CHAPTER 9

African Dance as an Epistemic Insurrection in Postcolonial Zimbabwean Arts Education Curriculum

Jairos Gonye and Nathan Moyo

As the kongonya dance commenced in the backdrop of high-pitched chimurenga[1] *song, I became barely conscious of my obscure presence amidst the rising thick dust. I remember looking at the bigger dancers and imitating their steps, moves and routines. What I distinctly remember to this day is that both young men and women danced in line formation, with those dancers behind clutching the waists of those ahead of them—man to woman, woman to man—then simultaneously rolling their buttocks exaggeratedly and stamping the ground as they hopped forward till the leading dancer completed a turn and clutched the waist of the last dancer in the line and thus formed a rotating ring (personal recollection by Jairos Gonye, the first author).*

Introduction

In the recollection above, Jairos Gonye (the first author) illustrates the political and symbolic power of African dance practices as an expression of the lived realities of a marginalized people in a perpetual struggle for self-affirmation in a world where standards of knowing and remembering are defined by notions of *whiteness* as normalized and taken for granted (Bell, 1980; Delgado, 2000;

[1] *Chimurenga* is the Shona word for war of liberation.

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Harris, 1995). This recollection also resonates with the growing efforts by Indigenous scholars from formerly colonized African nations such as Zimbabwe (formerly Rhodesia) and others. We foreground and claim African and other Indigenous peoples' experiences as valid epistemic insurrectionary practices in "a world that remains painfully hegemonic [and] riddled with vestiges of colonialism" (Shim, 2009, p. 113). Our work is forged in the crucible of the anticolonial struggles against Western European imperialism that deployed racism as a tool to oppress Africans. It aims to provide an entry point for an interrogation and understanding of the attempted erasure of the experiences and cultures of Black African peoples. This erasure was perpetuated through colonial education, among other forms of colonization.

Here, performing dance appears to be a way of refusing this forced invisibilization by the colonial forces and the attendant misrepresentation. This is contrary to the now (in)famous words of Trevor-Roper (1963), which characterize African traditional dances as mere "unrewarding gyrations of barbarous tribes in picturesque irrelevant corners of the globe" (p. 871). As Gonye (2013) argues, African dance performances are not only an expression of cultural heritage but also a "countercultural response to colonialism" (p. 69). These performances can be deployed to unmask the dominance of whiteness as normalized and at the same time foreground resistance and defiance. It is against this backdrop that we, in this chapter, examine the status of dance education in the postcolonial Zimbabwean school curriculum with a view to understanding the continued marginalization of African dance in the arts education curriculum.

The school curriculum in postcolonial Zimbabwe is in many ways a legacy of British colonialism, which introduced a type of formal education premised on Eurocentric ways of knowing. This Western European type of education had overt undertones of racial superiority that explicitly sought to promote Eurocentric epistemologies as superior and worth knowing while denigrating African Indigenous knowledges and practices (Mlambo, 2006; Shizha, 2013). In overt and subtle ways, whiteness became the invisible norm against which all other knowledges were compared (Parkes, 2007, p. 391). Such an education was racist and unjust, since a Eurocentric conception of knowledge interpolated with messages of white supremacy that rendered Indigenous African knowledge systems inferior (Shizha, 2013).

As played out in then Rhodesia (now Zimbabwe), this implied that "almost all of Rhodesian fine arts and culture represented a bland rehash of respectable, old-European bourgeois forms" (Kaarsholm, 1989, p. 197). Since curriculum reflects the dominant culture, it followed that the dance curriculum was more aligned to imported English and European dances, which could not be easily wished away at the attainment of political independence in 1980.[2] This is illustrated in Spivak's (1997) assertion that

[2] Zimbabwe became independent in 1980 after a protracted armed struggle.

> [the] declared rupture of decolonization has not resulted in the freedom one may have expected, the historical discourse—as independence from the colonial power might free us from our foreign oppressor's armies, but it does not automatically free us of the discourses in which our subjectivities and identities have been inscribed. (p. 202)

This means that freeing ourselves from foreign armies did not necessarily mean freeing ourselves from the cultural hegemony entrenched through an educational practice that was mostly aimed at reproducing an African who accepted that African cultural values and practices were inferior to Western ones. It is for this reason that Dover (2015) describes it as "an unjust educational landscape" characterized by Eurocentric epistemologies that have marginalized African ways of knowing thus maintaining an epistemic status quo that has the hallmarks of colonialism (p. 370). It is from this "foreign-ness of curriculum and voicelessness in pedagogy" (Kanu, 2003, p. 73) experienced by Indigenous people despite the formal end of colonialism that Africans need to free themselves.

