The Black Papers
Edition 1 | Wealth, Race & Power
Contributor | Beth Davies Kumadiro

Jambanja: Chaos in pursuit of Justice.

When I was growing up in Britain in the early 2000s, the land occupations in Zimbabwe were described like an incomprehensible rebellion led by mindless tyrants. The story went like this: mobs of black people, who could not farm, violently expropriated land from white people, who could farm, and therefore Zimbabwe is a failed state. This remains the popular, white-endorsed narrative of events.

In Zimbabwe, the 2000s land occupations are called *jambanja,* or "chaos." They are sometimes described as the third *chimurenga*, which means something like "liberation war," and "revolution." There is another narrative: Zimbabweans restored ancestral land to black, Indigenous people after colonisation and for this they were punished.

Talking about land in Zimbabwe is like reaching out your fingers to a lion. Dangerous, stupid; the lion is alive. In the wake of *jambanja*—the aftermath of chaotic, racial re-ordering and the West's 'imperial backlash' (Mkodzongi and Lawrence 2019, 2)—Zimbabwean descriptions of it oscillate between appeals to justice and propriety. There is pride or shame, forbearance or frustration, depending on who you speak to.

The urbanised, caught up in the whirlpool of economic collapse, say things like "I know why they did it but the way that they did it was wrong." For others, especially in rural areas, "it was a sacrifice."

I have two Zimbabwean grandmothers. One, black, *Shona,* was one of the first female local councillors for ZANU-PF. Through *jambanja's* chaos*,* she got a farm in Domboshawa, close to Harare*.* It had a traditional mud walled hut, without running water, and a large field of maize, which towered above my head in the early 2000s.

The second, white, Irish, was raised in Rhodesia—the name for Zimbabwe under colonisation—as the daughter of a railway engineer. She attended one of the top boarding schools in Harare before leaving the country at seventeen for university in Ireland. In the early 2000s, I visited family in Borrowdale and Marondera, splashing around in pools behind remote-controlled gates.

I wanted to locate *jambanja*: what was it? Was it wrong or was it right?

*

Dear reader, I am afraid that many of our narratives don't quite make sense. Are you? I think you and I are in an era of tectonic plate shifts; old ideas and allegiances rumble.

The new political extremists are chancers, the first to notice that the walls of our elaborate old home are filled with rot, and the first to grab a hammer. They are ascendent on opposition to "fake news"; ascendent on saying things that are absurd, shocking and memorable.

Centrists flail. Terrified of rot, cloistered inside, they insist the walls are as they have always been. Admit nothing, project confidence, smile, wave.

I think that the "international community" drank its own kool aid, and the stupor is just starting to wear off… Good morning, Sleeping Beauty! I am afraid that as of 7:01, the centre cannot hold; the stasis is breaking; your smile strains and cracks. As you slept, we ran out of soft power, and your ideological infrastructure has assumed the aspect of an abandoned theme park. The claims to magnanimity we made in the past are rather daunting and haunting now. Dizzying maintenance costs.

Black and indigenous people want reparations, not charity. White people don't want to lose dominance at all. Everyone is getting poorer and more stressed out. In America, the "orderly" immigration and deportation of the 2000s have become charter flights *in* for white Afrikaners and charter flights *out* for everyone else (Bustillo 2025). These days, it seems like everyone is trying to grab hold of whatever power they can before things go to shit. So yes, witch hunting is back too. Trans people now.

Reality is shifting, we can't quite stem the flow. People watch, in horrified transfixion to the screen, as The Only Democracy in the Middle East destroys civilisations, massacres families, and rapes prisoners with dogs and sticks (Palestinian Centre for Human Rights 2025). They see the talking heads of post-imperial and white-settler states preach international law and practice their artillery.

The kids in the post-colonies are climbing over walls and fences. Nepo-babies on Instagram might be the final straw in Asia, and the French are done in West Africa. Elections are just not producing the same thrill when you have bipartisan consensus on mass impoverishment (Mungai 2026). There is tinder everywhere. Doesn't feel good. Not sure where the hammers will land.

*

Last year, I took a hammer to the narrative infrastructure of decolonisation. What have we ignored about the global "postcolonial" settlement? What is rotten? It felt urgent, desperate, like a last-ditch attempt to keep my eyesight.

Mahmood Mamdani writes that 'precisely because deracialisation has marked the limits of postcolonial reform, the non-racial legacy of colonialism needs to be brought out into the open so that it may be the focus of a public discussion,' (Mamdani 1996, 20). Please, God—I found myself asking—can we bring it into the open; I really hate that my view of the present is obscured by rotting walls.

I spent 2025 at the University of the Witwatersrand in Johannesburg, South Africa, researching Zimbabwe's 'transit' (Mbembe 2001, 17) from colony to postcolony. I read through archival material on its independence and land settlement in the British National Archives, Zimbabwe National Archives, Commonwealth Oral History Project, and the Wikileaks Archives.

After that, I interviewed twelve people in December 2025—mostly academics, farmers and former political activists in Zimbabwe. To do the interviews in person, I criss-crossed Harare, Marondera and rural Mashonaland East and West. A quest for truth and understanding in a beat-up, navy blue Toyota Aqua.

Jambanja: was it wrong or was it right? Why did it happen?

*

I found that in 1890 and 1893, British settlers invaded Mashonaland and Matabeleland, in present day Zimbabwe, under a royal charter. In return for joining the invasion, white recruits were given a free, fiefdom scale 'conquest farm' (Palmer 1997, 29-39). The invaders claimed Indigenous territory for the British crown, and appropriated land for new private farms from *Shona* and *Ndebele* groups. Without compensation.

Britain established its sovereignty through the allocation of private property to settlers, and the private property of settlers was guaranteed by British sovereignty. As Brenna Bhandar argues, 'there cannot be a history of private property law… that is not at the same time a history of land appropriation in Ireland, the Caribbean, North America and beyond,' (Bhandar 2018, 3).

Shona and *Ndebele* rule was usurped by British rule. Tuck and Yang observe that 'settlers are not immigrants… beholden to the Indigenous laws and epistemologies of the lands they migrate to… settlers become the law, supplanting Indigenous laws and epistemologies,' (Tuck and Yang 2012, 6-7). This was the case in Rhodesia, where racialised taxation and forced labour increased dispossession.

A good example is the Hut Tax in Mashonaland in 1893. At the time, a British Government official said that 'the natives are probably in law and equity the real owners of the land they occupy,' such that the Hut Tax would be a charge 'for the occupation of their own lands.' Nonetheless, Britain charged the *Shona* for occupying their own land in 1894.

Under the Hut Tax, settlers required the *Shona* to do two months of forced labour or give them cash, gold, grain or livestock. Settlers seized up to a third of *Shona* cattle, sheep and goats 'by force' in some districts under the new law (Palmer 1997, 44).

> ***-------You asked why and I am telling you it felt like slavery. We were rich, and they made us their workers.***

Britain did not increase *Shona* productivity or 'improve' Indigenous lives through colonisation. This was a speculative, violent land grab for corporate, personal, and national enrichment. In 1927, a Native Commissioner commented that 'as far as their own crops are concerned, I do not think we can teach the Natives anything.' Yields of European settler farms were inferior to those of Indigenous farmers until after the Second World War, and the advent of fertilisers and pesticides (Palmer 1997, 15).

