Ubuntu/Unhu philosophy in Brian Chikwava's *Harare North* as a Zimbabwean diaspora text

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Abstract

A significant number of Zimbabweans were dispersed into the diaspora in the post-2000 era due to political and socio-economic instability in the country. They went on a quest for a better life and economic opportunities outside their native country but encountered frustrations and insecurities that affected their human dignity in the host countries. Since the dispersion, there has been much research and critical work on Zimbabwe covering the period from 2000 to date. This paper adds to the scholarship by examining fictional representations of Zimbabweans in the Diaspora in Brian Chikwava's (2009) Harare North from perspective of the cultural philosophy of ubuntu/unhu. The paper examines how the human dignity, ubuntu/unhu, and identity of Zimbabweans in the diaspora are depicted in the novel. The paper further investigates various coping mechanisms of migrants in the diaspora and argues that if the people's survival chances are threatened, their humanity is also threatened, and concerns for the values of ubuntu are set aside because of the imperative to survive in a hostile environment.

Keywords: Diaspora, *Harare North*, literature, *ubuntu/unhu*, migrants, Zimbabwe.

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Introduction

The implementation of the Zimbabwean government-initiated programmes such as the land reform programme, including the controversial 'Operation Murambatsvina' had negative socio-economic and political outcomes for the people of Zimbabwe. One of the biggest repercussions of these reforms was the mass out-migration of Zimbabwean citizens to other countries within the region and overseas where they experienced frustration and insecurity. Since the dispersion of the people of Zimbabwe to various countries around the world, there has been a lot of research and critical writings on the subject dating back to the early 2000s (Tibaijuka, 2005; Potts, 2008, Hammar, McGregor & Landau, 2010; Jones, 2010; Muzondidya, 2010; Makina, 2012; Ndlovu, 2016, 2020; Siziba, 2017). The aim of this paper is to add to this body of scholarship by examining fictional representations of Zimbabweans in the Diaspora, particularly in the United Kingdom using Brian Chikwava's (2009) novel Harare north. It examines how their dignity, and identity are affected by their displacement. It examines the various coping mechanisms the migrants employed and demonstrates that if the survival chances of a people are threatened, their human dignity is also threatened and their values of *ubuntu/unhu* are undermined.

Background to the study

The land reform programme and 'Operation Murambatsvina'

For an effective reading of the text, it is important to understand Zimbabwe's post-independence historical context (Pucherova, 2015). Since 2000, there has been an unprecedented out-migration of Zimbabweans into various countries (Hammar, McGregor and Landau, 2010; Muzondidya, 2010). The regional migrations are mostly into South Africa, Namibia, and Botswana. Overseas migrations are mostly to the United Kingdom and the United States of America (McGregor, 2010; Pasura, 2010). These migrations intensified after the violent and controversial land reform programme which started in 2000, when the majority of white farmers were dispossessed of their farms and forced to emigrate. The result was the closure of most industries, which led to the retrenchment of thousands of workers. Those who lost their jobs opted to stay in the cities, venturing into what is commonly known in Zimbabwean discourse as *kukiya kiya* (Jones, 2010). *Kukiya kiya* means doing whatever it takes, whether legal or illegal, to survive.

In 2005, the government of Zimbabwe launched another controversial and devastating campaign against illegal housing and commercial activities widely known as Operation Murambatsvina, meaning 'remove the filth'. It was an operation to 'restore order' and was characterised by mass demolitions of urban houses and shanties, and in which 700 000 people lost their homes and/or informal urban livelihoods (Tibaijuka, 2005; Potts, 2008). This operation affected most Zimbabweans; thus, relatives and friends had to assist those displaced during the operation. Many would not recover from the devastation, and following the operation, those who could left Zimbabwe. The emigrants included skilled, semi-skilled and unskilled workers (Muzondidya, 2011). Despite the economic recovery and political stability brought about by the Government of National Unity (GNU) from February 2009 to May 2013, citizens continued to migrate out of Zimbabwe. As a result, the Zimbabwean population living outside their homeland is estimated to be between three and four million people (McGregor, 2010). Some point out that migration is so widespread that at least one person in every household has emigrated (Makina, 2012).