Similarly, the postcolonial curriculum in Zimbabwe has remained problematic in that it is a "colonial space" (Tupper, 2015, p. 100), where African dance as an expression of Indigenous knowledge continues to be marginalized. This is partly a result of the persistence of whiteness as the definer and marker of what is considered legitimate school knowledge. This is also because Zimbabwean curriculum planners have yet to address this colonial vestige (Gonye & Moyo, 2015; Shim, 2009). This failure to destabilize the epistemic status quo is happening in spite of the anti-white rhetoric that has characterized the country's political landscape since 2000 under Robert Mugabe.[3] The deployment of Critical Race Theory (CRT) as a critical lens that facilitates an "understanding of lived oppression—the struggle to make a way out of no way—which propels us to problematize dominant ideologies in which knowledge is constructed" (Tyson, 2003, p. 20) becomes a useful heuristic to unpack this continued dominance.

In this chapter, we, as postcolonial subjects, employ CRT, firstly, to unmask how race and whiteness as property (Harris, 1995) have continued to manifest in the ways in which the arts education curriculum in general, and dance education in particular, are perceived and enacted in Zimbabwe. Secondly, we employ CRT to illustrate the epistemic insurrectionary potential of African dances that can be used to "resist interpellation and inscription within dominant representations of the historic past" (Parkes, 2007, p. 383). This would be a necessary step toward an epistemic insurrection against the taken-for-granted-ness of whiteness as normative in the curriculum.

[3] Robert Mugabe is the first black African President of Zimbabwe whose calls to sever links with the West have not been complemented with those to revolutionize the curriculum.

We further illustrate the ways in which the school curriculum in Zimbabwe reflects the legacy of colonialism and argue that two Zimbabwean dances, *jerusarema* and *kongonya*, offer us an opportunity to discuss what we posit as a post-racist liberatory performance—a dance performance that repeats, in exaggerated forms, the sexual propensities of the African body in defiance of white standards of morality. We constitute post-racist performance as a performance whereby African dancers engage in moves, steps, and routines that defy and challenge (Gonye, 2013) Eurocentric perspectives that pronounce African practices as wicked. Today, despite the racist British colonialists having lost political control, and most of them having left Zimbabwe, vestiges of racism still haunt our attitudes toward Indigenous dance. This condition thus makes liberatory dances relevant in the ongoing reconstruction of our identities. Such performances we conceive as post-racist, therefore, become necessary to address the racist colonial legacies illustrated in the scanty attention to Zimbabwean Indigenous dance forms in the arts education curriculum (Gonye & Moyo, 2015). Such dances might offer opportunities for rethinking the epistemic insurrectionary potential of dance in confronting and deconstructing what Jupp (2013) considers the epistemic inconsideration of the Anglocentrics who privilege the written word while sidelining other forms of knowledge such as cultural performances.

This anti-colonial project seems necessary since the postcolonial classroom spaces in African educational institutions remain heavily colonized by Eurocentric notions and perceptions of what is worthwhile knowledge to be included in the official curriculum. It is against this backdrop that we examine how Zimbabwean Indigenous African dances and their practices can be harnessed as both political and epistemic means to counteract the flawed post-independence arts curriculum. This curriculum, in the words of Tupper (2015), is a "colonial space" (p. 100) that is implicated in the subordination of Indigenous dances. As Willinsky (1998) argues, "the legacy of imperialism is ever present within educational discourses, having significantly shaped the construction and constitution of school subjects such as Geography, Language, Literature and History" (p. 90). In addressing some of the above concerns our chapter focuses on the following essential questions:

- How does CRT enable us to rethink Zimbabwean dances as representing alternative systems of knowledge extant in African performance that is at once decolonial and affirmative of African identity?
- What are the implications of this rethinking for the contemporary arts curriculum in Zimbabwe?

In the conclusion, we tease out implications for how African dance could be incorporated into the school curriculum as part of the broader project of a pedagogy of liberation that results in self-confidence with Indigenous dances and practices as sources of knowledge in Zimbabwe.

Theoretical Framework: Deepening Decolonization Through CRT

We employ the lens of CRT to reframe traditional African dance education as epistemic insurrection against persistent whiteness in postcolonial Zimbabwean arts education. This is especially important since "persistent whiteness," an offshoot of white supremacy in the post-independence Zimbabwean scenario, is manifested in the continued dominance of Eurocentric ways of thinking and education and is aligned with "other [related] forms of oppression" (Yosso, 2005, p. 72), such as classism, ethnocentrism, and neocolonialism. White supremacy, as it relates to African nations formerly under the political and economic dominance of European colonial powers and now under the control of a Western-educated African political elite, still exhibits the psychological side effects of such control, especially in their arts curricula (London, 2001; Willinsky, 1998).

Writing about Indigenous people in the United States, Writer (2008) avers that CRT can be useful to Indigenous peoples' desire to "unmask," "expose," and "confront" the "continued colonization within educational contexts and societal structures" (p. 2). In Zimbabwe, where Indigenous people far outnumber Whites, the Europeans (Rhodesians) who colonized Zimbabwe considered Rhodesia a settler colony and proceeded to entrench racist policies that sought to extinguish and marginalize African Indigenous cultures, knowledges, and practices such as dance (Gonye, 2015; Mlambo, 2006; Shizha, 2013). This history is reflected in the depleted contemporary arts school curriculum (Ministry of Education, Sport Arts and Culture, 2009). This is why we believe that CRT and by extension AfriCriticism (AfriCrit) are useful heuristics to interrogate post-racist performances in formerly colonized sub-Saharan Africa. AfriCrit, an offshoot of CRT, as described in detail later in this chapter, can enable a critical discussion and contestation of the legacy of colonialism in the arts education in post-independent Zimbabwe.

