.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Guns and Guerrilla Girls: Women in the Zimbabwean National Liberation Struggle

Interviews with Anonymous Women Ex-Combatants conducted in Harare, 1996
Tanya Lyons

Technical aspects of the interviews -

All interviews were conducted in English and were taped and then transcribed onto a word processor. In some cases the interviewees and/or the tape recordings were muffled and an accurate transcription of places and people’s names were difficult. Words which were inaudible are either placed in brackets or a gap has been left in the text. In some cases the interviews have been summarised and paraphrased by the interviewer for the sake of clarity. The interviews have been arranged here in thematic order. The names of the women ex-combatants have been changed to ensure their anonymity.

Questions for women ex-combatants in Zimbabwe 1996

1. Why, When and Where did you go to join the struggle?
2. What happened to you in the camps? Did you train?
3. How many women were training with you?
4. Did women have much say about what went on in the camps?
5. What was it like in the camps? How did you cope with women's things like menstruation and pregnancy?
6. How was the relationship between men and women?
7. Did you discuss women's liberation at all?
8. Were you involved in any attacks, raids, conflicts?
9. What happened to you after independence?
10. If you could make a film, write a book, tell a story or make a speech about your personal war experience, what aspect would you highlight?
11. Would you consider yourself to be a heroine?

Themes covered by responses to interviews

1. Reasons for joining the struggle
2. The journey to the guerrilla training camps
3. The journey to the refugee camps
4. Political and Military Training
5. How many women were training with you?
6. The general treatment of women in ZAPU’s Zambian Camps
7. ZIPRA's Victory Camp in Zambia
8. The general treatment of women in ZANU's Mozambican Camps
9. ZANU’s Nyadzonia Camp in Mozambique
10. Doroi Camp
11. ZANU's Chimoio Camp in Mozambique
12. The deployment of women
13. Women fighting
14. Rhodesian Forces attack Chimoio Camp
15. The relationships between men and women
16. Osibisa Camp in Mozambique
1. Reasons for joining the struggle

Rudo
I met the comrades first in 1972 and worked for them doing information.... there were not many of them in Rushinga. That term Chimbwido ... we had not heard of that... So at that time we were just comrades. I used to bring information from very far distances, where I knew that they are there. Later on then I decided to go.... we passed through Mozambique to Zambia. They were still at war in Mozambique. I went to training. [When] I was finished my training I was pregnant. I trained at Chimbichimbi. In my case I didn't manage to come back [to Zimbabwe]. It was a situation that at first myself I didn't even want to go out for training. From home I could operate a gun. I left home when I could even operate a gun. Then I was saying I dont want to go there, I was doing it here. The comrades taught me in Zimbabwe.

Sekai
In my village near Mount Darwin, the people did not know they were oppressed until they were politicised by the comrades. They struggled, and managed to send their children to schools anyway. I was denied access to education that is why I joined up. I decided to join the struggle because I wanted to liberate Zimbabwe. The war was still happening in Mozambique between the Portuguese so I was in Chifombo camp in Zambia. I joined the struggle in 1974. I was in active participation from then on.

Nhamo joined the struggle in 1974. She had completed Form 3 and was 16 years old. After her girlfriend in Mt. Darwin had heard some people were getting educated there in the camps and overseas, she suggested they should go to join. They first went to Botswana, then Zambia and went to the ZANLA camp Nampundu.

Maria
I am from Bulawayo and I didn't know about ZAPU or ZANU. I went to Beira, Tete for training as a recruit but I couldn't speak Shona only Ndebele, so this made it difficult. I would cry when trying to talk to the other women. Gradually I learnt Shona because no-one spoke Ndebele. This was in 1975 with other women we were training.
Sometimes we were mischievous when training. We would run and hide then come back before the others. I was a political Commissar in Tete, and taught others about the struggle. In the evenings we would make slogans. I trained at Wampa college, the institute of political science which was part of ZIPA. So many women were equal like men. After the training we would go to the front to teach the masses.

**Chipo**

I joint in 1976 to fight colonialism and liberate myself. I was about 17 or 18 years old. I was in Chibawawa refugee camp, then after political education, I was chosen among thousands to go for further training.

**Monica**

I finished my grade 7 which I was doing right there in the village... after that I left for a boarding school to do my form 1 and I got a place in Tambara high school in Chimanimani... My mother wanted me to go to this school because it was her home area, her sisters and brothers around there.. my father had left me young and I needed a lot of caring so this was the best school where my auntie and uncles could come and see me. so I did my form 1. I left the school in 1976. Why I left Tambara high school when I was coming from such a poor background with a mother who was struggling to make me go to school... is a good question. Why did I leave? ... Its not something which one sits back and thinks about it for days, this was a feeling which just comes into you and you decide. Either you go or you stay. Its a very very difficult situation to get into. I was very very young. There were so many things happening then. The school I was going to was a Methodist church school and [there was] a lot of politics.. in church even. And from that you would ask yourself who are you and what is your future like in this country. And if other countries like Mozambique had fought for independence and they had it now, why cant [we] do the same? And this is something, you'd go over it and then sometimes dismiss and say "oh well why should I worry about this?" It doesn't effect me alone it effects a lot of other people. Then you would go over it again and think about it, "what am I afraid of?" .... If I go and fight I will make the situation better for my mother. Maybe she will one day enjoy the fruits of just living in a free country, because I had not, I didn't meet a lot of war liberators then. In that area they had not made connection much in 1975.

We knew a lot what was happening. We heard a lot about the independence, in Mozambique, and in other countries... I used to read that newspaper called the African Times, and we would read about Smith declaring that no independence would come, and things like that, and black people were always considered inferior. And believe me you don't have to be a third year to understand that, I'm sure even a 15 year old could understand that. That's how I ended up deciding with a few friends that I think it was fine we shouldn't be afraid of joining the war of liberation and try to fight for our independence.... then for us it meant more opportunities more chances of getting a better job, position and be able to get my mother some good food, good clothes, good houses, ... So we left the four of us, we were four girls. There was no boy among our group....

This feeling comes into like you are obsessed you are possessed you are not scared of anything any more, you don't worry about your future, you don't know where your next food is coming from, you don't even know where your next drink is coming from. All I remember doing was getting into my dormitory put another dress underneath.. I had
two dresses, one pair of tennis shoes and that's it. ... Tambara is in a valley, so we actually went up the mountain. We left the school after lunch and we actually went up the mountain. Without a leader, without anyone actually knowing where we were going, but we knew eventually we would get to the border of Zimbabwe and Mozambique because we knew that the border was on that side, and the good thing about it was [we] knew that as soon as we get to the border and get into Mozambique we are set. That was the feeling we had, .. we get there and all the things will be arranged for us. Eventually we will join the other people who had left the school, ... but actually we were the first ones that year 1976.