The history of Zimbabwean migrations

Studies have shown that voluntary and forced migration of people is common across the globe (Muzondidya, 2010; Pasura, 2010). The history of Zimbabweans seeking new livelihoods in other countries dates back to the colonial period when men were contracted to work in the South African mines. But the nature and magnitude of recent transnational migrations took place after a war of liberation which was followed by majority rule at independence. The migrations are different, and McGregor (2010) in *Zimbabwe's new Diaspora* explains that the prefix 'new' emphasises the unprecedented dispersal of Zimbabweans since 2000 and further differentiates recent outward movements of Zimbabweans from the previous ones.

The exodus of Zimbabweans from their country resulted in the entry of the term 'diaspora' into Zimbabwean popular discourse (Hammar, McGregor, & Landau, 2010; McGregor, 2010). Braziel (2008, p. 24) says diaspora denotes "the scatterings of people from their homelands into new communities across the globe". The word 'diaspora' was originally applied to the Jewish people when they moved from Israel into exile to Egypt. Hammar, McGregor and Landau (2010, p. 265) note that the term 'diaspora' has been used in reference to Zimbabweans living beyond the country's borders and overseas. In local languages these people are known as *madiaspora* in Shona or *amadiaspora* in Ndebele. "Zimbabwe's new diaspora is 'fractured and fragmented' such that generalisations about a singular diaspora can be profoundly misleading" (Pasura, 2010, p. 103, following Pasura 2008). The diaspora is a critical source of income for many families, it has undermined intergenerational cultural transfer and has an impact on cultural identity (Sachikonye, 2011).

Chikwava (2009) in *Harare North* has not only written about life in the diaspora, but also about how the diaspora is viewed by those who remained in Zimbabwe. In *Harare North*, the diaspora is viewed as presenting tensions between individuals' desires and the opportunities that are available out there. Diasporic identities are shaped both by the politics of receiving countries and the unfolding events in the country of origin (McGregor, 2010, p. 4).

It is against this background that the paper examines Zimbabweans in the Diaspora as portrayed in *Harare North*, a fiction novel written by Chikwava (2009). The focus of this paper is on how the dignity of the characters in the story is impacted by life in a new country, how their new experiences, and the need to survive, shake the values and beliefs *of ubuntu/unhu,* which they previously held dear.

Ubuntu

Ubuntu is a concept in relational living that can be measured by one's behaviour towards others, including the environment that surrounds the individual. According to the *ubuntu* philosophy, a human being is only human because of his or her connection to other human beings (Mbiti, 1990). The concept of *ubuntu* is similar among many African societies. Many African people derive their humanity from their cultures and in the case of this paper the concept used derives from the philosophy of *ubuntu* in Ndebele*,* or *unhu* in Shona, which can be translated to 'humanness' in English. This concept is called *botho* in Setswana (Mugumbate & Nyanguru, 2013). From a South African perspective, Mbiti (1990, p. 141) describes *ubuntu* as "I am because we are, and since we are, therefore I am". This explains how one's humanity is

inextricably connected to that of others (Tutu, 1999). Oyebade and Azenabor (2018, p. 41) state that among the Yoruba an *omoluabi* is "a well-rounded good person, exhibiting virtues like moderation, truth, diligence, courage and wisdom" to other people. Gade (2011) analysed the historical development of written discourses on *ubuntu* and found that the Nguni expression '*umuntu ngumuntu ngabantu*,' (a person is a person through other people) and the Shona saying '*munhu munhu nevanhu*' (a person is a person because of other people) describe *ubuntu*. In this paper, *ubuntu* is used to mean the need to take into account the welfare of others in whatever a person does. A person with *ubuntu* respects other people and puts them first. The paper deals with both the Shona and Ndebele concept of *unhu/ubuntu* because Brain Chikwava, the author of *Harare North*, is a Zimbabwean. It is therefore assumed that the appropriate understanding of *ubuntu* adopted in this paper should be aligned with how it is understood by both the Shona and Ndebele of Zimbabwe.