This chapter draws on and modifies CRT's five central tenets, which include the use of "interdisciplinary methods" (arts/dance) couched in "experiential knowledge" to "challenge dominant ideologies" such as white or elitist supremacy in order to establish "social justice" (Yosso, 2005, pp. 72–75). To this end, we adapt Solórzano and Yosso's (2002) pertinent question in counter-storytelling as follows: Whose dances are privileged in the arts curriculum and whose dances are under-represented and marginalized? Following Solórzano and Yosso (2002), we are equally convinced that our Zimbabwean dances are not "fictitious" but are "grounded" in real cultural experiences that tell our stories as Black Zimbabweans.

We turn to Indigenous dance in this chapter in order to unmask the subtle nuances through which whiteness, as the invisible center of a globalized power and knowledge system (Chakrabarty, 1992; Harris, 1995), impinges on formerly colonized Africans' views on the aesthetic, epistemological, and identitarian functions of African dance. Informed by CRT as an educational theory

and analysis tool that challenges racist practices and discourses, as well as fosters emancipation and empowerment among students (Yosso, 2005), we draw on two Zimbabwean Indigenous dances, *jerusarema* and *kongonya,* to discursively challenge persistent whiteness as standard, universal epistemological practice. Since both dances performed a political role during Zimbabwe's 1970s anti-colonial struggle (Gonye, 2015), it behooves us to rethink their potential as curriculum knowledge for a cultural and epistemic insurrection (Medina, 2011) against whiteness in the arts education curriculum. This is essential if we are to resist Eurocentric epistemologies that were concomitant in the colonial project that framed Indigenous African dance forms and practices as primitive, licentious, and pagan gyrations (Asante, 2000; Conrad, 1995; Trevor-Roper, 1963).

We further draw on Yosso (2005) to acknowledge that "CRT is a framework that can be used to theorize, examine and challenge the ways race and racism implicitly and explicitly impact on social structures, practices and discourses" (p. 70). This is essential in order to discuss the negative legacy of an arts curriculum inspired by racism and elitism in Zimbabwe. In our case, the legacy of racism seems to insidiously influence the Zimbabwean arts curriculum that, in our view, appears dressed in black only to hide whiteness. Colonialism introduced social classes, statuses, privileges, and tastes among the dominant Blacks, which our independence has left intact. Among these has been the received Eurocentric belief that African traditional dances were pagan and unsuitable for inclusion in the curriculum as relevant school knowledge (Gonye & Moyo, 2015). These biases persist in the arts curriculum despite the attainment of political independence.

Our chapter further draws from postcolonial and Afrocentric scholars such as Wa Thiongo (1993), who advocate for a decentering of the analytical center from Europe to Africa, and Banks (2009), who argues that Indigenous dance knowledge can be a decolonizing tool. Indigenous dance pedagogy could thus promote what Medina (2011) conceives as a necessary form of epistemic insurrection that "disrupt[s] and interrogate[s] epistemic hegemonies and mainstream perspectives" (p. 11). Indigenous African dances, in this way, can be viewed as one of the sites that "decolonization emerges from" since it "occurs in multiple, at times divergent, and inevitably interrelated locales" (Asher, 2009, p. 9). All this countering should however be cognizant of Tuck and Gaztambide-Fernández's (2013) observation that the "spaces" opened by responses to such racism and colonization in the curriculum are often re-occupied by "white curriculum scholars [thus] displacing the bodies [of black knowledge] out to the margins" (p. 73). In our case, we should be wary of the postures and intentions of the new conservative black elite in relation to curriculum.

In their influential article, Ladson-Billings and Tate (1995) propose to harness CRT in order to expose the inequities in the educational system in the United States to demonstrate how race and property intersected in ways that privileged whites at the expense of blacks and other still marginalized racial

minorities, despite all the pretense of racial and social equity. More significantly, Ladson-Billings and Tate (1995) recognize the shortcomings of the liberal educational reforms that half-heartedly improved opportunities for inclusive education for previously marginalized groups, including blacks. In their words, "Critical Race Theory in education, like its antecedent in legal scholarship, is a radical critique of both the status quo and the purported reforms" (Ladson-Billings & Tate, 1995, p. 62). Similarly, the slow pace of the implementation of the cultural policy of Zimbabwe (2007) raises critical questions. Likewise, the fact that dance remains an adjunct of another marginalized arts subject—music—also raises important questions (Gonye & Moyo, 2015). All this is despite the central role dance played in the cultural and political trajectories of the nation. Therefore, we embrace CRT and try to adopt and adapt it to the Zimbabwean conditions, where elitist tastes inspired by Western education appear to influence the selection and sieving of knowledge that ends up being included in the postcolonial arts curriculum even though colonialism ended three decades ago.