So, we climbed the mountain high, I'm sure today that if you tell my to climb that mountain I will never be able to do it. .. at one point we made a very big mistake because we thought we had arrived Mozambique. unfortunately it was a farm, a white man's farm, and when we looked around from the top of the mountain we saw the soldiers, the Rhodesian soldiers, and we knew we were in trouble. But we didn't panic, so instead of going that way we took another direction and eventually around 7pm we crossed what we assumed was the border. We had been told that the border had a fence so we crossed that border.

**Rufaro**

I was born in Bulawayo. I went to the Botswana/Zimbabwe border and crossed the river. With over 200 children from the school. The guerrillas took us, and Rhodesian soldiers followed us but didn't fire. Then after that they said all our group must go to Zambia for training. We were taken by plane. When we reached Zambia we were taken to Victory Camp. This camp was used by the MPLA freedom fighters. We found other children from the Manama Mission, who were captured by the same guerrillas who captured us. There we stayed for some months doing military activities.

**Nyarai**

I wanted to liberate the country because the British colonised us. There are some jobs only whites could get. I was 18 years old when I joined. I had not heard about UDI as I was too young.

**2. The journey to the guerrilla training camps**

**Monica**

The first people to reach us [in Mozambique] were the Frelimo soldiers. And they took us and interrogated us, and you know, I can now understand, but at that time maybe I thought they were being cruel to us. They didn't understand, why we had left, and why we were coming to their country. I think they had to do this to sort of eliminate people who had been sent by the enemy. So you'd go really under tough interrogation. Ah, "why are you coming? have you told your mother?" that's one thing we couldn't do. You couldn't tell your mother, tell anybody for that matter, except the group among yourselves, so it was a tough time in the beginning. "What do you want to do in this country?" We said we had come to join the liberation war of Zimbabwe. They said "who told you about it?" and then we would talk about what has been happening in the country, and really what kind of community we are coming from, the church, and
everything. And we had learnt about our own war of independence. Anyway we slept there and we were given some food... and the next day they did take us to the camp now called Chimoio.

**Nyarai** spent one year giving sadza to men in the bush, then wanted to go and fight the Americans and the Rhodesians. She crossed the border from Mutare at midnight, asked Frelimo soldiers to take them to the Zimbabwean camps, firstly Manica then to Chimoio Camp in 1977.

### 3. The journey to the refugee camps

**Monica**

We then went to a place where all other young people were during the war. We would go and be transported to refugee camps. Now I know, but then I didn't know, then I thought we were going straight to the war. So we went to the refugee camps where we found the situation to be appalling. At first we asked ourselves "are these people?" everyone looked pale, dark ... we were in the middle of the bush. We were met by Tsetse fly, Id never seen these big flies before, they'd come and just bight you. And you ask yourself what have I done?

### 4. Political and Military Training

**Rudo**

Military training is not only jumping and the like. You have some lessons... it makes you stronger. Sometimes you happen to discover yourself. You discover what you are, and what you are really made of. Unlike when you are just in ... Military training is something else. It is unique, it's quite different.... You feel different; the only difference is that you know what you are.

**Sekai**

I was in Teresera camp in Mozambique, Tete province. We were told to carry ammunition between the Zambezi and the front, en-route to the training camp. There were more than 100 women. I Spent 6 months in the camps before being trained, then we were trained for 6 months in (ZANLA) Chifombo camp in Zambia. We would meet the guerrillas at the Zambezi to give them ammunition. There was a two man boat/ferry which carried these goods from Zambia to Zimbabwe. In the training we were taught the use of weapons and to be physically fit. But there was too many people and not enough food so we would share.

**Nhamo**

In 1976 I was trained for three months in Tembwe. I trained in all the war tactics.

**Shupikai**

I was at Wampo college in 1975 and trained to be a political instructor and a military instructor. I trained many people but never went to the front myself.

**Monica**
There were no clothes for training, we just had to go without clothes. I mean now, down the line you wouldn't be able to see the scars of training... especially for us without good clothes, especially crawling. (we were wearing) anything we could get, and most of the clothes were donated to us by sympathisers... We would just crawl without clothes. In guerrilla warfare you really had to do a lot of tactics. So... no matter if you had the big ulcer... [made worse] because of the heat. You are crawling on the ground on stones and everything because it is in the forest, ... there are [no] training fields... when you fall you can just fall on a stone or anything. ... but you wouldn't give up, there was no choice like that, but if you didn't like training, you would really suffer, you just had to go. And again this feeling that I want to train to be a soldier and go back and fight. The training is extremely tough. It was not training for fun it was training to go and face the enemy. It really required a lot of good training tactics and I think guerrilla warfare, this is when all over the world it succeeds, despite the fact that we didn't have enough ammunition or armies like the enemy. And we get somewhere because of the tactics in guerrilla warfare.

I was at the womens camp... in Chimoio. After training I was appointed to it, as much as I wanted to go to the front, since I had come to fight the enemy, they always wanted people who would look after the camps. And in this case we were appointed, I think we were 18 women soldiers trained to go. We were given our rifles, to go and guard the women in this camp, Osibisa. All our camps had guards...

**Nyarai**

After 2 months at the refugee camps we moved ... to a training base at night... we wanted to be trained. We stayed for 3 months. The war was very hard. Everyday the helicopters come to find us. "Where are you?" We would go in the morning to the bush, under the trees for cover. After that at night we'd go to the base. It was 1978, March. We stayed at Pungwe for the next 3 months. The war was very tough. Our heads moved this camp. Then they asked us 'We want Grade 7, form 4, form 2. I didn't have form 2. My father had 3 wives: Children - we were 17. After that we moved from Pungwe to Tete. First we had some political education then some lessons for Marxist and Communist. The military training also involved crawling on the ground a lot. [she showed me her scars on her elbows] They say we have finished our training and are going home to fight. Aiwe! [she whispers] "I was shot!" They said we will go together with the boys. After that we go to Tete in a car. Then from Tete to (Marubanga).

**Rufaro**

We were training how to use guns, but this was not enough for us, because we left the country thinking of being trained as soldiers. Then we used to cry for that, saying "Why are you discriminating us from men. Men are training in camps, we, just keep us here in V.C. So why should you keep us in here? Please we want to train as soldiers.

**Taurai**

So we were given military training as well as; - Victory camp was purely meant for refugees initially. But the Manama students, when they started residing in that camp, were all given training. That is, political training as well as military training. It was not as intensive as what came or followed later: In Soloweise and Mkushi and other military camps. I had O levels so I became a medical doctor in the camps.
5. How many women were training with you?

