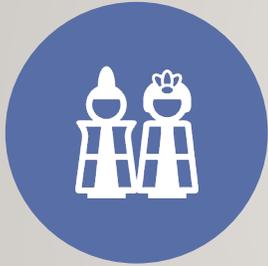


WOMEN'S PARTICIPATION AND CONDITIONS IN THE CULTURAL SECTOR

A PRESENTATION BY
EDITH 'WEUTONGA'
KATIJI – PRESIDENT
ZIMBABWE MUSICIANS
UNION



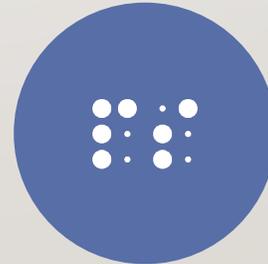
Generally culture is diverse and can accommodate everyone – male and female. This on face value can mean that there should be no gender stereotypes and expectations where participation in cultural activities is concerned. However the truth seems otherwise, as there are clearly defined expectations and roles especially for women. For me there are three main things that affect women and our participation and beneficiation in cultural activities. These are;



i. Defined and imposed roles expected of women in cultural spaces



ii. Unsafe practising environment for women



iii. Exclusion of women in the participation and beneficiation in cultural spaces.

PREAMBLE

Whether in Music, Film, Theatre and other related cultural interactions and activities, there seems to be predetermined roles set for women. This view is something that I can speak from an informed position as I come from Zimbabwe scenario where I am a player. However, I have heard and read through various fora that the plight of women is not unique to Zimbabwe alone. The scenario alluded to is something that is common across the African continent. In music for instance ... women have a role defined to be backing vocalists— that is common place – or as dancers. This is generally the expectations on women in mainstream cultural activities and professional jobs.



The time when an all-female group which nurtured my early music career started off in Bulawayo a city in Zimbabwe shock waves hit the music industry and audiences to the core because here was a group of girls whose members played drums, keyboards, all guitars and excelling on all the vocals and dancing. Here was a complete music band of females. I can recall that we wrote our own songs and performed them. Even though we became popular and were invited to concerts across the length and breadth of the nation of Zimbabwe, there were still expectations attached to our performances. An imposed view expected us not to play a certain type of music genre as it was deemed a feminine no go area. Further we were not expected sing and articulate certain topics that were construed a preserve for men, we were not expected to perform in certain spaces that were viewed as unfit for the woman. However, we were expected to dance in certain predetermined way that was to be suggestive – ‘typical’ of female dancers in the entertainment circles.



Sadly, from that dynamic, history making all women band, I am the only one still in the mainstream music as my peers were either ‘scouted at our shows and lured into marriage and subsequently stopped from performing in the ‘demeaning’ spaces. Some who were already married then were asked to find better engagement, which befitted married women. From personal experience there you have it ... even after a breakthrough – there was something else to break the camel’s back.

WOMEN AND DEFINED ROLES AND EXPECTATIONS



WOMEN'S SAFETY IN CULTURAL WORK SPACES

- So even after breaking through to affirm our own roles and work as we please or to our advantage and to the calling of our talents as women ... there was another problem – SAFE WORKING SPACES. Let me call it SAFE WORKING ENVIRONMENT because the safety or lack of it is not confined to spaces as in the four walls of a building. Yes there are many instances recorded and undocumented of females facing abuse of all sorts from emotional, physical and sexual at their work spaces – but there are instances also of facing discrimination, sexist attitudes and general disregard which in itself make the whole will to continue working disappear. The situation of assuming that any female that works in the entertainment and cultural sector are of loose morals and therefore easy objects for sexist tendencies and sexual exploitation is not as worse as it used to be in my country but it still persists. Sexual favours are demanded from female practitioners even for things like promotion and exposure. Most of the culture and creative industry is male run and dominated – to the point where most decisions are made exclusively by males ... therefore this creates a culture where women will be excluded from benefitting from any decisions that are of benefit – except in instances where there is some transaction involved and I dare say, even a sexual transaction.