After it was established as a British colony in 1923, Rhodesia's white-minority state segregated black and white people, largely into infertile and fertile land, and passed a series of racist preferential legislation in the 1930s (Ranger 2006, xi-xii). Land expropriation accelerated after the Second World War, as Britain awarded land to its war veterans (Palmer 1990, 165). By independence in 1979, around 6,000 white farmers held 42% of Zimbabwe's total territory, with Zimbabwe's seven million black people mostly overcrowded into infertile labour reserves (Palmer, 1990, 169).

The scale of white-held land in Zimbabwe was enormous, around ten times the size of the white settlement area in Kenya, which had provoked the "Mau Mau" anti-colonial rebellion of the Kikuyu in the 1950s. Only 15% of the total white settlement area in Rhodesia was being cultivated, while 40% was either unused or underutilised, with large areas of white-held land used as 'weekend farms.' The German Development Institute published a study in 1977 arguing that 75% of white-held land could be used to resettle black Zimbabweans outside of the labour reserves, while still maintaining the large-scale white commercial agriculture sector (Onslow 2017, 851-4).

Aside from its scale, the segregation in Rhodesia was a typical aspect of settler colonialism. Indeed, Samir Amin describes 'economies of the reserves' as one of settler colonialism's outcomes (cited in Moyo 1995, 44). In our December 2025 interview, Dr. Toendepi Shonhe an academic at Marondera University and the former Director-General for Zimbabwe's main opposition party, the Movement for Democratic Change, commented that 'reserves are reserves of labour… you are waiting to get deployed in the farms or in the emerging towns and industries. And women had to get a pass, or a ticket, that enabled them to open those areas. So, there was complete exclusion,' (Davies-Kumadiro forthcoming).

> ***------You asked why and I am telling you that they penned us up like livestock, let out only to work on a plantation or inside a mine, living in an open prison. The Native Commissioner flogged us indiscriminately in Mazoe (Palmer 1997, 43). They wanted us to export oranges.***

Colonialism's brash injustice provoked considerable resistance in Rhodesia, from the First *Chimurenga* in 1897, to the Second *Chimurenga* of the 1960s and 1970s.

But resistance was not only through revolutionary war. Famously, Rekayi Tangwena, the chief of the Tangwena tribe of Inyanga, was arrested in 1967 for refusing to leave his ancestral land, which had been designated for white occupancy. A Sunday Mail article in 1980 described how 'each time the owners of the ranch pulled down their huts, Tangwena and his people fled into the mountains, and when the coast was clear they would go back and erect plastic shacks."'

Chief Tangwena publicly complained that the Rhodesian state had burned down his village and taken away one hundred school children in 1974, going into exile in Mozambique. When offered alternative land in Gokwe by the state, Tangwena stated that he would live nowhere else but Nyafaru in Inyanga: 'that is my home because that is where my ancestors are buried. That is where I am going to rule,' (Sunday Mail 1980, MS 308/42/3, Zimbabwe National Archives).

> ***-------You asked why and I am telling you that we left the graves of our ancestors. My ancestors don't know where I am. We were living through catastrophe.***

There is a new wave of literature on land in Southern Africa, which emphasises the ongoing spiritual and cultural violence of colonisation, as much as its political and material consequences. Dineo Skosana describes land dispossession as 'a process of spiritual disfiguration.' She argues that landownership is 'a material and intangible representation of citizenship, which black Africans lost when their land was expropriated,' and that 'dispossession is a continuous, lived experience for black communities,' since 'dehumanising black African communities did not stop,' after independence (Skosaka 2025, 16-17, 19).

Similarly, mBuso weNkosi describes an 'ontological nowhereness' in which 'the death of the dispossessed was meaningless, the future-futureless since they did not belong to the land,' (weNkosi 2023, 18, 21). Tembeka Ngcukaitobi states that land dispossession was 'an instrument in the total cultural, social and economic domination of native peoples.' Such that, 'in undoing that legacy, the return of the land should be restorative of African people's humanity. Transactions over the "return" of land are incomplete without restoring the dignity of those from whom it was taken,' (Ngcukaitobi 2021, 134).

In Zimbabwe, the Liberation War, which gathered pace in the 1960s, was fought both for civil rights and for the restoration of land. Four years before Rhodesia's Unilateral Declaration of Independence from Britain in 1965—made in the hope of avoiding black mass democracy—nationalist leader Joshua Nkomo described the land question as the 'source of all our bitterness,' ("Source of Bitterness," MS 308/42/3, Zimbabwe National Archives).

After the independence of Mozambique and Angola in 1974-5, Rhodesia became a new front for both the African liberation movement and the Cold War. Following Angola's victory against apartheid South Africa with the support of Cuban troops, Britain and America sought independence and civil rights in Rhodesia-Zimbabwe on non-socialist terms (Gleijeses 2018, 488-490).

War losses became egregious for both sides by the late 1970s. Zimbabwean nationalists shot down Rhodesian passenger planes, and attacked the state's major fuel depot, while the Rhodesian "Defence" Forces bombed guerilla camps in Mozambique and Angola (Mtisi, Nyakudya and Barnes 2009, 162-164). The stalemate in the war resulted in negotiations between Zimbabwean nationalists, the settler state, and Britain, held at Lancaster House in London October-December 1979, closely watched by America, Zambia, Tanzania, Mozambique and Angola, and the Commonwealth.

In December 2025, I interviewed Prof. Eldred V. Masunungure, now the Director of Zimbabwe's Mass Public Opinion Institute and one of Zimbabwe's most eminent political scientists. He was a final-year undergraduate at the University of Zimbabwe during Zimbabwe's independence negotiations in 1979. He recalled demonstrating for independence on campus (Davies-Kumadiro forthcoming):

> It was a fantastic moment…[although] we would be clobbered by white baseball teams. After winning or losing they would come to the university, often to drink some beer in the restaurant. And after that they would cause a lot of havoc. In the halls of residence, I was a victim in November 1979, beaten so thoroughly I had to be hospitalised… At that time [in] the armed struggle… fuel tanks were blown up [by Zimbabwean nationalists] and were burning for about five days. They [Rhodesia] had to appeal to South Africa for assistance. It was burning for about a week and almost crippled the Rhodesian logistics and its capacity to fight. So, whites were very, very angry. The mood at the university [on land]: it's not something that many people felt needed to be negotiated about. Because

> it's a historical right, it's a historical injustice that has been committed by the white settlers. You did not even need to be a political science student to recognise that. Most of the black students came from rural areas… it was a lived reality that their parents were farming rocky soil… that after three years they would have drought. And there was no drought relief or food aid at that time. So, every student appreciated from lived experience that land is the asset that we must have and not negotiate the right.

> ***--------You asked why and I am telling you that our parents had their farms stolen. That we were watching our families starve every three years. Our undergraduates were beaten for protesting and went on to teach politics.***

As part of the negotiations, Britain wrote Zimbabwe's independence constitution. Under the constitution, white Zimbabweans became the 'automatic owners' of appropriated land after independence (1979DARES04927_e, Wikileaks; Lancaster House Agreement 1979, 19). Britain heavily restricted state land acquisition powers after independence, insisting that land transfers must now be market-based, and that Zimbabwe, not Britain, was liable to pay for any land that was transferred (Lancaster House Agreement 1979, 19).