Sekai
About 300 women were in the camp, but only a few men because they were sent to the front.

Shupikai
At wampa college there were maybe 500 people/students and comrades there, and half were women.

Monica
Maybe there were 500 women, with both men and women training them.

Nyarai
Half and half were women, 300 to 400 women training with AK rifles.

6. The general treatment of women in ZAPU's Zambian Camps

Ruth
In Zambia in particular when someone was menstruating I remember we didn't allow them to go and participate in the exercises or in the military training. They were given some lighter duties to do and were excluded from doing the strenuous activities. So that would have been an advantage being a woman.

Tsitsi
In Mkushi life was not all that different, because we were the first group of women to train there. So we had more advantages than men. In our camp there were a few men. These were instructors and old men who used to cook food for us. We trained heavily .... we were very much anxious to do so. Some of us got pregnant, but we cannot rule out that they loved each other. They were not raped, some of them are now married to those comrades.

Rufaro
One: we did not have cotton wool to use, when, [for periods]. So we used to tear rags, and wash them, to improvise as cotton wool, which sometimes, some of us did not menstruate monthly, but it was a disadvantage. Then, there came a problem of uniforms. Uniforms, sometimes you could wear, put on one uniform for a long time. But we used to wash when bathing our bodies, wash our uniform, and dry it in the sun. After bathing you put it on. We did not even bother with pants [underpants] because we knew if you dont have it, where can you get it? There is no parent here. If our commanders can't source these things, you can't get them anywhere, so we're used to that life.

Sometimes we would run out of food and you'd eat porridge for a week or so. You could eat sadza without relish, using salt. Some of us developed shaking knees, just because of our diet. But we're strong enough because we knew what we had come for. We did not even cry about it. Then one of the days [Joshua] Nkomo came and gave us
morale, [and said] "I'll try to give you some cows to supplement your diet." But we didn't bother much.

7. ZIPRA's Victory Camp in Zambia

Taurai
The girls were moved from that place [where they first arrived] to open a new camp that was purely going to be for ladies. A camp which was formerly used by NATO people from Angola. So we went and started using that camp. It was Victoria Camp, for us it was Victory Camp because of the victory now coming to Zimbabwe, through the reinforcement by the children and women from the society in Zimbabwe, which meant all the society, parts or structures were represented now in the liberation struggle. At that stage we continued to be convinced that we had taken a proper decision in coming to join the liberation struggle, by the politicians, rather the commissars. In V.C. there were initially about 200 of us from Manama, but each evening we would get a truck, if not 3 trucks so that the number we would get would be about 100. Then that is how they started training militarily.

8. The general treatment of women in ZANU's Mozambican Camps

Sekai
In Mozambique there was a water shortage. When we had menstruation it was so difficult. We were only given small amounts of water, and so there was no water to wash with, except if you get to the river. Men sympathised with us, but there were no exceptions made for women who were bleeding, we just had to carry on.

9. ZANU's Nyadzonia Camp in Mozambique

Monica
Now, we get to this refugee camp, which was Nyadzonia and we were very unfortunate when we got there, just a week after we got there... the camp was attacked by Rhodesian soldiers.... Way even before I had trained, I didn't even know what it is, I had not seen a gun I had not seen anything. All I had come to was to join the struggle. I have never talked to anybody about this [it] is very difficult for me to relate because it was very difficult. Well I was at Nyadzonia, it happened when, I remember the way it happened as young as we were, we used to stay together, us four girls who had come at the same time, ...[mentions their names]. As we were sitting on the ground,... cars came, and everybody else who was there going to the cars, especially those who had been there for a longer time than us because to them cars signified training. Cars used to come to Nyadzonia camp... and they go for training... and I sat there with my other three colleagues, because we thought we have just arrived and our chances of going training had maybe not come, not arrived, so we sat there as we waited for this... and those cars.... I asked "how did the Rhodesians get through to the camp in the cars?" I don't know how.... and the next thing we are sitting there, and well pah pah pah! [gestures gun shot].

We sat there for a while and ... then we are running. I went running because I had not been trained, then I had no tactics I knew, I [had] no practice with a gun shooting. And the shock of it and everything. And the direction we were running to the river called
Nyadzonia. Unfortunately for poor children, people like myself from poor backgrounds meant that we didn't know how to swim, we didn't have swimming pools. So running from the bullets going to the water, a lot of people drowned, but I didn't know how to swim, but I struggled and hoped the others managed to cross the river. Then I was lucky... I didn't get any.

As you are running you would actually feel the bullets "whoosh," and you'd see the other guy in front of you falling, you'd see the whole head coming off, and actually when that was happening.. I'll tell you these people were refugees people who didn't know anything about the war. You know some of them would even stop the bullets with their hands, because they just thought "what is this?" you hear this 'zoom'!

All that I remember is in the Pungwe forest with nothing to eat, stuck at the next big river. .. those who couldn't swim just had to walk up the river and find some little boats the local people helped them to cross.... that's how we managed to cross. At Pungwe I actually saw another guy who came from my school, drowning. We are trying to, even they put a rope, but then it was too long by the time we go to the middle. It's tiring, we cant hold him for that long. When you actually see someone drowning... a lot of us we were just so scared even to try getting on the rope, so this meant walking up the river until we got the local people to help us.

We walked for the next three or four days without any food, nothing. And the local people wanted to help but they also had nothing.... we got to a small camp called Shunga and that's where we gathered. A lot of other people gathered, and we stayed there until we got instructions where to go. Timing was very difficult to remember. For me to say we stayed there for two to three months I would be lying because during the war a day would be like a month, a month like a year, I mean being in that war for five years was like being in that for 20 years.

We had no clothes nothing. I had two dresses, now I only had one left I had no shoes, ... as soon as we got to Nyadzonia camp we had to share our dresses. So it was like we had no clothes, we had no blankets, we had no where to sleep. You just don't know where your next food is coming from. You give up your life... and as we were there, [we saw] the young Zimbabweans coming, and you feel sorry that those people are coming.... we didn't have enough arms...

10. Doroi Camp

Monica

We eventually went to a camp called Doroi. This camp was the most difficult time, because when we got to Nyadzonia the barracks were made from wood,... we started building our own barracks and we didn't have sickles to cut grass so, we would use our hands to cut grass, something very strange.. if you cut grass and cut yourself a small cut would grow up to be big ulcers. A lot of people got them, because of malnutrition, there is nothing to stop the ulcer, it doesn't heal and at this time you see all these strange diseases I have never seen in my life.
Nyarai

When we arrived at Chimoio it was the day the bombs were at Chimoio. We stayed at Chimoio for 5 days and after that our head told us to go to Doroi Refugee Camp. We stayed there for 2 months. We ate sadza of sunflower and it was bad. We asked "Why did we come here? Let's go home!" but there is no way to go home. If we go home we are going to get killed by soldiers, and they'd say you are a sell-out [they would think you are a spy]. The hunger was bad we were eating Mangai [Maize].