Among the Shona people, *unhu* is anchored on the view that "*tiripo, kana makadiiwo*" (we are well, if you are well too) (Dangarembga, 2006, p. 65). This view emphasises the importance of considering the wellness of others before that of oneself; it promotes equality of all human beings by placing value on the dignity of all people. Samkange and Samkange (1980) state that *unhu* is a Shona term for *ubuntu* in Nguni languages, and "the attention one human being gives to another is embodied in *unhu* or *ubuntu*" (Samkange & Samkange 1980, p. 39). Further, Samkange and Samkange (1980, p. 11) provide three maxims which shape the philosophy of *ubuntuism* or *unhuism*. First, to be human is to affirm one's humanity by recognising the humanity of others and, on that basis, establish respectful human relations with them. Second, when one is faced with a choice between wealth and the preservation of the life of another human being, then one should opt for the preservation of life. Lastly, according to the principle of *unhu*, the king owes his status, including all the powers associated with it, to the will of the people under him. The third maxim is embedded within the Shona saying, '*Ishe ndishe navanhu*' (A chief/king is a chief/king because of the people).

The virtues of *unhu* include humility, kindness, courtesy, warmth, empathy, understanding, respectfulness, friendliness, and consideration. All these virtues manifest in the manner one talks, walks, behaves, dresses, and interacts with relatives, friends, and other people around him (Samkange & Samkange, 1980). Our humanity is shaped by our interaction with others (Gade, 2011; Gade, 2012; Tutu, 1999). *Unhu* inspires people to relate in an honest, transparent, compassionate, and respectful manner. If one adheres to the *unhu* philosophy, he or she safeguards humanity and promotes values of togetherness, equality, sympathy, compassion, respect and obedience. Tutu (1999, p.31) states that *ubuntu*

> speaks of the very essence of being human. When we want to give high praise to someone we say, Yu, u *nobuntu*; hey, so-and-so has Ubuntu. Then you are generous, you are hospitable, and you are friendly and caring and compassionate. You share what you have. It is to say, my humanity is caught up, is inextricably bound up, in yours. We belong in a bundle of life. We say a person is a person through other persons. It is not I think therefore I am. It says rather: I am human because I belong, I participate, and I share.

If *unhu* encompasses virtues such as generosity, hospitality, friendliness, care and compassion, then anger, resentment, lust for revenge, success through aggressive competitiveness are incompatible with *ubuntu/unhu*.

Synopsis of the novel

Harare North is a novel written in Africanised English and set in London. Characters in the story do menial work in nursing homes in the United Kingdom and are commonly known as British Bottom Cleaners (BBC). The novel is written by a male author, Brian Chikwava, who left Zimbabwe in 2001 after the economic collapse and has since been living in London, United Kingdom. Chikwava provides an insight into the struggles of Zimbabwean people living in the diaspora, particularly in London. The unnamed narrator in *Harare North* believes "Zimbabwe was a state of mind, not a country" because of the economic collapse and political instability (Chikwava, 2009, p. 183).

The title *Harare North* suggests that the novel is set in Harare, Zimbabwe. But it is set in Brixton, a multicultural suburb of London. This psychological relocation of the Zimbabwean capital to Britain is a metaphor for large community of legal and illegal Zimbabwean immigrants living in London and other parts of the United Kingdom that Ndlovu (2016) argues, become an extension of Harare. The story of *Harare North* is told humorously in broken English by an unnamed narrator. As noted by Muchemwa (2010, p. 142) Chikwava is fluent in English, and the broken English is used as a deliberate stylistic device through which he voices the 'authentic' message of the immigrants' experiences. Siziba argues that the literary strategy of not naming the main character relates to the "uncanny nature of the character" (Siziba, 2017, p. 2). Ndlovu adds that the unnamed narrator is depicted as "a devious and egocentric character, ill-educated and boisterous" (Ndlovu, 2016, p. 30) throughout the novel. The unnamed narrator describes London and gives his interpretation of the environment. His description of the house that Shingi shares with other Zimbabwean immigrants is a metaphor for insecurity and instability. According to the narrator the house, "It look like one heap of brick that stand out from other houses because of its grey brick…It have two top windows look like big sad eyes" (Chikwava, 2009, p. 29). With this description, one appreciates not only the squalor that the immigrants live in, but also the hopelessness of their existence in a foreign country and a sense of not belonging.