The Body as a Potential Site of Insurrection

Scholars have argued that the human body is a rich site for investigating and explaining culture (Barker, 2012; Butler, 2007). Since different cultures are constantly interacting in both positive and negative ways, as evidenced in colonialism and globalization, the body becomes both a symbolic and literal site for political subjugation and contestation. This is particularly evident in the dances performed by excluded racial groups. Turner (1996) avers that contemporary Western European society is a somatic society whereby "major political and personal problems are both problematised within the body and expressed through it" (p. 1), implying that the body or what we do with the body carries meanings. One of the ways in which the black body reflects these issues of "constraint and resistance" is through culturally and politically significant dances (Turner, 2001, p. 12). This means that the body occupies an ambiguous position. The owner of the body can dance to his or her own tune; be "seen" to dance according to his or her own sensuousness; or, in the case of the colonized, be coerced to dance to the dominant colonizer's racist dictates. More significantly, the European colonizer's racialized gaze pigeonholes the African body, especially as the body performs dance, to illustrate the purported differences between the white colonizer and the black Zimbabwean, with the African person's cultural performances marking them as morally inferior and physically degenerate, hence needing to be refined through engaging in the presumably superior white man's cultural performances (Gonye, 2015). This is why Oye'wu'mi (2005) notes, "the gaze is an invitation to differentiate" (p. 4). Even though the Western people danced, they privileged the so-called superior exercises of the mind over the irrational "foibles" of the flesh, which other so-called less noble races preferred (Oye'wu'mi, 2005).

Hylton (2009), discussing how African Americans are persuaded to accept the racialized stereotype that Blacks can succeed only in sport, comments, "Racism operates in multifaceted and complex ways" (p. vii). One such way is to suggest that the different "racial" bodies are specially designed for different practices. The power of European discourse normalizes abnormal situations of domination that might be calling for urgent redress such as dichotomizing what is culturally or aesthetically good for less affluent Africans on the one hand and for the propertied Whites and elite classes on the other. Put in other words, the typical African body, especially that of one from the lower socioeconomic class, unlike that of the European one, performs best in the so-called less refined dances such as *jerusarema* and *kongonya*, dances whose exaggerated sexual moves seem closer to nature.

Likewise, in the Zimbabwean case, the United Nations Educational Cultural Scientific Organization (UNESCO), in 2005, lists *jerusarema* as an endangered cultural heritage practice on the *UNESCO Masterpieces of the Oral and Intangible Heritage of Humanity* list. The discourse of endangerment helps entrench the feeling that *jerusarema* is an immutable fossil and an artifact to be protected, rather than a dynamic and transforming asset—with the potential to revolutionize contemporary scholarship. This also implies that this symbolic recognition of traditional dance does very little to affect the negative racist and elitist attitudes imbued in the arts curriculum. What seem to be the gains for African culture are, in fact, benefits for White settlers and the contemporary Zimbabwean ruling classes. This recognition acts as a normalizing cover for the subordination that poor African schoolchildren experience every day through their arts education. It plays into the hands of elitist curriculum policymakers and planners. This is so because while ordinary Africans have to be content with the idea that their dance has been recognized by an international body like UNESCO, their schools can only afford unstylish, traditional paraphernalia (drums, rattles, and cheap costumes) through which the students experience these arts. The schools where the children of the well-to-do politicians attend purchase sophisticated equipment, guitars, brass instruments, and modern pianos. While the former second-rate instruments may not diminish the inherent value of such traditional dances per se, they help reflect the postcolonial arts curriculum's non-committal stance to addressing the inequities that abound in colonial education legacies.

Methodology

Our argument to use dance to free the Zimbabwean arts curriculum is premised on the idea that in both history and cultural studies, colonialism was contested through the intellectual and political movement called postcolonialism. The British colonialists harnessed racism as a principle to justify colonialism. Racism tended to point to the so-called differing bodily physical attributes, practices, and tastes between the colonizer and colonized for its explanations. We conceive from the formerly colonized's counter-racist bodily performances,

such as dance, a term corresponding to postcolonialism. We term this practice "post-racist" because of its inferences to defiant dance performances even in a context where the former British colonialists have emigrated from Zimbabwe. We argue that even in this globalized post-independence era, inequalities abound because of colonial and racial continuities, hence the need for post-racism to contest and counteract them. The explanation of postcolonialism relevant here resonates with Ashcroft's (2001) argument that postcolonial cultural representations signify a challenge and revision of the imperialist cultural exponents such as literary writers' misrepresentations of formerly colonized cultures.