- A lot of it exclusion does not occur in the open as my talk suggests. No. It is systematic. The creative and Culture industry as we know it today has been commercialized to mean that a lot of us as professionals derive our very livelihoods from our craft. Now for one to derive a meaningful livelihood from their craft, they have to invest in it – holistically – and then make a dividend from that investment.
- Often times a decision is made to to say that, ‘ah well this is not the type of event for a female performer’ hence one gets excluded. In other places, a decision is made that the type of audience expected does not suit a female performer ... or even the type of music one plays can be thought to be unsuitable for certain audiences by a male promoter as the case turns out to be many times. In the end, as has been with me and many other very talented female performers’ cases, we have tended to get more bookings from private and corporate entities. However, the nature of the corporate and private gigs is such that there will not be any public media attention mostly deliberately and this means we are excluded from media space. It should be appreciated the crucial role of the media is in our industry. Lack of it on ones’ brand and product is detrimental...

EXCLUSION OF WOMEN IN CULTURAL PARTICIAPTION AND BENEFITTING

CONT'D

- A lot of us have then had to rely on alternative media like social and online media, which has a mass reach yes ... but in our communities, specifically where I come from – traditional media is still very wide reaching even more than social media. Radio for example in ZIMBABWE still leads in terms of far reaching mass communication. Social media and online platforms require data which is very expensive and unaffordable to many. Hence we have an unhealthy scenario of seemingly being more recognized outside of our countries than within ... because the media available to us is not necessarily available to our local market.
- Financially, economically women are worse off than their male counterparts and in most cases depend on them for survival. Although this narrative is changing in some aspects, it still is a contentious issue. Unable to bribe DJs through payola, or pay to get stories in mainstream media ... those of us who are unwilling to transact sexually are left in the cold...and thus excluded.

NEWSPAPER FEATURES AND ARTICLES

06/10/2019

Tearful Gonyeti narrates Jah Prayzah abuse | The Herald



Pamela "Gonyeti" Zulu

Godwin Muzari: Arts Editor

It was an emotional interview as dancer and vocalist Pamela "Gonyeti" Zulu intermittently broke down on Wednesday when she narrated the story of her alleged sexual abuse by former employer Jah Prayzah. She began with a disclaimer.

"I did not want this information to go public. I just got angry in a meeting last week and spilled the beans in front of other people. We were only five in the meeting and tempers flared until I reminded him about his sex escapades in anger. It is embarrassing to share a story of sexual abuse with the world and I thought the issue would end in the meeting. I was surprised to see a story about it in a newspaper and I feel so bad, but I don't have anything to hide anymore," she said.

Gonyeti was referring to a story published by our sister paper H-Metro on Tuesday in which Jah Prayzah's lawyer Eddie Hamunakwadi was quoted as saying she was seeking compensation for sexual abuse in addition to claiming outstanding unpaid fees for her services in the band.

The Herald

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Tearful Gonyeti narrates Jah Prayzah abuse

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<https://www.herald.co.zw/tearful-gonyeti-narrates-jah-prayzah-abuse/>

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Pauline Gundidza

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Unpaid work for Muzondo

04 SEP, 2019 - 00:09
0 COMMENTS 1 IMAGES



Tafadzwa Muzondo was convicted on two counts of indecent assault.

Rebecca Kabaya Arts Reporter

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Journal

Muziki >

Journal of Music Research in Africa

Volume 4, 2007 - Issue 1: Music and social change in post-colonial Africa

115 2

0

Views CrossRef citations to date Altmetric

Articles

'Hear our Voices': Female popular musicians in post-independence Zimbabwe

Urther Rwafa & Maurice T. Vambe¹

Pages 66-86 | Published online: 10 Apr 2008

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Abstract

Whenever Zimbabwean music is debated in the country or outside, the reflections tend to centre on established male singers such as Thomas Mapfumo, Oliver Mtukudzi, Simon Chimbetu and others. Female singers are on the margin of theoretical works despite the fact that Susan Mapfumo, Dorothy Masuku and Stella Chiweshe have been singing from the 1950s, through the 1970s and certainly up to the present day (in the case of Stella Chiwese). In Zimbabwe today, the performances and creativity of new female singers such as Mbuya Madhuvu, Chiwoniso Maraire and Fungisai Zvakavapano² steal the musical charts. And yet very little research has been done on their work in order to explore the phenomenon of a female singing culture and to explain how they contribute and give shape to the contours of Zimbabwe's national culture. The main aim of this

JOURNALS

ON EXCLUSIONS

- A corporate sponsoring a talent search run by the National Arts Council of Zimbabwe selected 13 male artists to entertain at the finals of the competition.