11. ZANU's Chimoio Camp in Mozambique

Monica

After having learnt about Chimoio which was a training camp again we decided to ... we ran away from Doroi. We thought that our training would never come... so we decided to run away. .. we moved around at night, we had so many problems. When we just about got to Chimoio we were caught by the [Frelimo] and taken back to the camp, and had to explain that we were going to Chimoio we were fed up sitting here and we would try it again, so we went back and finally succeeded and we got to Chimoio. We were very lucky we ran away to training, and the person who trained me is now the Commissioner of Police.

12. The deployment of women

Rudo

It was not a training camp but a dispatchment camp. People would come and carry materials. I carried material, but because of the war in Mozambique, we carried material to the Zambezi and leave it there. Other people would take it from there. I dont know what happened to it all. We carried the stuff on our heads, backs ..., but at that time we were very strong and the spirit of fighting was in us. At first we were carrying material to the Zambezi, which was in the war again because I had to have my own gun, and then I went for training.

Sekai

Women were carrying more than men. I carried only guns, but did farming as well, growing vegetables and maize. I was in charge of maybe 100 people. On the surface it was about the security of the inmates in the camp, to make sure there were no fights in the camp, and to make sure that those coming to the camp were not spies. I deployed staff to guard certain points, people and the ammunition. It was quite an important position. and I was highly respected, and some men were even scared of me. My husband was in a different camp, but sometimes I would give him orders. During meal times I had to check that no poison had been put into the food. I was in Chimoio but not when it was bombed.

Nhando

In 1975/76 I became a teacher, and in early 1976 I was sent to Mozambique, for a few weeks to Chingotsi camp, then to Seguratsa camp near the border. There were less than 50 women there and only a few men, mainly commanders. It was dangerous to be so close to the border, as there was always the threat of attack. Our job was mainly to carry weapons to the border.
Maria

One of the important roles that was played by female ex-combatants was in the transportation of ammunition between Mozambique and Zimbabwe. Because in our culture here, women carry a heap load on the head, on the shoulders, even on the back. Whereas the men here culturally would only use their hands to carry. Now how much can you carry over a distance in your hands? It's difficult. So the female ex-combatants were mainly very useful in carrying ammunition into Zimbabwe, because they would carry more than men would. It was difficult for women because of the weight though. It would result in the loss of menstruation, maybe resulting from this cumbersome weight.

Ruth

But in Zambia we didn't encounter that. For anything we had the very early stages before my time in Zambia, did we have some ladies come into operate, otherwise it was very very rare for women to come in and operate. The female ex-combatants who were in Zambia were mainly used for political spreading, in other words, they were used as commissariats as well as instructors for military training. They were very good. They mainly did not want to send female combatants to the front to come and fight. They usually sent men. That is why in Zambia the females were more protected. They were more advantaged than the females in Mozambique. In the early 1970s women who went through Mozambique/Zambia they used to ferry material. My point is, we used to cross the Zambezi. we were not safe yet because there was still war. So the crossing again, it was not our country, the Frelimo were doing it for us. If they denied crossing, if the river is infested by soldiers from Rhodesia, people would not cross. So there you are, there as recruits, women. You have to be trained in the bush. You have to come back home,... until the crossing is ready. That is when you would go back. You train, and some women I know came back with the men to fight, before they even went for further training. Just be trained to use a gun, and how to stab from the attack.

13. Women Fighting

Question: Did you or any other women ever go on any military operations inside Zimbabwe?

Nhamo

Women did not go to fight battles - they only ever went into the liberated zones to stay in villages.

Monica

I was involved in more than four battles. Women were doing most of the carrying of weapons etc.

Nyarai

We went to Mutoko but there are landmines there. We would walk together [with men], if the soldiers are here in Zimbabwe, "fire fire," you'd defend yourself. We were together for 9 months in Zimbabwe, in and out, in and out. I was a very good fighter! I was involved in many attacks. Yes, near the border, we were carrying the materials and the commander said, there is the enemy in our front, you can defend
yourselves, fire fire! No problem for me to fire because I know how to operate the weapon. It was easy, we were training for 6 months. The attack was successful. Women did not just carry materials to the front. I am the one who was shooting! I am the one, [although] I didn't say I am the one who made more killings.

Rufaro

In our side there is no women who operated outside [of Zambia]. But we were near that point. If the Smith government did not accept peace we were coming in here to fight in the urban areas. We were prepared to come and fight. We wanted to fight the war at the [front]. We were training for urban guerrilla warfare. I am a ZIPRA. No! Women did not come here [to Zimbabwe]. We were preparing but the peace talks [ended the war]... We didn't get the chance to fight like men. Our leaders went to Lancaster House talks, then the Smith Government accepted the peace talks, so then there was no chance of coming here to show them that we can also fight like them.

14. Rhodesian Forces attack Chimoio Camp

Shupikai

I was in Chimoio when it was attacked by the Rhodesians. I had just got the guns out for the day's training and sent a girlfriend to get more from the gun hold, and the spotter plane flew over. The first thing I did was lie on the ground, still, to see what was happening and when the bombs started dropping, I just ran ... for maybe 20 kms - then I hid in the grass as paratroopers started dropping from the sky. At one point I was surrounded by these soldiers, and somehow I managed to avoid them: at one point I lay down and just fell asleep, only to be awoken by the footsteps of a comrade. I thought this was the end of me, and prayed to God that I was dead, so my parent's wouldn't be harassed and tortured back home. The comrade turned out to be a 'brother' so together we escaped. I then went to another training camp.

15. The relationships between men and women

Rudo

There was a division of labour, I think ... okay someone is deployed on the kitchen for 5 years, do you blame that person that he is doing nothing? Can you do that? That he didn't fight is he considered a useless person? They were equal because one could not do without the other.

Sekai

I had no trouble at all with the men, the soldiers were obedient.

Maria

I think we were just like men!

Rufaro

I think the situation, when you are staying at home, there are rules. The commanders didn't want women to have children in the bush. They treated us like their children. But there are circumstances, we can not stop anybody to do that. The women who got pregnant were sent to V.C. in Lusaka. The men didn't treat us like women.
They made sure that if he says "this," you do "that." Even when we went for Judo, he would give you a man to try. But women had no say [what went on in the camps], because when you are a recruit you have no say, you just take orders.