Harare North shows how the diaspora can be hostile to migrants because of the difficulty in obtaining decent jobs and legal status. The migrants end up adopting unscrupulous ways to survive. The protagonist, an unnamed Zimbabwean, travels to England and eventually becomes an illegal immigrant in London. Other Zimbabwean immigrants portrayed in the novel such as Shingi, Farayi and Aleck fail to secure decent employment in spite of their good command of English and high educational achievements. These migrants end up venturing into illegal and unskilled labour as they wait for the outcome on their asylum applications. In the end, they are disillusioned by double displacement, being displaced from their own country and also unsettled in foreign lands, a phenomenon named by some scholars as failed border crossing (. As Pucherova (2015) rightly notes, the immigrants are displaced emotionally, since their existence is unrecognised by the British system. Their illegal status in Britain makes them exist in a void and they become non-persons. These migrants are eventually forced into *kushaya hunhu* (lack of humanness) which summarises the impact of their conditions on their sense of self.

Review of literature on *Harare North*

Harare North has been analysed by several scholars across the globe mainly because its author, Brian Chikwava, was a winner of Caine Book Prize. These include Muchemwa, (2010), Manase (2014), Bachisi and Manyara (2014), Toivanen (2018) and Chidora and Ngara (2019). Primorac (2018) notes that the history of Zimbabwean fiction in English is mainly characterised

as 'nation-centred.' Primorac (2018) opines that the novel contests the post-independence nationalism during which Mugabe's reign caused many Zimbabweans to suffer and migrate to other countries. The current study concurs with Primorac that the fourth generation of Zimbabwean authors of fiction, such as Brian Chikwava, are concerned with issues of national interest and global displacement, especially of Zimbabweans.

Gunning (2015) views *Harare North* as 'African-British' because it focuses on life experiences of Africans in a British cultural contexts. Gunning (2015) further examines the combination of the 'African' and 'Western' views on what constitutes humanness in diasporic fiction. The unnamed narrator shows symptoms of 'dissociative disorder' because of traumatic experience in the diaspora (Gunning, 2015). Another scholar Pucherova (2015) analyses the novel *Harare North* in the context of post-independence disillusionment. Pucherova (2015) highlights and discusses Mbembe's notion of the post colony, where the inhabitants of that space are alienated both from the state and from their own selves. Another concept that Pucherova (2015) considers is Bhabha's state of 'unhomely' where the migrants are always associating with their homeland but remain unsettled in foreign lands.

Noxolo (2014) analyses the novel *Harare North* from a geographical point of view. Noxolo (2014, p. 291) introduces the concept of 'embodied security scape' arguing that in the novel, asylum seekers represent an expression concerning two differently situated connections, namely 'security-migration and security-development.' According to Noxolo, fiction produces an unusual narrative space for chaotic policies on asylum seekers (Noxolo 2014). Focusing on Chikwava's depiction of Zimbabwe and the United Kingdom within the contemporary historical circumstances, Noxolo (2014) maintains that the unnamed narrator becomes insecure in both countries. This resonates with Toivanen (2018) who notes that the unnamed narrator seems to be constantly on the wrong. Toivanen (2018) argues that crossing international borders presents difficulties in adopting certain cosmopolitan ethics.

Chidora and Ngara (2019) also consider the novel from a geographical point of view and note that the characters in *Harare North* present a sense of loss because of their experiences in exiles. Mangena (2018) contends that migrant identities tend to shift in the diaspora because of the experiences they encounter in the host lands. The migrants adopt strategies of survival by circumventing laws through identity masking (Mangena 2018).