We trust that to include such dances for study in all learning institutions and to develop an affirming pedagogy around them might enable Zimbabwean children to consider their Indigenous dances as being highly valuable. This might enable students to become freed from cultural subordination and inferiority complexes considering that racism remains like an albatross around the necks of African curriculum specialists. This is buttressed in Gonye and Moyo's (2015) research in which local Zimbabwean dance teachers demonstrate surprising ignorance about some of the dances they are expected to teach in schools.

Over the years, CRT scholarship has developed into a theory of critique beyond the legal field where it originated, and now has a foothold in educational research (Huber, 2008; Ladson-Billings, 1998). It also transcends the country of its origin, with other continents and marginalized groups having appropriated it in an attempt to push the theoretical boundaries further in understanding and deconstructing the "omnipresence of race" (Ladson-Billings, 1998) that is interwoven into the fabric of their societies (p.9). Indeed, several offshoots of CRT such as LatCrit, AsianCrit, FemCrit, WhiteCrit, among others, have become fairly developed heuristics of analysis in highlighting instances of racial inequality (Huber, 2008, p. 160). As for LatCrit, Huber (2008) argues that the theory aims to better articulate the experiences of Latinas/os, through a more focused examination of the multiple forms of oppression committed against Latina/o communities (p.166). Following this, we, as Africans, propose AfriCrit as an extension of CRT analogous to LatCrit and others. In our view, AfriCrit would generally enable an interrogation and reclamation of African arts and practices that range from wood carving, pottery, sculpture, theater, dance, song, to literature and architecture. Here, we posit that AfriCrit could offer the disadvantaged people of the African continent a heuristic for interrogating and understanding how they are positioned in the global world. AfriCrit becomes a hankering toward pan-Africanism, which is etched in the traditions of resistance and reclamation of what is African. It might, for example, help tease Africans on what they make of the fact that European colonialists doubted that the Zimbabwean people built the Great Zimbabwe monuments, preferring to ascribe this architectural marvel to "'white,' foreign" people (Fontein, 2006) and referring dismissively to the monuments as the "Zimbabwe ruins" (p. 772).

It is in view of such marginalization and misrepresentation that Africans need a theoretical framework that could help them defend and celebrate their Indigenous as well as emerging arts even now that the White racists have relinquished direct political control. This resonates with Solórzano and Yosso's (2002) exhortation that we should "develop new theories that will help us to better understand those who are at the margins of society" (p. 23). Our proposed AfriCrit theory could therefore help African scholars to appreciate why and then contest the continued Eurocentric practices where some of Africa's best artworks are recognized more for their apparent exoticism than for their aesthetics, expressiveness, rhythm, order, function, and cultural specificity (Asante, 2000).

In its emergent state, AfriCrit remains anti-essentialist and tries consciously to avoid romanticization of Africa and its past, which has been the bane of African theories and philosophies. The theory draws from our belief that our African artists of different disciplines use the arts such as sculpture, carving, literature, and dance, among others, to conceptualize and reframe the continent's experiences dating back to the days of slavery, through colonialism to post-independence. It posits that African artists use the arts to express our political, economic, and cultural struggles, all of which point to a history of racist colonial domination and anti-colonial resistance.

We specifically conceptualize AfriCrit as a theory that represents the belief that African traditional dances, normally performed in a circle, embody notions of nationhood, identity, and sovereignty. Particularly, dance works through linking the dancing feet to the soil upon which the Africans danced barefooted within a circumscribed boundary. Commenting on Zimbabwean traditional dance, Asante (2000) notes how traditional dancers tread on the soil with such respectful steps and solemn grace that participants and watchers envisage the respect shown to the spirits abiding therein. Gonye (2015) further develops the idea of the communion effects of the African dance circle reminiscent of the African-American ring shout performance. AfriCrit offers tools for the development of a critical arts discourse that not only counters the entrenched colonial discourse but that also challenges the continued muting of the African voice many decades after independence. This could help correct the prevailing misconception by some Europeans and Western-educated African elites that defiant African dances are pagan performances, a misconception that has perpetuated the educational preference to modern Western European dances.

We offer, below, linguistic descriptions of two of our most defining Indigenous dances, for which epistemological quintessence has yet to be acknowledged and tapped. The description of *mbende/jerusarema* is, on the one hand, a first-person plural account. This account is based on our cultural understanding of this lived experience, including its transformation, particularly during the colonization of Zimbabwe by the British at the turn of the twentieth century. The narrative on *kongonya* is, on the other hand, a first-person singular witness account (first author) of this dance that was born during the 1970s Zimbabwean liberation struggle.

Mbende/Jerusarema, *Historical Origins, and Peculiar Steps*

Jerusarema, formerly known as *mbende* before the 1890s colonialism (Mheta, 2005), is one of our most popular traditional dances in Zimbabwe.[4] Before the British colonized our country, the Shona people, but especially the Zezuru, a sub-group from Murehwa in the northeastern parts of Zimbabwe, performed *mbende* at cultural ceremonies such as funerals and festivals. This dance gradually spread to all parts of our country as the people travelled for commerce, trade, and intermarriages.