**Nyarai**

No! We were not sleeping together. This side for girls. This side for boys. We met at the class. We are not sleeping together but segregated.

**Taurai**

I will tell you of the position or identification of the feeling between the different sexes as we experienced it in Zambia. Initially we were told that we are comrades. And the word comrade was an umbrella word which meant you are my pal, you are my brother, sister, you are everything to me, - except sexually motivating. We were given strong and very meaningful explanations, in the sense of accepting a comrade. Because we were supposed to look at each other as brothers and sisters, more than anything else. So the differences in the sexes was supposed to imply that we are just brothers and sisters. So that we all wore combats, trousers and a shirt, and a cap, which was military gear, and boots. You could not identify that that was a woman and that was a man from a distance, because we all looked like just a man or a woman. From a close range you could tell from the significant features - and maybe facial features. Some of them would sell you out!

But for some of the comrades it would be difficult to identify, this would be a female, this would be a male. So in that same context, we would train, we would undertake similar military training, we would do everything together as comrades as brothers and sisters. If somebody collapsed, collapsing would be either a man or a woman. Anybody would collapse. And it would not be singled out as maybe purely a feminine gesture. Though practically it was mainly females collapsing, because sometimes, some of them had not; it was at the initial stage that most females would collapse because they had not had the strength and the stamina for them to be able to withstand the harsh environment in which we gradually lived. We would wake up at 3 or 4am in the morning to go out to the bush to do jogging. We had to run long distances, and get fit to do operations. After military training, it was uniform in most cases. You could not differentiate between the female and the male.

**16. Osibisa Camp in Mozambique**

**Rudo**

At Osibisa Camp it was important for that women to look after a child. There are couples still around today who had babies in the war. Everybody was interested to come home. This is why they are saying that some women are refusing to go to Osibisa, they wanted to come to the front.

**Monica**

We went to Osibisa, I was actually one of the commanders of that group looking after the women and their children. I mean this was a war and there were quite a number of children, even when the other camps didn't have food that camp would have food, but still we didn't have enough education. It was difficult. Putting mothers and children in one place wasn't easy. There weren't any creches, it was just a difficult time. There were not many projects for these ladies. Most of them were already trained and
they had to look after their children in this place. So again it was another frustrating. I think the party found it very difficult. The mothers were trained, they had all come to the war to fight but they end up [in this camp] and some of the fathers had gone away and you never know whether they are alive, or whether they'll come back. You don't know if they will ever see that baby. You can imagine what was going through those women's minds. A lot of them would [cry], the babies would never know their fathers.

At Osibisa we then moved after a lot of threats from the Rhodesian forces planes, airforce, fly over, like every other day, recognising, Nyadzonia had been bombed, Chimoio had been bombed, a number of other places were bombed. When the party realised that it had become dangerous for the children to remain there, we moved right back into Pungwe forest. Osibisa was a better camp in the sense that it was closer to the city, Mozambican towns, so for mothers if we need to take children to the hospital. Now we had to move the children.

17. Mafudzi Camp

Rudo
I was in ZANLA and became a teacher in the camps, in Varoma at the time of Détente. This was early April/March 1975 to December. Then to Shinguzi, Tete, Mafudzi camp. I was teaching kids how to read and write, I was doing that up until 1980 and did not teach political education at all. Although it was a refugee camp it was no different to the other camps. Myself I can use a gun, nearly everyone, most of them were trained. At Mafudzi we were not excluded from the struggle we were part of the struggle. I said I was just answering for myself, I wasn't a political instructor. We had political instructors who would come in. They were not minors. In two or three years time they would go and train.

Sekai
They sent the children to Mafudzi camp for children. My child was 3 years old when sent there to the creche. I stayed in Chimoio camp and did chores in the camp. I was a Detachment Security Officer (Colonel).

Nhamo
We went to Mafudzi camp for refugees and I was promoted to the level of general staff, and became a teacher, and also I was Mafudzi Camp Commander because of my position. That camp was holding almost 5000 people including the masses and the refugees. Vatoto (swahili for young children) there were about 2000, about 2,300 masses - our parents, our mothers and fathers. At that camp they didn't want trained people. Only 16 people there were trained and we went there disguised, because we wanted to teach people, because we didn't want our Zimbabweans to just stay and do nothing. We were not teaching political education but academic.

18. Sex, Contraceptives and Pregnancy

Rudo
I went to the struggle when I was already pregnant. There was this situation that many women were not menstruating and I thought the same was happening to me. After discovering that I was pregnant the training was on and off. I went to Lusaka to give birth in a hospital. Talk of a woman who went to the struggle in 1972 up to 1980. If
that person had a child then, do you blame that person? So its a mentality of people who didn't understand the struggle just because so and so is going. So they really don't know what they are after.

**Sekai**
There were no pregnant women in Chifombo Camp at all. I did not see any. The camp was mixed. I met my husband in the camp. He operated in Rhodesia and was sent to Pakistan for education. When I had my first baby I was sent to Chimoio hospital, then was sent to Chimoio camp after I had the baby. I was treated well, but was not very comfortable during the war situation.

**Monica**
I met my husband in the camps who was a regular soldier and we married and I had a baby. There were no contraceptives available, except personal restraint. I had my baby eight days before Independence in 1980. It was tough being pregnant in the last year of the war.

**19. Marriage and Children of War**

**Rudo**
It happened, I was in love with the father, that's how. He was a comrade. His name was So Silent. He was a very strong man. It never took me time to get pregnant, it was the first time. My husband was killed in combat. We had fallen in love in Zimbabwe and then we registered our marriage in the camps. "If we had of come back together he would have paid *Lobola*, there was no way he was going to get away from it! That is our culture! About the father of my children. He is now dead but I am still attached to the relatives.

**Nhamo**
I had a baby in the war. My husband was also General Staff in the Transport Department in Tete. I went there for business a lot and fell in love with him in 1976, and had a baby in 1978.

**Taurai**
I met the father of my first 2 children during the war. He was a commander, and I got with him because he was single and so was I, and I thought, I had better get hooked with someone so the other men wouldn't put pressure on me, and also my husband respected my virginity. We did not have sex until we were registered, just fondling and kissing.