Ndlovu (2016) analyses the language in *Harare North* and notes that Chikwava (2009) employs satirical humour and broken English as a stylistic device in the novel. The linguistic paradoxes observed by Ndlovu (2016) relate to the intended audience. Ndlovu's (2016) interpretation of the language employed by Chikwava in the novel is also significant as it assists in exploring the humanness of people in the diaspora. In another publication Ndlovu (2020) accuses Chikwava and other writers of depicting Zimbabwe in stereotypical terms to ensure their success in the global literary market.

Siziba (2017, p. 2) draws on both sociological and literary insights of '(un)naming, identity and the related questions of *being* and *becoming'* in reading the text *Harare North* from a social anthropology point of view. *Harare North* is seen by Siziba (2017) as a text about the political violence that resulted in many Zimbabweans fleeing their country. Siziba's (2017) argument that the unnamed narrator is both a victim of political violence and a representative voice for people perceived as anti-state is insightful. The author observes that the novel demonstrates Zimbabwean people's resilience as they manage to survive under harsh and

confusing circumstances. The argument by Siziba (2017) is important as it points to the representation of the inaccessible spaces in *Harare North* such as the psyche and subjectivity of the characters. As noted by Siziba (2017), Chikwava's literary technique of using the nameless narrator allows readers to evaluate the widespread political violence in Zimbabwe that caused unprecedented displacements. Although Siziba's study comments on the marginality of the country's underclasses, the work does not analyse how the humanity of the characters in the novel are affected or challenged in the diaspora. The scholars mentioned have not used the African concept of *ubuntu/unhu* in their analysis which is focus of this paper.

An analysis of the novel

Unhu/ubuntu and identity

One of the first instances where the narrator finds himself having to set aside his values of *ubuntu/unhu* to survive, is by providing misleading information to the British immigration officers upon his arrival at Gatwick Airport. Before embarking on the journey, the narrator had made inquiries and discovered that if he told a convincing story about being an asylum seeker, he would be allowed to enter the United Kingdom. But when he tells the British immigration officers that he is seeking asylum, he is detained, but later released to his relatives who are already living in the United Kingdom. Despite his broken English he manages to convince the British immigration system about seeking asylum boasting that his story was 'tighter than thief's anus' (Chikwava, 2009, p. 4). Although the narrator is a loyal supporter of the ruling Zimbabwe African National Union (Patriotic Front) (ZANU PF) party, upon his arrival at Gatwick Airport, he immediately invents a story claiming that his life was in danger because he is a member of the Movement for Democratic Change (MDC), the main opposition party in Zimbabwe. He tells the immigration officers: 'I have been harass by them boys in dark glasses because I am youth member of the opposition party' (Chikwava, 2009, p. 4). Later the narrator informs the reader that he is Robert Mugabe's supporter. The narrator thus problematizes the notion of identity and the binary of victim/oppressor (Noxolo 2014). Muchemwa (2010, p. 141) argues that Chikwava 'disabuses readers of the notion that diasporic spaces are occupied solely by innocent victims of political violence'. Noxolo (2014, p. 301) affirms the narrator's 'ambivalent agency' of being a perpetrator of violence in Zimbabwe and continues to be manipulative in London although he is also a victim of Zimbabwean politics. However, the narrator later feels guilty for having disrespected his President, Robert Mugabe and tries to justify why he worked as a ZANU PF youth militia: He says:

> If you is back home leading rubbish life and ZANU-PF party offer you job in they youth movement to give you chance to change your life and put big purpose in your life, you don't just sniff at it and walk away when no one else want to give you graft in the country even if you is prepared to become tea boy (Chikwava, 2009, p. 17).

The narrator flouts the values of *unhu* by claiming to be escaping from violent persecution. The reality, however, is that he is fleeing from the political crimes he committed in Zimbabwe such as killing an opposition party member. The narrator reveals that he was a member of the 'Green Bomber' youth militia who were trained to terrorise members of the MDC. It is apparent that not every Zimbabwean in the diaspora is a legitimate asylum seeker fleeing persecution. Some are the perpetrators of violence and persecutions and are fleeing from their dark criminal past, fleeing from themselves, and seeking refuge in the diaspora where they can mask their true identity and reinvent themselves. When the narrator arrives in London, he, like a chameleon, deceitfully changes from being an oppressor into a victim to fit into the asylum migration

narrative, thereby flouting the ideals of *unhu* by being dishonest. This person is only interested in his own well-being and not of others. But because he is both a victim and a perpetrator of political violence, it is difficult to say that this character ever held any of these *unhu/ubuntu* values in the first place. His disregard of the *ubuntu* values associated with his Zimbabwean roots seems to be something that started long before he migrated.