Black Zimbabweans got no compensation for land appropriation and no reparations for spatial, economic or political segregation.

As Philani Moyo states, one of the Patriotic Front's main arguments at Lancaster House was that 'black people who had been dispossessed of their ancestral land without compensation could not fund its repossession, as that would be tantamount to perpetuating a colonial injustice,' (Moyo 2021, 633). 'Why should landless black taxpayers be expected to pay compensation to white landowners?' the delegates of Zimbabwe's nationalist Patriotic Front had asked the British Foreign Office in October 1979 (FCO 36_2675_16B, British National Archives).

Many African states said similar things. 'To tax Zimbabweans in order to compensate people who took it [land] away from them through the gun?,' President Julius Nyerere of Tanzania had exclaimed before the negotiations began. 'Really, the British cannot have it both ways… That the future Government of Zimbabwe must pay compensation is a British demand and the British must promise in London to make the money available,' (Moyo 2021, 633).

Nevertheless, Britain's Foreign Secretary threatened that if Zimbabwean nationalists did not accept its provisions on land wholesale, then it would kick them out of the negotiations and continue on the path to independence with the settler state only (1979STATE269539_e, Wikileaks).

This was anathema to Zimbabwean nationalists, who warned that a bilateral settlement between Britain and the settler state would not end the war (FCO_36_2675_28, British National Archives). One of Zimbabwe's nationalist groups, ZANU, put out the following broadcast on their liberation radio ("Comment on 'the Land Questions'" 1979, MS 308/42/3, Zimbabwe National Archives):

> The greater lot of white settler farmers in Zimbabwe never really bought the land which the British insist they must be compensated for. To many the farms—chunks of land—were offered as rewards for services to the British Government, especially after the Second World War… British civil servants, British and other foreign companies moved into land that was for centuries home to thousands of Zimbabweans. These people had their homes bulldozed to the ground and… [were] ordered to leave. They were never compensated… The [only] compensation Chief Tangwena and his people ever got was the destruction of their property and being forced to adopt a life of nomads without a permanent home… When the British drafted their constitution and provided for the protection of land rights for these white settler farmers and private companies, they never thought of the compensation of the Tangwenas and many others.

Frustration was shared by many African states and the Commonwealth Secretariat, with even the US Ambassador criticising British 'brinkmanship' (1979STATE269539_e, Wikileaks).

In response to the outrage, Britain and America offered 'to help' with land resettlement if Zimbabwean nationalists would accept the constitution (FCO 36_2675_16, British National Archives). Zimbabwean nationalists, under immense pressure to end the war, accepted the offer, despite its deliberate ambiguity. Mugabe's request for parallel discussions to create a framework around the British and American aid offer was refused (1979LONDON20368_e, Wikileaks).

Unfortunately for Zimbabweans, Britain had no intention of embarking upon a serious programme of postcolonial land restoration after independence. Britain's Foreign Secretary stated that 'it is not (not) our intention to fund an operation to buy out European farmers wholesale. Quite apart from being prohibitively expensive, to do so would go against our objective of encouraging whites to stay.' Behind the scenes, he instructed British diplomats to reassure white farmers that Britain's aid offer would not undermine the privileges for whites established by the independence constitution (FCO 36_2675_24, British National Archives).

> ***-------You asked why and I am telling you that they forced us to let the settlers keep the land. And our leaders agreed, they wanted the state. Even though we told them that "political power alone is meaningless unless people have land," (Raftopoulos 2009, 214). Children were dying on the battlefield. We hoped that change would come with independence.***

After independence in March 1980, the promised aid programme was established to resettle black Zimbabweans out of the labour reserves. But only £20m match funding was allocated by Britain in 1981 (OD_137_250_E26, British National Archives) with an overall payment of $44m by 1997. This was clearly 'grossly inadequate' to the scale of white settlement (Moyo and Yeros 2005, 184), and far less than signalled by Britain during negotiations (FCO_2875_1, British National Archives).

In Britain's parliament, members of the House of Lords questioned the government's limited aid spend, asking in July 1980: 'where is the rest of the 90 per cent likely to come from and what

are the British Government doing to secure it?', 'is the minister aware that, without the necessary finance, there will be a lot of trouble there?', 'one should not spoil the ship for a ha'p'orth of tar?' (Hansard, Volume 411: debated on Thursday 17 July 1980).

There was broad amazement at the small scale of funding, even in the West. In August 1980, the New York Times ran a leading article entitled 'reneging on Zimbabwe', stating that 'Zimbabwe's Western godparents have not kept their part of the independence bargain.' Henry Kissinger's 1977 promise of $1bn for postcolonial land reform had 'proved to be a mirage,' (FCO_23_2875_32, British National Archives).

Meanwhile, Zimbabwe's postcolonial obligations were made meticulously clear. Zimbabwe was required to discharge $200m of debt accrued by the pre-UDI colonial state (Mtisi, Nyakudya and Barnes 2009, 165) to enable continued borrowing from international banks. It had a constitutional obligation to buy its own land back at market rates, and even a constitutional obligation to pay the pensions of colonial civil servants. Land compensation and pensions payments had to be remittable in foreign currency, 'free from any deduction, tax or charge,' (Lancaster House Agreement 1979, 19). The independence constitution—which was not confirmed by any democratic vote—included a decade-long moratorium, meaning it was banned from alteration for ten years.

The independence constitution was blatantly unjust. It pre-emptively aborted, through coercive negotiations, any deliberation on postcolonial justice of the sort attempted by the Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) after apartheid in South Africa. It obscured, through a development programme, the right of Zimbabweans to reparations for harms, particularly by construing the restitution of land as an ahistorical market transaction. White farmers had their rights to property, consensual sales and compensation guaranteed by the constitution while black Zimbabweans, left uncompensated, were expected to wait their turn for aid in the labour reserves.

Zimbabwe's framework for independence made it financially impossible to transfer land at scale, and constitutionally impermissible to designate contiguous areas of land for resettlement. At any time, in any country, it would be almost unthinkable for a state to purchase half of its own territory at market-rates through government revenues, as Zimbabwe was expected to. And this was not at any time, or in any place, but in the immediate aftermath of colonisation and a destructive civil war. Zimbabwe was establishing public services for most of its population for the first time, for example increasing its number of primary and secondary schools by a 'remarkable' 80% between 1980-1990 (Muzondidya 2009,168).

Limited land was transferred through the Land Resettlement Programme. Before 1983, white farmers sold land abandoned during the war, which was being occupied by black Zimbabweans who began to settle outside the borders of the overcrowded labour reserves. After 1985, however, the state started to evict black Zimbabweans from private property, asking black Zimbabweans to wait for the government to purchase and allocate land. As the country stabilised, land prices skyrocket-ed, and there was little incentive to sell agricultural land (as land-owners could use their estates as collateral for loans), causing the programme to stall (Moyo and Yeros 2005, 183; Palmer 1990, 177; Kinsey 2004, 1670).

Sam Moyo, Zimbabwe's pre-eminent, late scholar of land reform, estimated that less than 1 in 10 Zimbabweans living in the former labour reserves after independence were affected by the

aid programme before 1993 (Moyo 1995, 121). In the mid-1990s, 4,000 white farmers owned 33% of Zimbabwe's fertile land, and 40% Zimbabweans remained landless, or nearly landless, with inadequate land to feed one's family (Moyo 1995, 48, 121; Kinsey 2004, 1679).