**20. Rape in the camps**

**Honour**
I was in Mozambique and it was a different situation to that for ZIPRA, in V.C. in Zambia. When there was not enough food, to me it was a surprise because you'd see boys falling down, but the women were strong. And in our camp, if you spoke to anyone who was in Mozambique and ask them which was the best, strongest, where I was, Tembwe, people died there because of hunger, well for women again myself, I was very unlucky. There was Comrade Nyadza, he was very very cruel when the female comrades joined the struggle. Say this one comes to the camp to do [something], he
will go to the girl and say "I want you!," what, what, - but we used to refuse, and he would hit you thoroughly. Myself I even got a few injuries ... he would hit me and say I'm a sellout, but I refused. But he never had me.

**Shupikai**

There was rape happening in the camps all the time, especially among new recruits. The men commanders would just send for a girl and she was told to go and 'sweep' his hut - which meant she wouldn't be doing any sweeping. They would demand sex, and rape the woman - as their right! I was raped by a comrade. It happened to me! Also if the new-comers to the camp didn't sleep with the guys they'd be accused of being spies - "If you were not sent here to spy you will sleep with me!.

It was unfortunate that I was their leader and no-one came to me to report about those cases. It is very unfortunate. What I know is that the majority of them went by consent. To tell you the truth. It needed a strong character because along the way you think 'I have been raped', and yet, you were not that strong to really stand and defend it yourself. Really sometimes I would say, I can’t say 100% that there were no rape cases, but I didn't get told about them. But I know exactly what used to happen. I almost got into trouble by cautioning them [the men]. That I can say in front of many. I almost got into trouble! Because when we used to have these counselling sessions, they were going back to their boyfriends. You see and threats were coming to me. Of course, its not a lie. From the boyfriends, some of whom were married men, going with young girls. And these were the young girls I was trying to counsel, who used to go back and report. So, now its good for them to say all these things, I really can understand. Some went by consent That is my point. Most went by consent. Because if you are raped, you can't continue to go there and get raped.... how many times do you get raped? You can see where the truth of it is. I am not saying totally that no-one was raped, but I didn't get them. But for most it was by consent.

Q: What about the spirit mediums asking people to refrain from sex?

Yes that was supposed to be done. Characters change my dear. Understandings change, and backgrounds speak a lot to an individual. From where I come from sex is illegal until you are married. And most of these people from where they came from sex was nothing.. You can see the conflict already. You try and counsel that person, she will come back and say "who are you? You are not my Auntie!, or my Mum! or any relative!". I wasn't any of these except that I was a comrade. What else should I do. No power nothing. Let her go get pregnant. Tomorrow she is crying, I have been raped! Ah! What type of rape case. You go to this man, you go to that man, seeing you moving on your own two feet, all of those going for rape cases. If you had kept yourself away let them come there and drag you, then we call that a rape case. But you go there willingly, you are called, you go there, you are coaxed into discussion, you also contribute, when it gets to real sex you also to some extent give in, but you know its a wrong thing when a bad thing comes as a result of that. You say, "I was raped!." I dont agreed with that.

**21. Representations of Rape**

Ruth
Of all the women who had children during the struggle. Most of them we cannot say it was a rape case, some of these were being real agreements. Some of which they are married, married up till today. So we cannot say it was a rape case, they were in love. We cannot rule out that one. They were women and children with fathers also. Of course most of the parents, either the mother or the father, died during the struggle. But it was not rape, we can rule out that one completely.

Shupikai

Other women do not want to admit that there was rape in the camps because after the war, ex-combatant women were accused of being prostitutes, and found it difficult to get married, because they had obviously been sleeping around. So many women didn't want to admit being ex-combatants. These women who are denying there was any rape are just trying to protect their images as women.

22. The Zimbabwe National Liberation War Veterans Association (ZNLWVA)

Sekai

An idea that came out of this meeting was that the ZNLWVA ought to have a radio update for War Veterans, since they don't know what is going on. More dissemination of Information is needed. Also the ZNLWVA needs a female representative who is a female ex-combatant with administrative skills, who can represent the women.

23. Women’s Liberation

Sekai

As head of security I had no time to discuss women's liberation during the war. The idea was to liberate Zimbabwe first. (Although she expressed that she had not had a chance to think about this openly, but she does worry about it, and thinks about it, and discusses it at the grassroots only, the problems with men). Since Independence there doesn't seem to be much unity between female ex-combatants themselves on this issue. I admire some of the educated women today but they are not recognised. (If she could be the minister for a day, she said she would promote these women above men).

I met Teurai Ropa. She was first at Chifombo with men, then at Chimoio. Myself and others elected Teurai to be the chair of the women's group. Already Teurai and the other women would discuss grievances like women's needs to get cotton wool, the needs of children. If it wasn't for Teurai many women would have died!

Nyarai

Aaah, they were talking about women's liberation but we wanted to liberate Zimbabwe. If you are a boy you can come to liberate Zimbabwe. If you are a girl you can come to liberate Zimbabwe. It was not difficult for women to liberate Zimbabwe because we were working together. A commander would be a man or a woman. They'd say let's work together, defend yourselves if the soldiers want to come and shoot you. You can shoot them! 'If you want to shoot me, I shoot you!'. If you are first to see a fighter, Fire Fire!

Taurai
We did not specifically talk about women's liberation. We were not highlighting on women at all, because remember I was saying we were treated as equals, so we were appealing to all Zimbabweans to just feel there is a challenge. If your children like us were even denied the comfort of your own homes when our parents came to claim us from Botswana, we denied ourselves that right. By refusing to come back home and choosing to fight we showed that we were dedicated to the struggle, and wanted able bodied male and female to come and join us.

**Rudo**

Women's Liberation wasn't discussed. I think this just came about, whether this was discussed somewhere, where I didn't attend, but otherwise it just came about. Even when you were doing training, some groups were training together with men. The same training. And the duties we were doing were just almost the same. We had no feeling of "that because I am a woman ...not because I'm a woman, I would just ask him, why are you doing this to me? Not because I am a woman. I never felt like that.

Politically when we choose leaders, I just see it up to now, we favour to choose a man. When they do us wrong we don't say it is because its a man, we just say its because of him and we go for another man. Other than changing to go for a woman also. But you find most of the voters, they are women. Why, I dont know?

Myself, I wouldn't mind about the cooking, sweeping and washing, we can do that as women. But there are certain ways of getting into a man, for him to do it. He can do it ... That can't be everyone's task to liberate a woman. The liberation they mean mostly is political liberation. The liberation at work, we must get equal salaries, ... and when the promotion comes. "I must not be left out because I am a woman." Whereas the mentality of our men here, even a woman lecturer ... people don't expect a woman to be in a top position, and assume that she is a student or participant and not the leader. There is always a negative attitude to women in high positions.

**Nhamo**

The women who went to Wampa college were more educated on ideas like women's emancipation.