Unhu and survival strategies

Harare North presents another character called Tsitsi who becomes pregnant at the age of seventeen. Tsitsi is visiting her aunt in London and finds herself stranded because her visitor's visa has expired, and she is now an illegal immigrant. Although it is immoral, Tsitsi starts renting her baby out to immigrant women applying for council houses because she has no other means of survival. Her suffering as an illegal immigrant denies her and the baby the ability to maintain dignity and good social status. Out of despair and lack of options Tsitsi is forced to flout the values of *Unhu* (by 'renting out' her innocent baby), as do the other women who exploit her and her baby for their fraudulent gain. However, the migrant women are in a desperate situation to find accommodation. What makes the situation frightful is the involvement of innocent children in the indecent business of making money and get council accommodation. The spirit of humaneness proves difficult to maintain in the diaspora, given the dire circumstances and situations that the immigrants face. Migrants are faced with the dilemma of whether to live by their traditional values of *ubuntu/unhu* and suffer or to survive by any means necessary.

Identity reconstruction and *unhu/ubuntu*

In *Harare North,* being in the diaspora is synonymous with loss of status because of racism. Employers take advantage of the immigrants' precarious positions of not having legitimate documentation to stay in the United Kingdom. For Shingi, the narrator's friend in the novel, the diaspora has been shaped by a mixture of opportunities and exclusions. Although Shingi has managed to get asylum and a National Insurance number that allows him to work, he suddenly finds himself out of employment. The company he works for closes because of threats from the immigration officials who have information that it employs illegal immigrants. Taking advantage of the fact that white British administrators have difficulty telling black Africans apart from a photograph, Shingi lends his passport to other Zimbabweans in what we may term a transactional identity where anyone can buy an identity, take it back to the owner to 're-sell' it when it is needed by someone else. Such an identity is as fluid as it is precarious because the discovery of this exchange of identity documents can lead to deportation or worse. Further, despite having credible, legal papers, Shingi is not satisfied about being a Zimbabwean because of the limited opportunities available to Zimbabweans. He starts dreaming of having a French passport because of the better benefits when one is a French citizen. Shingi demonstrates a crisis of identity, which is triggered by the need for survival. He no longer places any value in his identity as a Zimbabwean because that identity is inextricably linked to racial, economic, social, and other forms of exclusion.

To maintain an image of success in London, Shingi says, 'Maybe when you get home you can tell big story about life in Harare North; big story about how you can become a labourer, sewage drain cleaner and then French President; being many people in one person' (Chikwava, 2009, p. 53). Another immigrant calls himself 'MFH – Master of Foxhounds' and claims that 'he is an American with many degrees; one in psychology, another in science, computers, crime, the climate—just about everything' (Chikwava, 2009, p. 128). The

immigrant is forced to do anything to survive in the diaspora because of the difficult circumstances. Aleck, another Brixton character, makes up a story about being a shop manager, while in reality he works as a British Bottom Cleaner (BBC), a name for the job of caring for the elderly in nursing homes and which locals would rather not do. Because of the dirty nature of the jobs, they are open even to illegal immigrants and unapproved asylum seekers (Pucherova 2015). The unnamed narrator commenting about the reconstructions of identities says, 'He have reinvent himself complete; you will never think he is Zimbabwean if you don't know him' (Chikwava, 2009, p. 127). In the light of the harsh realities of life in the diaspora, readers appreciate the need for reinvention or reconstruction of immigrants' identity and sense of self, even if it is just in the imagination. The sharing of documentation among migrants is a demonstration of this fluid state of self-identity, and the sense that people see the need and are comfortable with the idea of being different people at the same time.

