



Our Voices

Young Women's voices on Zimbabwe Rising

Recently, economist Vince Musewe wrote a piece titled "Zimbabwe Rising," about the country's possibilities of economic development.

He correctly made the point that in order for Zimbabwe to unleash its full potential, it must be "driven by the creativity and enterprise of its people" and that it must reinvent a "new and inclusive narrative."

We agree with his analysis, but would like to expand on his definition of "an inclusive narrative."

Inclusivity means addressing the underrepresentation of women, half the population, in the country's formal economic sectors and mainstream media.

In mid-September we were a group of young Zimbabwean women from all walks of life (married, single, students, employed, etc.), who, dismayed by women's lack of access to mass media, to gathered at a forum in Harare to unite our voices on societal issues. Here are some of our views on how to reinvent Zimbabwe:

On Information and Communication Technology (ICT):

"If I could influence where money should be invested it would be simple. Imagine a Zimbabwe where young women are able to access affordable internet connectivity, where they are, how they want to access it.

While we are working on the macro economic environment, accessing Internet and the social media tools that come with it, will begin to make it easier for women from all spheres of Zimbabwean life, to connect, keep informed and influence the direction of their lives. Zimbabweans women are communicating and connecting using internet based tool more on many varied and interesting ways, but we could do more.

Imagine a Zimbabwe where every woman is on Whatsapp and able to google any information she so desires, where Internet-enabled phones are affordable and data costs are minimal.

Then all those women who have a story to tell can become online journalists and budding entrepreneurs can have websites and explore potential markets virtually.

Then we can have a Zimbabwe where more women can have access to social media, and share

their thoughts on platforms such as @herzimbabwe and @263chat, and be able to access innovative spaces.

So if I was looking for foreign direct investment, I know what I would look for. Sometimes it's just as simple as access to Internet to change my access to the world markets and the world." - **Tsitsi Mhlanga**

On Creative Industries:

Africa has taken the international film industry by storm. A movement of African women filmmakers has started on the continent; unfortunately that revolution has not found its way to Zimbabwe. The African woman is an important subject, her struggles and triumphs are unique.

This has led to her story being appropriated by male filmmakers. Critical women's voices like Judy Keene (Kenya), Tope Oshin Ogun (Nigeria) and many other are challenging the status quo and they have found support and the audience in their countries and the Diaspora.

Back home, it becomes a lonely and isolated effort. Even with iconic figures such as Rumbi Katedza, Tsitsi Dangarembga and Nakai Matema, the vacuum has not been filled.

This is not for lack of skills and training. Zimbabwe Film and Television School of Southern Africa (ZIFTESSA) is producing female graduates. There is, however, a need for women who are motivated by the passion to challenge the negative narrative about women. The training is necessary and so are women filmmakers who have women's agenda at heart.

There has been a great uproar

about the appropriation of African stories by the western industries. There should even be a greater one about the appropriation of women's stories by men. Women in other sectors also need to realise the importance of this space and fight for it.

Deputy Minister Christopher Mutsvangwa recently called on women to occupy their space in the film industry. If developed nations such as Sweden had to create policies for women's

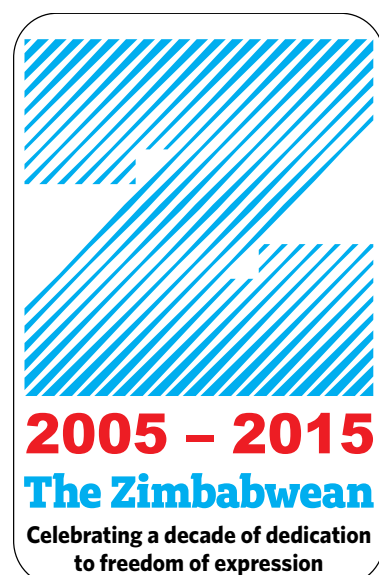
cinema, we should also acknowledge the gaps that exist. Deliberate moves are required to establish the framework we need to promote women in film. Like any other male-dominated sphere, only a full scale invasion will open up the space for women. - **Karen Mukwasi**

On Feminism:

"If you have educated your daughter so that she can have access to opportunity and a well-paying job, if you have protected

your sister from the harassment of other men, if you have asked women to vote for you, if you have promoted a woman at the workplace because she performed her duties better than any other candidate, If you've fought side by side with women for the liberation of our country, you're a well-marinated feminist chasara kubikwa." - **Ruvimbo Goredema**

We urge visionaries of our country to take these recommendations seriously. Yes, Zimbabwe will rise, but not without its daughters. - **This piece was produced by Urgent Action Fund – Africa, a pan-African feminist fund, in partnership with Her Zimbabwe, a platform that amplifies the voices of women.**



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