**Monica**

Roles were not divided along traditional gender lines in the camps. Ideologies, marxist was the talk of the day. We didn't talk particularly about women's liberation, we wanted to liberate everyone.

There is a lot more for women to know. I don't think it is enough to talk to the women in the village. I think education is to come from the bottom. I don't see any of these women succeeding if they sideline men. Because what has made men today women have always been part of it. Men never have their own meetings to talk about their own problems and try to avoid women. So, as long as there are meetings and efforts being directed where men are not involved, progress will be very slow, and the result wont be as pleasant as what we would like them to be. Its a question of, women who are educated, women who know their rights and their partners know their rights and their partners respect them, then life becomes a little easier for women. But as long as you come out of that meeting and you come home and men still look down at you, I don't think that as his wife you will be able to convince him. There are lots of men out there
who are very open minded, I mean I don't want to talk about myself, but I don't have problems with emancipation, I don't have that. I've got a man who is very open minded ....

I think being involved in the struggle did help a lot, it helps for respect for each other. ... I think the war did help a lot...

24. Wearing Trousers

Nyarai

In 1980 I was very happy, wearing trousers, shirts, boots, my parents didn't have a problem with this.

Rufaro

I used to think that women were not supposed to be soldiers. But when I went to Zambia, when I first saw these ladies, and I was told they were soldiers, well trained soldiers, and they were putting on nice camouflage uniforms from Russia, I was very attracted. When I was wearing the uniforms I felt that I was equal to men ex-combatants. If given the chance I could do whatever he could do.

Nhamo

We were wearing Chinese green uniforms, which included trousers.

25. Are you a Heroine?

Monica

I was very proud of my contribution, very proud and I have had no single day when I have regretted going to war. As much as we are going through a lot of problems during and after the war. As much as I felt I was being ill treated, simply because I am a former combatant, in this society in one time or another I am very proud that I fought for that war. You know there is one thing I always say, "what everybody did when I went to war, I have done it. What I did, what I did in the war, they would never do," so I will always be ahead. That gives me a lot of pleasure and happiness, I'm very proud that I fought in this war.

But something has to be done to rehabilitate the ex-combatants. I know our economy is not that good but I really don't understand why things have to be like that. Even if rural people hear about a program they can't afford the bus far to come to the city.

Nyarai

Yes I am a hero, the government know me (she shows me a letter to say she is a fully fledged war veteran, but it does not use the term Hero). When I die they will pay for my funeral, (but that's all there will be no public acknowledgment of her efforts).

Sekai

I don't feel like a heroine because I have not been given the respect from others. I have got no medals to indicate that I am a hero. I fell empty, not a hero at all. I would appreciate to be shown love and appreciation for my sacrifice, but I don't know who
will do this. Maybe the government, but at least the War Veterans Association is doing a good job, but I want my payout.

**Rudo**

How could I be called a 'terrorist' then and today I can't be called a hero with my fellow comrades? The enemy called me a terrorist, and you cant call me a hero today, what does that mean? I totally condemn the selection of the heroes. If ever one crossed the border, going to join the struggle, and that person managed to fight during the war, or died during the war, or they survived, that person is a hero, because it's "Mission Accomplished"! It means we dont know the term. What is a hero? I cant explain, but the way that they are doing it now, I feel everybody that went to fight and came back, should be recognised.

The pride we have is hidden. You know the way we are living you cant be proud. You dont want to be identified, because we are living in poverty.

**26. Demobilisation**

**Nyarai**

In 1979 there's a conference in Geneva. They said go to the (Demobilisation) camps. We refused. They can bomb us in the camps if you go. We stayed in assembly points november 1979 to 1980.

**27. After the war - thoughts, actions, representations**

**Monica**

Women combatants are suffering more than men. The stereotype of former combatants being uneducated and stupid, but they are clever!

**Nyarai**

Other people joined the Zimbabwe National Army. I was in the party. I became a para-military instructor. Our salary was very nice. Trained for 6 months by Koreans in 1983. But it's not so good now. I got $8,400 payout. That's all. They gave me $233 a months for a while. "I want to fight more." We are many who liberated Zimbabwe. So its difficult for the government to help, bit by bit. For me I'm okay, for others, they have nothing. No money to go to Harare to see the doctor. Yes, we won equal rights. we were fighting together with everything we are doing together we won equal rights...

**Sekai**

I am now afraid that my rank was not recorded and I'm concerned I will not get enough compensation that is due to me. I am under-educated. After Independence I was happy because my parents were still alive. Now they were getting a fairer deal from crops than before. Bore holes were dug, clinics were built and the transport was better. I dont see much else that needs to be done. On heroes day in our province there is a place allocated for burials and graves, and we go there and sing songs and slaughter some animals to eat.
I do talk to her kids about the war, because I don't want them to have to go to war. (She asked me what kind of assistance I could give her. She has 5 children, is married and needs assistance of any kind, mainly for the children's education).

I haven't had a chance to discuss this before.

**Shupikai**

As an ex-combatant woman my marriage fell apart after Independence. My husband's family (he was also an ex-combatant) didn't like me, and said I was too much of 'an ex-combatant', maybe they meant I was too strong? The family tried everything, even witchcraft, they cut my back at night, until eventually my husband divorced me, although he was very apologetic about it. It was his family - not him! I am a small woman but strong. I have brought up my 2 girls by myself, on a teachers salary. I am poor, but proud and a Christian. I would like to write a book about my life. Even my brother has encouraged me, but there is just no time. I was involved with the Zimbabwe Women Writers but there is no time anymore.

I have developed ulcers from the war, mainly from lack of food - when the stomach is empty, acid is produced ... so in Independence I had to pass up the offer of an overseas education because I was in hospital for three months with ulcers. Now I am a teacher it is okay. There was also a lack of water in the camps, we would even draw up muddy water, anything. With these ulcers I also get terrible back pain so I cannot sit up for too long.

(Shes not aware of any literature produced about the liberation war and women, not even *Mothers of the Revolution*. Also, she discussed that she was worried about intimidation and anonymity. She was worried that if she said anything that would offend the government there would be repercussions. For example, one woman was allegedly taken to the psychiatrist hospital and given 2 injections which made her sleep for 3 days, she couldn't look after her family, all because she was speaking out against the system. She didn't want to criticise the government that she had fought so hard for. She put them in POWER! She thought that she was a hero, as she had been in the struggle for Zimbabwe).

**Rufaro**

We came here after independence but our people shunned us. I went back to Bulawayo. People here don't like ex-combatants. Even if you are married to a man, sometimes people say you want to control him in my house, you are thinking you are in the bush. This is not the bush. They think you are trying to bully them. They don't even think that you fought for them. They are here just because of you. They think, being an ex-combatant, I don't know how I can describe it. They don't like ex-combatants.