In December 2025, I interviewed Prof. Ian Scoones, an academic at the University of Sussex who is a leading scholar of Zimbabwe's land reforms. He described the programme like this (Davies-Kumadiro forthcoming):

> It was a good technical land reform programme at one level, highly constrained by the willing-seller, willing-buyer thing, which I think is disastrous and we've seen it to be disastrous in market-based land reform programmes around the world in different places, including in South Africa. It showed that if you give smallholders some land, they can do stuff with it, and it's good for livelihoods, good for the economy, etc. But it didn't deliver agrarian reform because it didn't deal with the structural issues… didn't change it from an old style, dualistic colonial system, still with whites dominant, to a more equitable, radical alternative. So, it failed in that sense, even if it succeeded in generating livelihoods for those that got that limited amount of land. When you have [sic] hundreds of thousands of households, giving it to 71,000 is just not enough.

-------*You asked why and I am telling you that you left us in the labour reserves for twenty years after independence. We tried to do it your way. You made it impossible, you disregarded us. You didn't want to deal with the costs—financial, emotional—of admitting you had stolen our land. You wanted to keep it.*

By the mid-1990s, ZANU-PF, the Zimbabwean nationalist party which had been in power since independence, was haemorrhaging credibility. Structural adjustment—instated by the World Bank and IMF after Zimbabwe's heavy welfare spending in the 1980s—was implemented in 1991. Growth plummeted from 4% to 0.9%, recovering only to 2.9% by 1998-1999. Between 20,000 to 30,000 workers lost their jobs, causing unemployment to rise from 32% to 44% from 1990-1993. This increased pressure for the government to allocate land for subsistence farming (Muzondidya 2009, 188-9).

There had been tension between the Liberation War Veterans' agenda and most ZANU-PF politicians since the mid-1980s, since Veterans wanted redistribution and politicians increasingly 'viewed indigenisation in terms of self-aggrandisement and personal accumulation,' (Muzondidya 2009, 198).

In our December 2025 interview, Mrs Bridgit Matambo, a farmer and development worker in Mashonaland East, recalled that (Davies-Kumadiro forthcoming):

> A lot of the people, especially the War Veterans, after having spent a number of years in the bush fighting, most of them were not married. So, when they joined their families, they wanted to start a new life, which was different from the one they had spent in the bush. So, they also wanted jobs and the like. Making families, marrying, you know? So that's when they realised that 'ah, we have wasted a lot of time.' We now need to go for the land. So that's when they started pushing the Mugabe Government. Saying we now need land, we need to be resettled.

The mounting political and economic pressure on ZANU-PF led to a capitulation in 1997, after President Robert Mugabe was 'besieged' by war veteran leader Chenjerai Hunzvi in his party offices. ZANU-PF allocated the War Veterans Z$50,000 (approx. US$4,500) each in 1997, and agreed to provide monthly pensions of Z$2000. This was unbudgeted and, cumulatively, substantial enough to further destabilise the macro-economy (Muzondidya 2009, 198). Following the payout, the Zimbabwe Dollar lost 74% of its value within four hours on Blackout Day, 14 November 1997, throwing Zimbabwe into monetary collapse (Raftopoulos 2009, 219).

> ***-----You asked why and I am telling you that we got nothing after the war. After fighting in the bush for ten years, we got no land and no jobs. Women laughed at us, while ZANU-PF paid colonisers their pensions in pounds.***

At the same time, ZANU-PF came under effective political challenge by the Movement for Democratic Change (MDC), which allied trade unions and largely urban civil society with white farmers (Raftopoulos 2009, 210). It was defeated by the MDC in a referendum on more autocratic state power in February 2000 (Kriger 2007, 71). In response, ZANU-PF allied itself with the Land Movement of rural citizens and war veterans to reboot its popularity and hold on to power.

Jambanja, the state-backed land occupations, took hold of Zimbabwe's rural areas, with over 1,500 farms occupied by June 2000 (Kriger 2007, 71). ZANU-PF returned to power in the elections of June 2000, winning a majority of contested seats on the back of its support for land redistribution (Mamdani 2008). In July 2000, the government announced the Fast Track Land Reform Programme, formalising and extending the land transfers started by jambanja.

Jambanja led to the redistribution of 10m hectares of prime agricultural land from 4,000 white and 200 black large-scale commercial farmers, to around 145,000 black subsistence farming families, and over 20,000 small and medium-scale black farmers by 2010. White-held land reduced from 39% in 1980 to 0.4% in 2010, with white farm sizes reducing from an average 2407ha to 593ha (Ossome and Naidu 2021, 345, 350).

Catherine Boone estimates that land claimed by *jambanja* was transferred to an estimated 5,000 ZANU-PF-linked elites and approximately 160,000 smallholder families (Boone 2013, 301). Elites were typically afforded greater choice over land, and allocated farms in the most fertile areas. Nonetheless, the main trend was a redistribution from large-scale white commercial farms to black subsistence farmers. In 2011, about 13% of agricultural land was held by mid-scale farmers, while over 70% was held by small-scale farmers (Moyo 2011, 499).

> ***-----You asked why and I am telling you that we obtained justice when we objected to our dispossession. We took our land back by force, because force was the only way our rights would be acknowledged.***

> ***Politically, economically, you contained us. But our minds, our feet, our hands were free.***

Zimbabwe faced an intense 'imperial backlash,' (Mkodzongi and Lawrence 2019, 2).

Shortly after *jambanja,* Zimbabwe defaulted on loan repayments and was put under sanctions by the EU—led by Britain—and the United States. The US passed the Zimbabwe Democracy and Economic Recovery Act (ZIDERA) in 2001, which blocked Zimbabwe from World Bank, IMF and IBRD programmes and financing, cancelled the financing package allocated in return for structural adjustment, and suspended all new lending and disbursement of funds under previously approved loans.

The US legally required its executive directors at all international financial institutions to 'oppose and vote against' any loans, credits or guarantees to Zimbabwe, and oppose any debt cancellation or debt reduction (Congress.gov 2001).

At the time of writing, in May 2026, ZIDERA is still in force.

In our December 2025 interview, Dr. Walter Chambati, an academic and the Executive Director of the Sam Moyo Institute for Agrarian Studies in Harare, recalled that 'aid was withdrawn to "make the economy scream" as the Americans said. "Make the economy scream,"' (Davies-Kumadiro forthcoming).

A sanctions-induced liquidity crunch, combined with the seismic shock to agricultural production caused by *jambanja,* in the de-industrialising low-growth economy created by structural adjustment, led to an economic implosion.