A dancer must be a vigorous athlete to successfully engage in *mbende/jerusarema*. Our dance is sometimes described as a war or courtship dance, with its somersaults, athletic swings, and gyrations, among other moves. In Shona traditional lore, it is also said that young men and women performed *mbende* as courtship, ritual, or war dance as well as for entertainment (Asante, 2000; Gonye & Moyo, 2015). In each case, our female dancers used to wear costumes such as loose skirts draped in traditional black and white colors—the preferred colors of our nation's founding spirit mediums. Male dancers wore flapping animal-skin skirts (hunters' trophies) or black shorts and bare chests. With the growth of the 1960s–70s nationalism, we have added the colors of the national flag to the swaying costume.

Our dance borrows its original moves and steps from the nervous, darting movements of the mouse, a rodent known as *mbende* among the *Manyika* (Shona). *Mbende's* trademark moves and routines include an athletic crouching, a nervous swaying of the body, a scrapping of the ground with the feet, and an energetic horizontal, sideways gyration consistent with sexual suggestiveness. Both men and women normally perform these rapid, waist swirling moves while facing each other and punctuate the routine with a provocative thrust of the pelvis at the partner.

Transformation and Proliferation of Jerusarema

Asante (2000), an African-American Afrocentric researcher whose findings on *jerusarema* coincide with our account above, records that the Shona performed the *mbende* dance before their "warring" opponents, particularly the Ndebeles, so as to distract the latter, whose gaze became riveted on the gyrating women and somersaulting men (p. 41). Meanwhile, the Shona fighters would be preparing to ambush their opponents. This means that *mbende* embodied war knowledge, tactics, and strategies. Even as *mbende* evolved over the years, it remained "a war dance of distraction, diversion, and disguise" (Asante, 2000, p. 48).

[4] The Shona vernacular name for *jerusarema* was *mbende*. After the colonialists banned the dance, the defiant Shona still performed it. Its performance fostered a sense of identity and common struggle against cultural strangling among the colonized. To disguise its centrifugal and nationalist potential, the Zimbabwean performers spiced it with some Christian tunes and even performed it after Sunday church services under the new name *jerusarema* for Jerusalem. The term 'Shona' refers to the majority of African people who lived in Zimbabwe (excluding the Ndebele) and comprises sub-groups such as the Manyika, Zezuru, Karanga, Korekore, and Ndau.

Oral history suggests that in the early years of colonialism, the missionaries and colonial administrators connived to ban *mbende,* charging that it was an embodiment of depraved licentiousness. They also claimed that the dance promoted indolence among the Shonas, who, instead of availing themselves for labor in European endeavors, wasted their energies gyrating under the African sun. The missionaries and colonialists aimed to render the African dances despicable to the African and disorient the African by infusing a lack of confidence in African cultural practices and ultimately ingratiate the African toward the so-called sophisticated European performances such as ballet (Gonye, 2015). However, as the story of *mbende/jerusarema* illustrates, not all Zimbabweans discarded their cultural dances.

Even after the new colonial administration banned *mbende,* the dance reemerged under the Christianized name *jerusarema*. The recently colonized Zimbabweans continued to come together and perform *mbende*, though their steps were such that they beguiled the underlying protest. With the passage of time, the expansion of urban centers, and the growth of a nationalist armed struggle, *jerusarema* also spread countrywide and was performed beyond the Zezuru geo-ethnic boundaries. Soon after Zimbabwe's independence in 1980, its performance became widespread.

In the next subsection, the chapter discusses the *kongonya* dance in a historical perspective. It first offers a first-person narrative (I) description of *kongonya* by Jairos Gonye in which he relives his experience of the dance as it was being performed at a political meeting in the night called *pungwe*. The text is in italics to distinguish it from the rest of the generalized body text and discussion. The rest of the section makes sense of these experiences in light of the historical development of the dance.

Kongonya *and Historical Origins*

This one dark night in October 1978 is one among many. This was the height of Zimbabwe's liberation struggle against the Smith-led racist Rhodesian regime, an armed struggle known as the second chimurenga. The place was Nyashanu Farm no. 47 Devuli Range in Gutu district of Masvingo province. The pungwe or night-long political meeting had been called by the Zimbabwe African Nationalist Army (ZANLA) guerrillas of ZANU, where the guerrillas lectured the rural populace and farm workers on the imperative to intensify the war against the oppressive white colonial administration. As usual, the guerrillas, or the comrades as we affectionately called them, interspaced their political speeches with song and kongonya dance. For us four-year-old kids, it was song, music and kongonya more than political awareness that drove us to the pungwe. With hindsight, I now realize that this was a terrible gamble, for noise travels farthest during the night, and the racist Rhodesian army was also prowling in these nights. But why then were there few skirmishes at pungwes, despite that every night was a pungwe and kongonya night in those years?