**Nhamo**

She is divorced to this man because he took another wife, he didn't like her - as other women who were not ex-combatants were better. He did pay lobola for her.
28. The alleged abduction of children by ZIPRA guerrilla fighters from Manama Mission School

In January 1977 Manama Mission school was attacked by guerrillas and all of the students were abducted (there is a lot of Rhodesian propaganda about this abduction in the press). One of the children abducted was Taurai who spoke about her experiences. The following is her account.

The comrades came to take the money and the children. They were abducted at gunpoint. The Rhodesians tried to stop them but could not do anything. 5 kms from the school there was a shop and food was taken.

At the Botswana border at the Shashi river crossing the group of children were harassed by helicopters. Their school uniform was red so there was no camouflage. They were only children, who were tired hungry and injured with running, especially through the thorn trees. WE are concerned even up to now how our legs are not in good shape (she showed me her scars from the thorn trees). The U.N came to assist the situation. The freedom fighters told one girl who was the sister of the school principle, and she was my friend, to tell them that she had organised the children to come to Botswana. She was supposed to deny any involvement of her brother the principle. The freedom fighter said,

"You are going to tell the world that you organised the school on your own." So, they folded the AK rifle and it was small now. They disguised themselves with dresses and they were wearing wigs, to look like women amongst us. One was standing next to the principle's sister with a gun, and one was next to the teacher. Whatever we were answering they would push the gun to prop you they were around and remind you they were around and to say whatever they told you to say. So it was like that.

Some of the students from Manama have been killed by ZIPRA to destroy the image of ZIPRA, here back home with the people. So then the people in command of ZIPRA decided what or who can be the most influential person from the Manama group who can be believed by most people if they came out to tell the truth. Then they figure out that my friend can be the most influential person. She was given the task of broadcasting externally from Zambia. There was an external broadcasting station where the fighters would give their own news or their information to the people back home. I dont know which station it was here. All I know is that she would go off to the radio station and read the names of students from Manama.

I heard that the broadcasts to Zimbabwe had encouraged thousands of people to come and join the struggle. Many were crossing the borders illegally, some legally to go to school in Botswana, Zambia or anywhere else. It was difficult to do it legally. But if they knew the route of the freedom fighters, they would go top them and say "take us with you!"

From that time on it started to feel very bitter for me, and I am sure for the rest of the clan. But particularly me and the other teacher, because we didnt know what we were involved in. Personally I wasn't aware that we were being oppressed. My family were quite okay at that time. Because my father had just bought us a farm, and we were all
going to school. I am the last born in our family, but at least we were all going to school, and I didn’t think that we were oppressed.

"I had just done my O levels. My father and my brother had managed to buy us a big farm in Karoi. We also had a shop running, we had five taxis running. I didn’t realise we were missing anything. Because maybe I was the youngest and nobody discussed politics with me."

At that stage, (in Botswana) until the political commissars, you know, started giving us the literature of how we are oppressed. Of how we are not allowed to use common toilets with the white people. Of how the women were being deprived of chances to do anything in life, except with the permission, or under the supervision of husbands. And so on and so on....

As far as I was concerned, I didn’t know about politics before I came to there. But I know there was somebody called Joshua Nkomo, because if you remember the liberation struggle history, this struggle was started by one of the leaders, Joshua Nkomo. It was ANC this was lead by him, and old man Chinamano; old man Sika; and old man Jirira. There was a heap load of them in the Central Committee. The split that divided ZAPU and gave birth to ZANLA, I am not very sure about the differences they had. Except that gradually in the eyes of the people, ZANLA was for the Shonas and ZAPU was for the Ndebeles. But that was not quite true. I believe they had their own differences.... As far as I am concerned, there is no difference between Shona and Ndebele.

I was never told the difference between ZANLA and ZAPU as being tribal. Because in ZAPU you’d find all the tribes in Zimbabwe being represented. And we were all supposed to treat each other as brother and sister, and without any segregation. Even if I found a Lesotho girl with me, and there was a Shona girl amongst us ... there was no difference. All we understood was, we were all sons and daughters of Zimbabwe and we were supposed to liberate Zimbabwe from the reign of the regime. So that those other people who were deprived could also get an equal share, at least fair education, fair treatment in hospitals. Fair treatment in toilets. You found during Rhodesian times there were some toilets not being used by blacks, and some they would use. Same applies to schools.

There were some schools where only whites or coloureds would go to.

I became aware of all this in VC when we were now being given political education. Then I realised oh, this is not right, oh and there is a need to struggle. But before we went to Zambia, ... the pursuit by the parents from Zimbabwe....."

And when we met these reporters and told everything we had been told to tell.... There came a time that parents were given passports and buses to follow us as far as Rozana, to try and retrieve all the children to come back to Rhodesia at that time. Then I was faced with a very difficult decision to make. Because at that stage I didn’t know if I would be talking only to my parents without the Rhodesian forces in the room. So I refused to go and meet the parents, until for the 4th time they were sending a car for me. So I went to the camp commander to clarify what are my chances of survival. If I should go back and tell them that my parents were telling lies, I would be betraying
them. I’d already been betraying them. And I feel bad. And it is not true what I was
telling as I was told to tell, whatever. So, then they said, No No dont be scared just go
and meet your parents and tell them the truth and come back here. After all when you
get to Zambia you will be sent to school. So we proceeded seeing the parents and
explaining the position to the parents. A few of them, hardly 20, the rest of the school which was more than 500 students, had been
convinced that by joining the liberation struggle, you’d be freeing yourself of a lot of
conflict and a lot of colonialism within the country. So it is time you people stood in
support of the liberation struggle. So, there was enough political knowledge which was
given to us at that stage, so we gave the same back when we saw our parents. Then we
decided to stay in Botswana. After our parents had gone back to Rhodesia, we then
went to Zambia.

First we were the girls who were to be airlifted from Botswana to Zambia. When we
got into Zambia we arrived at a camp called Nampundwe and it was mainly for men.
But at that stage they allowed us to arrive there, because there was no other camp that
was strictly for female combatants. So that was the time that there was the tragedy of
comrade Jason Moyo. And then , the party leaders had just gone to Geneva for the
Geneva talks. So on their way back, Dr. Nkomo was brought ... to our camp, to
Nampundwe to address us as well as to meet us. And when he met us he actually
virtually cried, because he was touched by the idea that small children, were now being
involved in this thing.

**Dr. Tanya Lyons – Brief Biographical Statement**

Dr. Tanya Lyons is the Academic Coordinator of the Globalisation Program and a
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