In December 2025, I interviewed Mr Albert Murove, a farmer in Mashonaland West. He described himself as a "backpacker," in 2000, who rushed to the rural areas and was allocated a small farm. He recalled the impact of hyperinflation on small-scale farming (Davies-Kumadiro forthcoming):

> It started soon after the land invasion. We were a member of IMF and World Bank. Funds were blocked. I'm a civil servant by profession, and a UNISA graduate… finances were good. So, when the sanctions started… A teacher used to earn $1500-2000. The salary dropped to less than $10 a month. There was a crash on the Zimbabwe dollar. Inflation took 6, 10, 20 figured digits. To the fact that there was no dollar at all. So, we started in progress, but everything came to nought because of the sanctions. Everything came down. We couldn't have access to fertilisers because three quarters of the fertiliser inputs are actually imported. So, without the dollar, it's gone. And on top of that, the very people whom we took land from are, or were, the owners of industry…

Agricultural production in volume terms declined by around 50% by 2008–closer to 60% in foreign exchange terms (Moyo 2011, 520). Moyo assesses that low production levels were 'largely due to the shortages of fertilisers, irrigation facilities and draft power' due to reduced domestic production of inputs and foreign exchange constraints on imports (Moyo 2011, 526).

Would this have happened if *jambanja* was orderly; supported as a postcolonial process of restitution? In an interview with Yan Hairong and Chen Yiyuan, Moyo commented (Yan and Chen 2016, 134) that:

> If you do land reform in the radical way, you'll be punished by Western capital… that's what they do. The consequences of land reform, you have to be determined to do something radical and withstand the pressure. They will close the markets, close the finance, maybe even put you on sanctions. So, there's a general fear you won't get any more IMF loans… the circumstances in Zimbabwe are to go it alone and damn the consequences as they say... [but even still] many myths have been broken. Okay, you will suffer for some time, but you could survive suffering. Zimbabwe also shows that "Look, you can't depend on the market way of doing land reform."

Adom Getachew argues that 'powerful states and the international institutions in which they are dominant, "bear a portion of the responsibility for the authoritarianism, the disorder and weakened state capacity"' of what John Rawls describes as "outlaw" and "burdened" societies. She argues that the West's presence in the postcolony 'is not limited to "active interference" but can take the form of "invigilation and/or intimidation" (Getachew 2019, 134, 35).

In twenty years, it was impossible to establish an orderly process for the restitution or redistribution of land at a meaningful scale in Zimbabwe. First, this was precluded at independence. Land redistribution was resisted again by Britain during structural adjustment in the 1990s (OD_137_250_3, British National Archives). It was set back once more when Britain withdrew funding in 1997, with the international development secretary stating (Moyo 2021, 635):

> we do not accept that Britain has a special responsibility to meet the costs of land purchase in Zimbabwe. We are a new government from diverse backgrounds without links to former colonial interests. My own origins are Irish, and as you know, we were colonised, not colonisers…'

The impossibility of orderly redistribution was sealed by the failure of the donor conference on land in 1998 (Davies-Kumadiro forthcoming). Today, we witness the 'invigilation' of South Africa by the US, which accused it of a "white genocide" after South Africa passed its 2025 Expropriation Act to enable faster land redistribution, and opposed genocide and settler colonialism in Palestine (Chothia 2025).

If an orderly process is made impossible, the postcolonial citizen must turn to chaos to achieve justice. In our December 2025 interview, Mrs Matambo, a farmer in Mashonaland East and development worker in Harare, said 'yes, it was chaotic. But we still have the land. And we won't give it away,' (Davies-Kumadiro forthcoming). She showed me around her fields, and her tobacco smoking barn, explaining how the farm was improving its tobacco quality year on year.

> ***------You asked why and I am telling you that we are steadfast.***

Zimbabwe's position, set out in its 2013 Constitution, is that the Government of Zimbabwe will pay white farmers compensation for improvements they made on the land, while Britain, as the former colonial power, is responsible for compensating farmers for the land itself. 'If the former colonial power fails to pay compensation… the Government of Zimbabwe has no obligation to pay compensation for agricultural land compulsorily acquired for resettlement,' it states (Kriger 2007, 70-71).

Britain rejects this claim and has continued to pursue compensation for white farmers from Zimbabwe only. Indeed, British PM Theresa May went so far as to sponsor regime change in Zimbabwe to obtain compensation for white farmers almost two decades after *jambanja*. One academic I interviewed in December 2025 recalled that (Davies-Kumadiro forthcoming):

> The British were actively involved in the coup. Theresa May was the Prime Minister then. And the Ambassador—Catriona Liang. That's one of the things they were negotiating. The British promised that "we will support [sic] this faction of ZANU-PF"; that they would actively underwrite the recovery of the economy. And compensation was part and parcel of the discussions that they had, that were then overtaken by events when Theresa May was ousted from power.

After Mugabe's ousting in 2017, President Mnangagwa's new ZANU-PF government sought to achieve economic reintegration by offering compensation to white farmers in return for the lifting of sanctions, in line with British proposals.

In July 2020, the Zimbabwean Government agreed a US$3.5bn Global Compensation Deed with white farmers, funded through long-term debt of 30 years, guaranteed by the Zimbabwean Government—in effect, of course, the Zimbabwean taxpayer (Moyo 2021, 631). In our interview, Prof. Masunungure noted that this was 'nearly the equivalent of the national budget,' (Davies-Kumadiro forthcoming).

Despite offering compensation, Zimbabwe is still under sanctions. It is making its compensation payments through interest on government bonds, at miniscule scale.

Sanctions continue to constrict the country's development. In 2023, the President of the African Development Bank stated that 'economic sanctions are driving Zimbabwe further into unsustainable debt.' The majority of Zimbabwe's debt is made up of interest payments and Zimbabwe cannot access international concessional finance to pay for or restructure it (African Development Bank Group, May 17 2023).

The case of Zimbabwe–overwhelmed by debt and paying compensation for land it reclaimed after colonisation–is comparable to Haiti, which paid for recognition as an independent, black-ruled state during slavery. Haiti paid 125m gold marks (equivalent to 300% of its gross national income) plus interest to France for recognition. This was compensation for France's loss of human "property," (Picketty 2025). To this day, Haiti has received no apology, return of funds, redress, or compensation. The enslaved were disregarded and their descendents marginalised.

In its revolution against slavery, Haiti asserted black self-determination—in terms of personhood and state sovereignty—and claimed the égalité and liberté espoused by the French Revolution for France's black subjects. Haiti's violent overrule of slavery was seen as outrageous by the West. Morally, it was rejected even by contemporary abolitionists and used as a "worst-case scenario," for what could happen without gradual emancipation (Davis 2006, 159). The punishment was monumental. But Haiti's sacrifice paved the way to abolition.

Through *jambanja*, Zimbabweans violently overruled the colonial norm that black land rights are inferior to, and cannot infringe upon, white property rights, even after independence. Sanctions functioned like punitive damages, aiming to transform Zimbabwe into the exception that makes the rule.

In our December 2025 interview, Dr. Walter Chambati commented that 'the Western world uses Zimbabwe to set an example that if you go against the interests of people of European origin then these are the consequences that are going to visit you. To come into the fold, you have to pay compensation. Be even with the white settlers. So, the debate in South Africa now is: "we don't want to go the Zimbabwe route,"' (Davies-Kumadiro forthcoming).

Looking at the destruction in Haiti and Zimbabwe today, you are encouraged to ask, is overruling white supremacy really worth it? Is it better to live in a corrugated iron shack on the edge of a large, white-owned South African farm, or to live on your own plot in Zimbabwe, without the funds to buy fertiliser and power tools? Die on your feet or live on your knees?