As the kongonya dance commenced in the backdrop of high-pitched chimurenga song, I became barely conscious of my obscure presence amidst the rising thick dust. I remember looking at the bigger dancers and imitating their steps, moves and routines. What I distinctly remember to this day is that both young men and women danced in line formation, with those dancers behind clutching the waists of those ahead of them—man to woman, woman to man—then simultaneously rolling their buttocks exaggeratedly and stamping the ground as they hopped forward till the leading dancer completed a turn and clutched the waist of the last dancer in the line and thus formed a rotating ring.

In an earlier article Gonye (2013) describes *kongonya* as a dance born of the second *Chimurenga* when the ZANLA guerrillas and their civilian supporters danced amidst political education lessons (p. 69). The *Kongonya* dance is strongly linked to the *chimurenga* politics and war. If the political rhetoric and armed war were the counter-discourse and ultimate expression of speaking back and fighting the racist imperialists, respectively, *kongonya* was the cultural counterstroke to cultural imperialism and an affirmation of the cultural depth of the birthing Zimbabwean nation. This is especially so since *kongonya* was not attached to any ethnic grouping but to the fighting nation as a unit.

Kongonya is a dance of defiance. Whereas Eurocentric perspectives had derogatively denounced African dances as largely expressing sexual lassitude and thus fit for extermination, the Zimbabwean freedom fighters and their civilian supporters resuscitated these so-called irrational dances that we term post-racist performances in this chapter. These were clearly defiant performances because they were boisterously performed in an open ground during wartimes, which would otherwise have called for utmost secrecy. It was as if the performers were actually daring the Rhodesian army and administration to a confrontation (Gonye, 2015). Gonye (2013) suggests that, etymologically, *kongonya* derives its meaning from the Shona root words *kongonyara* or *masvanhikongonya,* words which describe the defiant and proud steps of a male baboon and the defiant looks of a woman refusing to be rejected, respectively. Thus, *kongonya* is a dance that facilitated the Zimbabwean armed struggle.

Proliferation and Transformation of Kongonya

Since *kongonya* was a dance mostly performed by the peripatetic Zimbabwean guerrillas, it was not a localized dance but a diffused dance that spread alongside the war. This means that by the time the war ended in 1979, *kongonya* had spread across more than half the country, especially in those areas where ZANLA operated. After independence, *kongonya* was not as enthusiastically performed as it was during the war, though it remained associated with the ruling liberation party, Zimbabwe African National Union (Patriotic Front's) (ZANU PF) political meetings and election campaign rallies.

In post-2000 Zimbabwe, *kongonya* assumed a deeper meaning following the country's land redistribution program, which aimed to redress the historical imbalances that favored a minority White population that still disproportionately owned the land. *Kongonya* reminded the people of the "unfinished

business" of the *chimurenga*—the fight for an equitable redistribution of the land (Raftopoulos, 2009). The Zimbabwean people performed *kongonya* as they mobilized themselves to "invade" the formerly white-owned farms and settle themselves. The dance reminded the people of the earlier 1970s anti-colonial struggle against racialized marginalization, colonial oppression, and cultural imperialism. In the post-2000 period, *kongonya,* whose images were also persistently broadcast via the Zimbabwean national television station, became a way Zimbabwe as a nation counteracted its apparent demonization by the Western European media, following the controversial post-2000 redistribution of formerly white-owned farms (Raftopoulos, 2009). Those images of defiant dancers showed viewers that culture, identity, the economy, and sovereignty were inseparable, in that, while the dance expressed a cultural and national practice, it also demonstrated how a people who wanted to defend their economic resources and political independence used their bodies to express those desires.

Conclusion and Recommendations

The above narratives on *jerusarema* and *kongonya* suggest that both dances have played conspicuous roles on the social and political level. For instance, both *jerusarema* and *kongonya* helped display Zimbabwean identity, cultural resilience, and political defiance. In this chapter, however, we transfer such conspicuousness toward education that re-energizes mental decolonization and argue that these dances should therefore be integrated into the arts curriculum. This is premised on our argument that despite the politicians' and cultural nationalists' understanding of the decolonial potential of traditional dances, they have not vigorously pursued the path that might have ensured that *jerusarema* or *kongonya* become epistemological weapons against persistent whiteness in the arts curriculum. We are dismayed that racism and elitism continue to be implicated in the selection and sieving of the content of the arts curriculum even though colonialism ended in 1980. This is so because schools that take dance seriously in post-independent Zimbabwe emphasize dances originating from Western European countries such as ballet, at the expense of the "naked" performances of the majority Africans such as *jerusarema* and *kongonya*. These schools again, though well equipped and professionally staffed, are very expensive for they are mostly private or former white A1 schools where only the children of the affluent and influential elites can go.