Keeping Identity through *unhu/ubuntu*

Another virtue of *unhu/ubuntu* is that every individual who is aware of the presence of a visitor within a locality should make that visitor comfortable (Samkange & Samkange, 1980). It is interesting that the narrator is picked up from the airport by his cousin's wife Sekai. The narrator expresses concern over Sekai who neglects the traditional obligations of hospitality which should be observed when welcoming a visitor. According to the narrator, Sekai no longer values the virtues of *unhu/ubuntu*. Sekai does not greet him and keeps a distance (and her hands in her coat pockets) so that onlookers do not associate her with the narrator, who is carrying an old suitcase that has the smell of his mother in it. Sekai looks down upon this unkempt person, even though he is a relative (perhaps because he reminds her of the Zimbabwe she has fled from). Her hostility towards the narrator eventually forces him to move out and live with Shingi, his childhood friend. Sekai does not adhere to the Shona saying '*tiripo, kana makadiniwo*' (I am well if you are alright too) (Dangarembga, 2006, p. 65) which emphasises the importance of looking out for one another. She is labelled a 'lapsed African' because of her prolonged stay in the diaspora (Chikwava, 2009, p. 5).

Although the narrator in *Harare North* seems to retain his dignity by maintaining connection with home, his actions fail to conform to *unhu/ubuntu*. After Shingi is stabbed in an alleyway, the narrator finds life difficult and decides to steal Shingi's National Insurance number and passport so that he could find work since it is impossible to find employment as an illegal immigrant. The narrator is bothered by letters and text messages from Shingi's family asking for money. He flouts the virtues of *unhu/ubuntu* by stealing Shingi's identity and replying to letters from Shingi's family in Zimbabwe. He flouts *unhu/ubuntu* further by refusing to give Shingi's mother some money although he himself is benefitting from impersonating Shingi. This also goes against the Shona culture which teaches, that your friend's mother is also your mother. By denying Shingi's mother money, he is in essence denying his 'own' mother some money. But he also flouts *ubuntu/unhu* values of compassion and empathy by stealing the identity of his cousin and hiding the fact of his death from his parents thereby denying them the opportunity to learn about and mourn their son's death.

The novel reveals that when immigrants are severely threatened and faced with serious survival challenges, they are forced to go against their core values espoused in the principles of *unhu/ubuntu*. The immigrants in the novel end up being dishonest because it is almost impossible to secure employment by being honest. The dishonesty is sustained through the assumption of multiple, chameleon identities, to blend in and escape police harassment and possible deportation and loss of livelihoods. Some of these identities are imagined, such that

the identity of a minimum wage illegal immigrant is replaced with a conjured 'more respectable' one that is acquired through an imagined possession of university degrees. The narrator tries to live up to the philosophy of *unhu/ubuntu* but fails because of the painful circumstances that he encounters in the diaspora. Due to unemployment, the narrator goes hungry most of the time and is forced into criminal activities such as theft and extortion in order to survive. Siziba (2017, p. 2) confirms that the narrator's desire to survive 'makes him an unpredictable and uncanny figure' who will do anything to survive.

Immigrants in the story encounter difficulties in the host country when they try to legalise their stay. That causes them to not conform to the virtues of *unhu/ubuntu*. Aleck does not love Tsitsi but is forced to take Tsitsi in because he is the father of her baby. This shows that the union between these two people was not just one of convenience, but it is also a predatory one. It is convenient for Aleck to take Tsitsi in because it provides accommodation, adds to the evidence in the application for asylum, and provides social benefits of having his child together with the mother under the same roof. Clearly there is no love between the two which leads to Aleck abusing Tsitsi to the extent of hitting her and causing her to fall down the stairs. In the absence of love, the concept of *unhu/ubuntu* is impossible to achieve because the philosophy is rooted in thoughtful consideration of one another. Whereas the people might have thought that the spirit of *unhu/ubuntu* would prevail in the diaspora, the reality is in fact the opposite. The novel depicts a very negative, even stereotypical, image of Zimbabweans living in the diaspora, in that no character comes across as having firm values based on the principles of *ubuntu/unhu* associated with the values in Zimbabwe. But even in Zimbabwe, those values were lost to the corruption, political violence, and repression characteristic of post-independence Zimbabwe.