I asked Mr Murove whether *jambanja* was worth its consequences. Looking me straight in the eye as his family continued working the fields behind him by hand, he said

> Besides all the people suffering, the people chose to continue with the land. I would prefer not to have a car, not to have bread, but to have land. Because I know that is what Munya [my son] is going to inherit. We are not talking of ourselves now but of future generations… To us, it was a sacrifice.

He gathered a bag of beans for me to take back to Harare.

Similarly, in our December 2025 interview, I asked Mr. Matambo, a farmer in Mashonaland East who received land after *jambanja,* if he thought that *jambanja* was worth the sacrifice. He replied that (Davies-Kumadiro forthcoming):

> It was. It was. Where would we be now if we did not acquire this piece of land? We used to work in town. And if you retire, you need a place like this. And your children will also need it. And your grandchildren, your great grandchildren will need this land. More than us… [The colonisers who] acquired these pieces of land did not benefit much from it. But their great grandsons, whom we chased away, there are billionaires who benefited. So that's why I'm saying our great grandchildren will benefit from this more than us. We don't have much time left. So, our children and our great grandchildren will benefit more.

Have we been so fixated on Zimbabwe's economic collapse that we diminished *jambanja's* moral argument? Through *jambanja,* Zimbabweans reasserted their land rights and overturned the neocolonial agrarian structure.

In the same way that Haiti was decades ahead of slavery's abolition, Zimbabwe may yet herald a world where there is wider recognition, restitution and compensation of Indigenous land and property rights.

> ***-------You asked why and I am telling you that this land is our birthright.***
> ***Our wealth was taken, our welfare state broken, our currency unhinged.***
> ***But we took back our land, and we will build on it.***

*

We began with the narrative that "mobs of black people, who could not farm, violently expropriated land from white people, who could farm, and therefore Zimbabwe is a failed state."

Hammer in hand, amid its ruins, we can see the building blocks of its untruths.

First, the narrative's cornerstone is its assumption of white civility and victimhood, and black irrationality and savagery. The savage is a colonial image. The coloniser tells themself that domination is morally justified because the colonised subject is barbaric; therefore, colonial violence is pre-emptive violence (Fairbanks 2026).

I thought that the trope of the savage was debunked. But it keeps reappearing in contemporary society; a cockroach in our source code. The slave and the abolitionist, the savage and the coloniser; we ricochet. In 2023, it took months to debunk the Israeli narrative that colonised Palestinians were beheading babies; because Israeli society treats Palestinians like "human animals" (Maad, Audureau and Forey 2024).

It is taking even longer to humanise black Africans reclaiming their ancestral land after independence.

The popular white narrative of *jambanja* closely resembles British narratives of the "Mau Mau" rebellion against colonial rule in 1950s in Kenya. David Maughan-Brown argues that with "Mau Mau", 'the settlers' justificatory ideology could not allow any admission of legitimate social and economic grievances' for the revolt, which included low wages, racist passbooks that restricted movement, a lack of electoral representation, and exclusion from land.

Most of the Kikuyu who joined the revolt lived in overcrowded reserves or small tenant plots on settler land. Britain brutally suppressed the resistance, running 'a network of detention camps… where torture and rape were endemic,' and tens of thousands killed. Frederick Cooper comments that Britain's representation of events 'like true madness, had its own meticulous logic and its insistence that it was the Other who was mad,' (cited in Gopal 2019, 397-399).

In the case of *jambanja*, international attention on the collapse of white agriculture created a 'new sense of victimhood' that de-historicised and exculpated white Zimbabwean identities (Raftopoulos 2009, 216). The image of the savage obscured colonial responsibility for reparations, justified economic exclusion, and invited derision.

Second, in the context of postcolonial Southern Africa, I found that *jambanja* poses a question. Is it possible to reject colonial domination except by causing chaos?

Colonialism produced racial capitalism in Southern Africa, which retains significant political and economic power after formal independence (Levenson and Paret 2023, 3412). In South Africa, for example, white people held 79% of agricultural land in 2017, and black Africans held 4% (Ngcukaitobi 2021, 83). Black Africans made up 82% of South Africa's population in 2025 (Statistics South Africa 2005). Black South African households had 5% of the wealth of white South African households, on average, in 2024 (Chelwa, Maboshe, and Hamilton 2024, 423).

Judging from the continuation of the colonial land settlement in South Africa and Namibia, land redistribution has remained unachievable at scale within contemporary "order." In our interview in December 2025, Dr. Toendepi Shonhe stated that 'if you follow the neoliberal, capitalist ideology you are unable to ask for reparations because you need to settle. You need a political settlement with global capital,' (Davies-Kumadiro forthcoming).

This seems broadly true. In March 2026, for example, when Ghana obtained UN majority-agreement that the transatlantic slave trade was the gravest crime against humanity, which requires reparations, it was despite the opposition of white-majority states (Declaration 4106588, UN, March 17 2026). The immediate response of the Reform Party in the UK was a proposal to deny visas to citizens from countries seeking slavery reparations (Wheeler 2026).

Decolonisation and abolition disorder white supremacy. They provoke backlash: 'accept your place or be denied entry.'

In the post-imperial, post-enslaver states of the West, there is a desire to draw the line at civil rights and curtail the 'socio-spatial mobility' of the postcolonial citizen, which is often asserted through migration controls (Okyere and Olayiwola 2022, 24). There is deep fear about the loss of white property—status, wealth, and place—in a post-imperial world where white states feel 'minoritised, intermarried, infiltrated,' (Balibar cited in Sylvester 1999, 712). Colonial "defence" forces segregate to protect the racial exclusivity of white places while citizens balk at affirmative action.

This 'interracial relations of international relations' (Pallister-Wilkins 2021, 100) makes land reform a topic of international white interest, which cannot be managed as domestic policy within Southern African states. Land reform is disorder within white supremacy. Land reform challenges an economic, spatial and moral order that protects white property and disregards Indigenous land rights. It does not happen inside the rules.

Frantz Fanon writes that decolonisation 'which sets out to change the order of the world, is clearly an agenda for total disorder… the violence which governed the ordering of the colonial world, which tirelessly punctuated the destruction of the indigenous social fabric… will be vindicated and appropriated when, taking history into their own hands, the colonised swarm into the forbidden cities,' (Fanon 1961, 5-6).

Any revolution takes place when reform fails; when containment is too tight to draw breath; when there is no moral or political choice except that injustice is overwhelmed and overturned. Messier than a pure right or wrong, revolution is a historical process.

The French Revolution was morally justified, resulted in authoritarian terror, and still shaped the world for the better. The Haitian Revolution was morally justified, plunged Haiti into centuries of disaster, and still shaped the world for the better. Right or wrong depends on who you are and when you lived.

So how should we understand *jambanja*? How do I understand it, as a scholar and as a grand-daughter?

Jambanja was decolonisation in practice. It challenged the colonial dictum that Indigenous land rights do not matter. It forced through the national and international recognition of Indigenous land rights in Zimbabwe. It was guided not by savagery but by the desire for restitution. Restitution by any means necessary. It was brutal and imperfect. But, somehow, nevertheless, it makes me proud to be Zimbabwean.

Jambanja was chaos in pursuit of justice. It may yet re-shape the world.

Primary Sources

British National Archives (listed chronologically)

FCO 36_2675_16. 1979. “Verbatim Service 067/79,” October 11.

FCO 36_2675_16B. 1979. “Note from Mr Luce’s Private Secretary to Mr Renwick.” October 11.