06/10/2019 Edith WeUtonga laments the exclusion of female artists in the Chibuku Road to Fame Finals

THE TRAVELLERS | JAH SIGNAL | WINKY D | EX-Q
JUDGEMENT YARD | SHINSOMAN | KILLER !!

Chibuku Road to Fame Finals Poster

This didn't go down well with Edith WeUtonga, who took to Facebook to share her frustration with Delta and Chibuku, the organisers of the event, writing on Facebook the artists had this to say.

Ntswai ndzobabwiler kuti there's a deliberate motion to keep the Zimbabwe female musicians from the big stages. Talent development is only open to the boys who have the talent or not! Not only that, the final is reserved only for the *big* musicians from Harare. As long as you are not female Delta and Chibuku is open for business. #hashtag #p#hashtag

Do you think Zimbabwean female artists are overlooked, share your thoughts in the comments below

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06/10/2019 Edith WeUtonga laments the exclusion of female artists in the Chibuku Road to Fame Finals

MAGAZINE INSPIRATION IN THE LOOP EVENTS JOBS

Edith WeUtonga Laments The Exclusion Of Female Artists In The Chibuku Road To Fame Finals

Master Move - September 16, 2018

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To Start Watching, Download Here

MyTelevisionHQ

If the Chibuku Road to Fame Finals poster in anything to go by then clearly it is a 'Man's World' the poster features some of the most prominent male Zimbabwean artists but eerily there is not a single female artist featured.

https://www.creativeloop.co.zw/2018/09/edith-weutonga-laments-the-exclusion-of-female-artists-in-the-chibuku-road-to-fame

06/10/2019 Where are the women? - Newswatch Zimbabwe

Breaking Zimbabwe: if treating its citizens: United States

Where are the women?

By newswatch - February 26, 2019

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SOUND TRACK: PLOT MHAKO

THE local music industry is male-dominated and misogynistic. Where are the women? It is as if there are no women at all, even behind the scenes, save for a few backing vocalists and dancers. It appears as if the music scene is only a boys' territory as the statistics show that for every 10 males there are only 1 female. The gender disparity in the music industry in Zimbabwe continues to worsen when the entire developing world is closing gaps on gender equality and the economy.

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Could Zimbabwe be still struggling with generational patriarchy? Some stories of female artists are nerve-wracking as they fight against societal stereotypes and sexual bias. The abuse, objectification and prejudice faced by female artists is shocking amid allegations of producers, artists and even the fans all wanting a piece of the female artists. The distraction, temptation, and financial support lure is often times irresistible for female artists in an industry where the competition is fierce. The intimidation and exclusion begin in childhood, with girls not being encouraged to play a guitar or join a band. There has been a slight shift and change in perception over the years as people start seeing and relating to female artists on the global stage and have made bold statements on gender, such as American singer and songwriter Angelique Kidjo, but at home the song is different.

We are still singing from the archaic hymn book

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https://www.newswatch.co.zw/2019/02/where-are-the-women/

CONCLUSION

- Many have suggested variously on ideas to deal with the status quo and bring normalcy. Others have squarely blamed women cultural players for lacking bravado, work ethic, drive and stamina to conquer regardless of the entitlement to their views, as an invested and affected player and an entity, I think the world needs to relook at its history and how it has to bring about a balance in many such instances in the past. After the abolishment of Slavery ... the defeat of colonialism and the fall of apartheid corrective measures were put in place to bring to speed a certain group of people who were previously disadvantaged and closed out because of their race. Such measures included empowerment programs and deliberate quotas enacted as laws even. The justification being that there was/is need to realign and lift up those who were deliberately shut out and felt the way us – female cultural practitioners feel today, thus being confined, predefined, unsafe and excluded from the mainstream involvement.



SONG BY UNITED WOMEN IN MUSIC ZW

• Thank you.



United Women
IN MUSIC ZW
WOMAN OF ESSENCE