For the characters in the story, the journey into the diaspora is an attempt to regain control of their destinies by escaping from the intolerable conditions in their country. The process that makes the journey possible is shaped by forces beyond their control. Aleck pretends to be the owner of an apartment that he has been asked to house sit for an elderly couple and decides to rent it out to other immigrants at exorbitant prices. MaiMusindo pretends to be a powerful spiritual healer who performs rituals and threatens clients who refuse to pay for her services. MaiMusindo also works at a salon where she uses the backyard to provide midwife services to immigrant mothers who cannot afford to pay for the service in London hospitals. The narrator hides his identity as a Mugabe supporter to the immigration officers and other immigrants. By this Pucherova (2015) argues that the narrator and other immigrants live double identities. These characters reinvent themselves by adopting various strategies that enable them to survive. Assuming multiple identities, such as the use of other people's identity documents, identity theft and renting out babies to other asylum seekers are some of the survival strategies adopted by the characters in *Harare North*. The migrants then discover that they are not in control of their choices in the diaspora. This conforms to Mangena (2018) that identities in the diaspora shift because of the insecurities in host lands. The choices are shaped by the circumstances and ideological positions produced by the political dynamics in the host country. Ndlovu (2020) rightly notes that the narrator finds both Zimbabwe and Britain unhomely. *Harare North* shows that the migrations are an economic paradigm of poverty and misery which continues to dominate among the migrants.

Conclusion
The study concludes that although most African cultures are anchored on the philosophy of *unhu/ubuntu*. *Harare North*, as a fictional text, demonstrates that people in the diaspora can

fail to live up to this standard given the severe socio-economic challenges they face outside their homeland. Chikwava (2009), through the characters in the novel, describes the economic struggles and hardships of Zimbabwean migrants in the United Kingdom. The Shona expression '*Ishe ndishe nevanhu*' (A chief is a chief because of people) means that a chief should be concerned about the welfare of people. The expression means that even the most powerful members of the society are given legitimacy by the less powerful, and thus people are inextricably and symbiotically connected, so that the pain of one is the pain of all; the destruction of one is the destruction of all. This makes it imperative for one to be mindful of the welfare of others as one pursues one's own success. Zimbabwean independence was supposed to bring new hope for the people. Instead, there was economic and political instability which forced people to migrate to foreign lands. In the diaspora, dreams and hopes were shuttered because of the insecurities associated with being in a foreign land, with no entitlement or 'belonging.' Zimbabweans thought by moving into the Diaspora, the spirit of *unhu/ubuntu* would prevail but in foreign countries the need to survive took over, and individualism gripped the migrants who had to abandon all their traditional *unhu/ubuntu* values for more aggressive and unethical behaviour that was necessary to see them through each day. However, the irony is that these strategies do not work, as the narrator's hopes of a better life in the UK come to nothing in what is termed failed border crossing (Toivanen, 2018). The philosophy of *unhu/ubuntu* becomes difficult to follow due to discrimination that is encountered in the diaspora.

Harare North reveals that the diaspora is characterised by frustrations in the land of opportunities. The novel illuminates an overwhelming display of dishonesty because of the difficulties encountered in the diaspora. Characters such as Shingi and the narrator adopt false names and documentation as survival strategies. These acts are not only counter to the values of *unhu/ubuntu*, on which they were raised, but are also stressful and dehumanising, resulting in loss of pride and dignity. The uncertainty and precarity associated with illegal immigration status of the migrants has a profound impact on their humanity. The novel concludes with the narrator who is becoming mentally ill, and this defines the extent of his loss: that of his mind and his *unhu/ubuntu*. The characters in *Harare North* show that it is difficult to maintain the spirit of *unhu/ubuntu* in the diaspora given the challenges faced by immigrants. Thus, the text shows that even though the Zimbabwean culture is rooted in *unhuism/ubuntuism,* unsettling experiences in the diaspora make it difficult for *unhu/ubuntu* to prevail.

Acknowledgements

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