FCO 36_2675_24. 1979. “Telegram number 239.” October 16.

FCO_36_2675_28. 1979. “Patriotic Front.” October 16.

FCO_23_2875_32. 1980. “American Aid for Zimbabwe.” August 4.

FCO_2875_1. 1980. “Aid for Zimbabwe.” March 13.

OD_137_250_3. 1992. “Telno 030 of 230915Z January 92.” January.

OD_137_250_E26. 1992. “Secretary of State’s Meeting with Dr Nathan Shamuyarira, Zimbabwean Foreign Minister.” February 5.

Miscellaneous

Congress.gov. 2001. "Text - S.494 - 107th Congress (2001-2002): Zimbabwe Democracy and Economic Recovery Act of 2001." December 21 2001, accessed March 19 2026. https://www.congress.gov/bill/107th-congress/senate-bill/494/text/pl.

Hansard. 1980. “Zimbabwe: Md for Land Resettlement Volume 411: debated on Thursday 17 July 1980.” Accessed May 14 2025. https://hansard.parliament.uk/Lords/1980-07-17/debates/43d6f965-c833-4ccb-8788-359a77b36047/ZimbabweMdForLandResettlement.

Institute of Commonwealth Studies. [unknown]. “Lancaster House Agreement.” December 21 1979. Accessed May 29 2025: 1-51. sas-space.sas.ac.uk/5847/5/1979_Lancaster_House_Agreement.pdf.

Palestinian Centre for Human Rights. 2025. “PCHR Documents Testimonies of Systematic Rape and Sexual Torture in Israeli Detention against Released Palestinian Detainees.” November 15. https://pchrgaza.org/pchr-documents-testimonies-of-systematic-rape-and-sexual-torture-in-israeli-detention-against-released-palestinian-detainees/.

Statistics South Africa. 2025. “Inside the numbers: SA Population Trends for 2025.” July 25, accessed October 25 2025. https://www.statssa.gov.za/?p=18613.

UN. 2026. “Declaration of the Trafficking of Enslaved Africans and Racialized Chattel Enslavement of Africans as the Gravest Crime against Humanity: draft resolution.” Declaration 4106588, March 17, accessed March 26 2026. http://digitallibrary.un.org/record/4106588.

Wikileaks (listed chronologically)

"PF Envoys Visit Tanzania." October 15 1979, accessed August 16 2025. 1979DARES04927_e. wikileaks.org/plusd/cables/1979DARES04927_e.html.

"Lancaster House Conference." October 16 1979, accessed August 16 2025. 1979STATE269539_e. wikileaks.org/plusd/cables/1979STATE269539_e.html.

"Lancaster House Conference." October 17 1979, accessed August 16 2025. 1979LONDON20368_e. wikileaks.org/plusd/cables/1979LONDON20368_e.html.

Zimbabwe National Archives

"Comment on 'the Land Questions.'" *Voice of Zimbabwe*, October 15 1979. MS 308/42/3.

"'Chief" back to fight for land", *Sunday Mail*, February 2 1980. MS 308/42/3.

"Source of Bitterness," [publication unknown]. MS 308/42/3.

Secondary Literature

Bhandar, Brenna. 2018. *Colonial Lives of Property: Law, Land and Racial Regimes of Ownership.* Duke University Press.

Boone, Catherine. 2013. *Property and Political Order in Africa: Land Rights and the Structure of Politics*. Cambridge University Press.

Bustillo, Ximena. 2025. "First Afrikaners arrive in U.S. under radically redrawn refugee program." *NPR,* May 12. https://www.npr.org/2025/05/12/g-s1-65984/south-african-afrikaner-refugee-us.

Chelwa, Grieve, Mashekwa Maboshe, and Darrick Hamilton. 2024. "The Racial Wealth Gap in South Africa and the United States." *Review of Political Economy* 36 (2): 423–440. https://doi.org/10.1080/09538259.2024.2318962.

Chothia, Farouk. 2025. "Is there a genocide of white South Africans as Trump claims?" *BBC*, June 2. https://www.bbc.com/news/articles/c9wg5pg1xp5o.

Davies-Kumadiro, Beth. Forthcoming. "Development Aid for Blacks, Compensation for Whites? Land Rights, Reparations and Zimbabwe's Decolonisation 1979-2020." MA diss., University of the Witwatersrand.

Davis, David Brion. 2006. *Inhuman Bondage: The Rise and Fall of Slavery in the New World*. Oxford University Press.

Fairbanks, Eva. 2026. "How the US far right bought into the myth of white South Africa's persecution." *The Guardian,* March 10. https://www.theguardian.com/news/2026/mar/10/how-the-us-far-right-bought-into-the-myth-of-white-south-africas-persecution.

Fanon, Frantz. 1961. *The Wretched of the Earth: A Negro Psychoanalyst's Study of the Problems of Racism and Colonialism in the World Today.* Diana Publishing.

Getachew, Adom. 2019. *Worldmaking after Empire: The Rise and Fall of Self-Determination.* Princeton University Press.

Gleijeses, Piero. 2018. "Decolonisation and the Cold War", *The Oxford Handbook of the Ends of Empire,* ed. Martin Thomas and Andrew Thompson. Oxford Handbooks.

Gopal, Priyamvada. 2019. *Insurgent Empire: Anticolonial Resistance and British Dissent*. Verso.

Kinsey, Bill H. 2004. "Zimbabwe's Land Reform Program: Underinvestment in Post-Conflict Transformation." *World Development* 32 (10): 1669-1696. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.worlddev.2004.06.005.

Kriger, Norma. 2007. "Liberation from Constitutional Constraints: Land Reform in Zimbabwe." *The SAIS Review of International Affairs* 27 (2): 63–76. https://www.jstor.org/stable/27000091.

Levenson, Zachary and Marcel Paret. 2023. "The South African Tradition of Racial Capitalism." *Ethnic and Racial Studies* 46 (16): 3403-3424. https://doi.org/10.1080/01419870.2023.2219300.

Maad, Assma, William Audureau and Samuel Forey. 2024. "'40 beheaded babies': Deconstructing the rumor at the heart of the information battle between Israel and Hamas." *Le Monde,* April 3. https://www.lemonde.fr/en/les-decodeurs/article/2024/04/03/40-beheaded-babies-the-itinerary-of-a-rumor-at-the-heart-of-the-information-battle-between-israel-and-hamas_6667274_8.html.

Mamdani, Mahmood. 1996. *Citizen and Subject: Contemporary Africa and the Legacy of Late Colonialism.* Princeton University Press.

Mamdani, Mahmood. 2008. "Lessons of Zimbabwe," *London Review of Books* 30 (23), 4 December. www.lrb.co.uk/the-paper/v30/n23/mahmood-mamdani/lessons-of-zimbabwe.

Mbembe, Achille. 2001. *On the Postcolony*. University of California Press.

Mkodzongi, Grasian and Peter Lawrence. 2019. "The fast-track land reform and agrarian change in Zimbabwe." *Review of African Political Economy* 46 (159): 1-13. https://doi.org/10.1080/03056244.2019.1622210.

Moyo, Philani. 2021. "Contested Compensation: The Politics, Economics and Legal Nuances of Compensating White Former Commercial Farmers in Zimbabwe." *Review of African Political Economy* 48 (170): 630–45, https://www.jstor.org/stable/48654585.