As we demonstrate elsewhere (Gonye & Moyo, 2015), even in the predominantly African schools, dance remains an adjunct of music, another marginalized arts subject. Many teachers, who continue to receive colonially inspired education, remain relatively uninformed about the traditional dances they are supposed to teach. Above all, we rue the fact that our 1970s nationalist leaders, most of whom presided over our so-called migration from the racist colonial curriculum to a nationally conscious curriculum, hardly took advantage of the Zimbabwean people's attachment to their traditional dances evidenced in the

inspirational role *jerusarema* and *kongonya* played in the anti-colonial struggle, to complete the "rupture" with colonialism. There remains a paradox where, in the Zimbabwean post-independence historical context, the politically influential members show interest in traditional dances only when they seek the performers' political support and endorsement of policies. Such double standards, however, do not serve the cultural and educational interests of Zimbabwe, but only those of a few political elites, and should, therefore, be uprooted.

Zimbabwean dances such as *jerusarema* and *kongonya* represent alternative systems of knowledge extant in African performance. These forms of knowledge could enable us, Zimbabweans, to appreciate our nation's history and its trajectories, hence the need to centralize them in the Zimbabwean schools' arts curricula. Dance education should be encouraged and availed equally and consistently across Zimbabwe's educational levels, viz., the pre-primary, primary, secondary, and tertiary levels. These levels include, respectively, the crèche (1–2-year-olds) and Early Childhood Development (ECD) (3–5-year-olds) settings; the Grade 1 to Grade 7 (6–12 -year-olds) settings; the Form 1 to Form 6 (13–18-year-olds) settings; and the teacher training colleges and universities for teacher upgrading and professional performers' training for personnel who would teach pupils from ECD upward. In this way, education might become a means to achieve transformative social justice and liberation (Solórzano & Yosso, 2001). This is because *jerusarema* and *kongonya* are danced naturally and spontaneously during most pupils' socialization games and festivities in their neighborhoods, whereas, for ballet, there would be a need for special instructors. This means it could be easier and more culturally valuable for students to study their own dances rather than those imposed from other cultures.

In the event that *jerusarema* and *kongonya* are included in the arts curriculum, the focus and emphasis could be on the ontological or contents value of the performances, and the stylistics or manner of performance. Firstly, area content focus could be on studying and discussing the meanings embodied in *jerusarema* and *kongonya*, particularly the Zimbabwean culture of resistance, resilience, and defiance suggested in both dances as well as the identity and nation formation potential in each. Secondly, practical studies of the manner of performance could center on the idea of dance as a symbol of the survival of African species as suggested in the effusive gyrations of the waist prohibited by the missionaries and colonial administrators—the provocative thrusts of the pelvis area and the stamping of the ground, all of which suggest procreativity. Other equally significant moves and stylistic routines to be scrutinized include *jerusarema's* darting moves reminiscent of an endangered but alert character; *kongonya's* defiant moves of a determined fighter; and *kongonya's* circular moves that signify the dancer's symbolic and literal defining of the margins and boundaries of an emerging united Zimbabwean nation's liberated zones (Gonye, 2015).

All this seems to suggest that the study of the defiant *jerusarema* and *kongonya* is a way of placing one's culture at the center of what is worth knowing and practicing. These dances, in many ways, perform the story of Zimbabwe as a

formerly colonized country whose dance performances are misrepresented and a combatant nation whose inspiration comes from these dances (Gonye, 2015). This finds resonance in Delgado's (2000) notion that storytelling and counter-storytelling are a "cure that can shatter complacency and challenge the status quo," especially in instances where the stories of the dominated out-groups aim to subvert a reality that is raced (p. 60). This is because stories by the racially dominated groups are powerful means for destroying the mindset of the dominant ones by showing that "what we [the dominant] believe is ridiculous, self-serving, or cruel" (Delgado, 2000, p. 61).

AfriCrit could also be viewed in this light as a means of challenging a normalization of white standards in the selection of dance curriculum in Zimbabwe. Drawing directly from Delgado's observation above we contend that Africans could engage in dancing and counter-dancing, movement and counter-movement methodologies that could also be seen as "race"-centered practices that might effectively embody and convey the experiences of black people. This buttresses the notion that our arts curriculum, especially concerning dance, should be taught and learned from our own perspectives and terms.

Finally, we posit that AfriCrit enables us to subvert and modify some images disseminated via the proliferating new information-based technologies including the satellite television and the internet through media such as YouTube, which could be implicated in the marginalization of African cultural performances. Such technologies continue to churn Western European-type dances such as ballet and other modern dances as the standard dances, with the effect that African watchers and students alike aspire more to be ballerinas than traditional African dancers. Drawing from AfriCrit strengthens our appraisal and appreciation of the mediated dances by Africans and other formerly colonized peoples. This way, dances such as *jerusarema, kongonya,* hip-hop, raga, *samba,* and *son jorocho,* among others, could be proudly envisaged as decolonizing and identity affirmation tools of the racially marginalized (Banks, 2009; Gonye, 2015; Gonye & Moyo, 2015). The postcolonial Zimbabwe arts curriculum, then, should put dances such as *jerusarema* and *kongonya* at its center in order to locate their culturally affirming and liberating discourse in the foreground.

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