Moyo, Sam. 1995. *The Land Question in Zimbabwe.* Sapes Books.

Moyo, Sam and Paris Yeros. 2005. *Reclaiming the Land: The Resurgence of Rural Land Movements in Africa, Asia and Latin America.* Bloomsbury. https://sahistory.org.za/sites/default/files/archive-files/sam_moyo_paris_yeros_reclaiming_the_land_the_rbookos.org_.pdf.

Moyo, Sam. 2011. “Three decades of agrarian reform in Zimbabwe.” *The Journal of Peasant Studies* 38 (3): 493-531. http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/03066150.2011.583642.

Mtisi, Joseph, Munyaradzi Nyakudya and Teresa Barnes. 2009. “War in Rhodesia, 1965-1980.” In *Becoming Zimbabwe* ed. Brian Raftopoulos and A.S. Mlambo. Weaver Press.

Mungai, Christine. 2026. “Democracies Disfigured.” *The Ideas Letter,* March 19. https://www.theideasletter.org/essay/democracies-disfigured/.

Muzondidya, James. 2009. “From Buoyance to Crisis, 1980-1997.” In *Becoming Zimbabwe* ed. Brian Raftopoulos and A.S. Mlambo. Weaver Press.

Ngcukaitobi, Tembeka. 2021. *Land Matters: South Africa’s Failed Land Reforms and the Road Ahead*. Penguin. ePub.

Okyere, Samuel and Peter Olayiwola. 2022. “Anti- Trafficking and Anti- Smuggling Campaigns in West Africa as New Racialised Migration Deterrence Efforts.” In *White Supremacy, Racism and the Coloniality of Anti-Trafficking-Routledge* ed. Kamala Kempadoo and Elena Shih. Routledge.

Onslow, Sue. 2017. “Race and Policy: Britain, Zimbabwe and the Lancaster House Deal.” *The Journal of Imperial and Commonwealth History* 45 (5): 844-867. https://doi.org/10.1080/03086534.2017.1370221.

Ossome, Lyn and Sirisha C. Naidu. 2021. “Does Land Still Matter? Gender and Land Reforms in Zimbabwe.” *Agrarian South: Journal of Political Economy* 10 (2): 344-70. https://doi.org/10.1177/22779760211029176.

Pallister-Wilkins, Polly. 2021. “Saving the souls of white folk: Humanitarianism as white supremacy.” *Security Dialogue* 52, Issue Supplement_1: 98-106, https://doi.org/10.1177/09670106211024419.

Palmer, Robin. 1997. *Land and Racial Domination in Rhodesia*. Heinemann.

Picketty, Thomas. 2025. “France owes €30 billion to Haiti and should start restitution talks.” *Le Monde*, May 10, accessed May 29 2025. www.lemonde.fr/en/opinion/article/2025/05/10/thomas-piketty-france-owes-30-billion-to-haiti-and-should-start-restitution-talks_6741114_23.html.

Raftopoulos, Brian. 2009. “The Crisis in Zimbabwe, 1998-2008.” In *Becoming Zimbabwe* ed. Brian Raftopoulos and A.S. Mlambo. Weaver Press.

Ranger, Terence. 2006. *Peasant Consciousness and Guerilla Warfare in Zimbabwe: A Comparative Study.* Currey.

Said, Edward. 1979. *Orientalism*. Vintage Books.

Skosana, Dineo. 2025. *No Last Place to Rest: Coal Mining and Dispossession in South Africa.* Wits University Press.

Sylvester, Christine. 1999. “Development studies and postcolonial studies: Disparate tales of the ‘Third World’.” *Third World Quarterly* 20 (4): 703-721. http://www.jstor.org/stable/3993584.

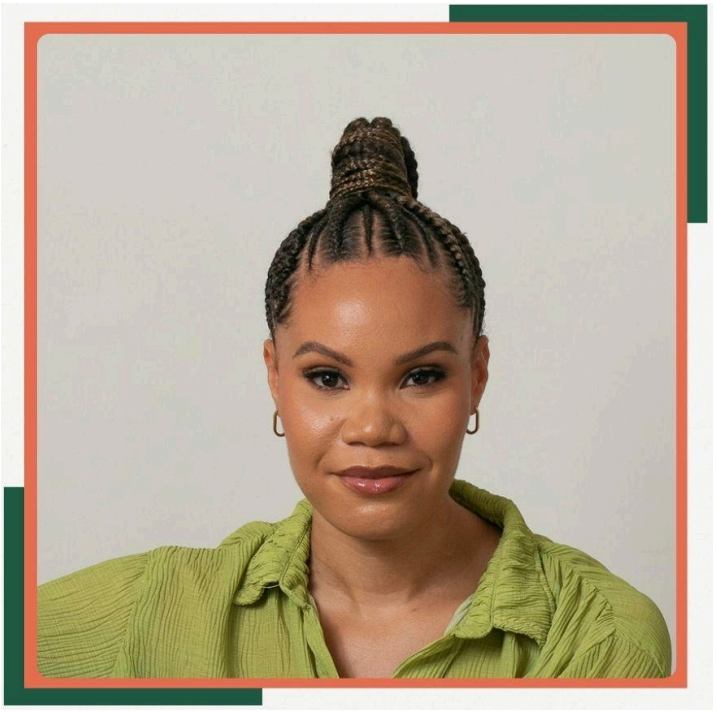
Tuck, Eve and K. Wayne Yang. 2012. “Decolonisation is not a metaphor.” *Decolonisation: Indigeneity, Education & Society* 1 (1): 1-40. https://clas.osu.edu/sites/clas.osu.edu/files/Tuck%20and%20Yang%202012%20Decolonization%20is%20not%20a%20metaphor.pdf.

weNkosi, uMbuso. 2023. *These Potatoes Look Like Humans: The Contested Future of the Land, Home and Death in South Africa.* Wits University Press.

Wheeler, Richard. 2026. “Reform would deny visas over calls for slavery reparations.” *BBC*, April 7. https://www.bbc.com/news/articles/c4g4w722peyo.

Yan, Hairong and Chen Yiyuan. 2016. “Land reform in Zimbabwe, class dynamics and delayed Bandung: an interview with Sam Moyo.” *Inter-Asia Cultural Studies* 17 (1): 128-139. https://doi.org/10.1080/14649373.2016.1139032.

Yeats, William Butler. 1989. “The Second Coming.” *The Collected Poems of W.B. Yeats.* https://www.poetryfoundation.org/poems/43290/the-second-coming.



Name	**Beth Davies-Kumadiro**
Geography	**Zimbabwe, Nigeria, United Kingdom**
Title	**Jambanja: Chaos in pursuit of Justice**
Format	**Essay | 22 - minut e read**
Biography	Beth Davies-Kumadiro is a researcher and writer whose work examines the afterlives of colonialism in land, law, and international relations. With roots in Zimbabwe and Nigeria, and based in the UK, she writes from inside the contradictions of postcolonial inheritance. Her contribution traces how Zimbabwe's independence settlement encoded a racial hierarchy in property rights — one that treated white land claims as enforceable and Black land claims as matters for "development." She draws on archival research and interviews with Zimbabwean farmers to name what this hierarchy cost, and costs still.