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Ndlovu, Duduzile Sakhelene
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Claiming Space: A Case Study of Ndebele Zimbabwean Migrants' Music in Johannesburg

Photo by Dianah Chiyangwa

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Duduzile Sakhelene Ndlovu

University of Johannesburg, South Africa,

duduzile.ndlovu@gmail.com

<https://orcid.org/0000-0001-9170-7172>

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Claiming Space: A Case Study of Ndebele Zimbabwean Migrants' Music in Johannesburg

Abstract

Global technological advancements in transport and communication have led to a compression of time and space, but some populations are confined to their geographic regions. This paper uses a qualitative approach to conduct an intersectional analysis of music by Zimbabwean migrants in Johannesburg South Africa to explore how migrants respond to this phenomenon. It presents the ways in which the migrants construct identities and spatial imaginaries as a form of claiming space in Johannesburg and globally. Xenophobia in South Africa and the migrants' memories of the Zimbabwean State violence necessitates the narration of identities and spatial imaginaries where the migrants can claim belonging. The paper argues that even where the identities imagined do not carry currency in the contemporary world. They work to critique the current racialised global hierarchy that does not include the migrants in its power geometry.

Keywords: migration, music, space, violence, xenophobia.



Reclamando el espacio: Un estudio de caso de la música de los migrantes Ndebele de Zimbabue en Johannesburgo

Resumen

Los avances tecnológicos globales en el transporte y la comunicación han provocado una compresión del tiempo y el espacio, pero algunas poblaciones se ven confinadas a sus regiones geográficas. Este artículo utiliza un enfoque cualitativo para llevar a cabo un análisis interseccional de la música de los emigrantes zimbabuenses en Johannesburgo, Sudáfrica, con el fin de explorar cómo responden los emigrantes a este fenómeno. Presenta las formas en que los migrantes construyen identidades e imaginarios espaciales como una forma de reivindicar el espacio en Johannesburgo y en todo el mundo. La xenofobia en Sudáfrica y los recuerdos de los inmigrantes de la violencia estatal en Zimbabue hacen necesaria la narración de identidades e imaginarios espaciales en los que los inmigrantes puedan reclamar su pertenencia. En este artículo se argumenta que, incluso cuando las identidades imaginadas no son válidas en el mundo contemporáneo, sí lo son. Estas identidades sirven para criticar la actual jerarquía global racializada que no incluye a los inmigrantes en su geometría del poder.

Palabras clave: espacio, migración, música, violencia, xenofobia.

Introduction

Migration between Zimbabwe and South Africa has occurred across different time periods and there are ethnic linkages between the two countries. The border between the two countries is itself a recent colonial construction which nonetheless has remained. Achiume and Last (2021) argue that migration regulation regimes in the region continue a colonial legacy which negatively impacts on the vulnerable and disfranchised in such a way, that they are not receiving any benefits from their mobility, instead, migration increases precarity. This paper distinguishes two streams of migration from Zimbabwe to South Africa. The first stream is the migration of victims of Gukurahundi. This is migration from the southern parts of Zimbabwe which has been sustained throughout Zimbabwe's post-independence time (Maphosa, 2007; Ndlovu & Landau, 2020). The second began in the early 2000s as a result of a decline in the Zimbabwean economy that brought about a corresponding increase in people moving to the neighbouring Southern Africa Development Community countries, and as far as the United Kingdom, Australia, and North America (Crush & Tevera, 2010). How then do migrants who experienced marginalisation in Zimbabwe navigate this precarious location at the fringes of South African society in the presence of other Zimbabwean groups?

This paper answers this question through exploring music composed by Ithemba lamaNguni, a migrants arts group from the first migration stream. Ithemba lamaNguni craft identity narratives, in their music, by deploying memories of the past and contrasting them to their circumstances in Johannesburg. The paper conceptualises the music as a strategy to claim space in a context of precarity. The music functions not only as a narration, but also as a space where identities that are not officially recognised can be celebrated and lived out. I have chosen to read the music here as a decolonial engagement, a way to explore meaning-making which is outside of the framing of any research questions. What Ratele (2019) terms 'the world looks like this from here' for Ithemba lamaNguni. The music which simultaneously narrates violence experienced in Zimbabwe, experiences of xenophobia in South Africa, and the history of slavery and colonialism, constructs an identity for the musicians that differentiates them from other Zimbabweans, South Africans, Africans, and the global community. The musicians fashion themselves as a particular kind of Zimbabwean, African, and global citizen, albeit one who only exists in the music, as a form of claiming space in the global, racially unequal society.

This paper begins, in the next section, with a discussion of the problem of migration regulation that makes mobile populations precarious, with a focus on Zimbabwean migration to South Africa. This is followed by a conceptual mapping of the paper exploring identity and spatial imaginaries. Thirdly is a methods section outlining the intersectional analysis of the music. This is followed by a discussion of the identities, the local and global spatial imaginaries narrated in the Ithemba lamaNguni music in the findings section, and lastly ending with the conclusion.

Problem Statement

There has been a rising negative sentiment towards migrants globally (Gilmartin, 2008); making already difficult contexts for mobile populations harder. Writing about the nation in the 21st century, Triandafyllidou (2020) argues that nations fall on a continuum between neo-tribal -where the nation is exclusive and does not have tolerance for diversity- to the plural nation, which engages diversity and co-opts it into itself. In South Africa, xenophobic attitudes towards 'black' foreigners are well documented (Landau, 2012; Neocosmos, 2010; Tafira, 2017). Crush and McDonald (2000) show the shifting attitudes towards foreigners in the post-apartheid era as nationhood took on more prominence and black South Africans began to claim places they had initially shared alongside black foreigners. Xenophobic violence has a far-reaching impact beyond those directly affected, impacting also on how migrants inhabit spaces and places (Ndlovu, 2020; Siziba, 2015)

Migration regulation regimes are not necessarily focused on responding to the needs of mobile populations, but on "protecting" citizens from unwelcome guests. In many cases, acquiring the documentation that recognises one's status as a refugee or migrant is unattainable. Being documented or undocumented structures people's life outcomes, as Menjivar and Abrego (2012) show, in North America. Zimbabwean migration to South Africa is a good example of the ways migration regulation does not respond to the needs of the vulnerable (Amit, 2015; Polzer, 2010) and how it continues to be driven by colonial logics (Achiume & Last, 2021). The earlier migration was largely invisible to officials. However, the second stream migration was visible. It also coincided with the Zimbabwean socio-political economic crisis despite the South African State being reluctant to recognise Zimbabweans as refugees as a result of political relations between the two countries (Polzer, 2010). In 2009, the Zimbabwe Special Dispensation Permit was initiated with mixed outcomes, as only a limited number of Zimbabweans accessed it due to the limited time in which it was in effect, as well as mistrust by some who chose not to apply (Amit, 2015; Ndlovu, 2020). The project offered amnesty to irregular migrants and to those holding fraudulent documentation. Holders of the permit live in uncertainty of what will happen when the permits expire, as the South African government has been making ad hoc extensions to the validity but without clear outline of the long-term plan. This is the brief overview of the legal context within which the music that this paper analyses is being produced, and below I discuss Zimbabwean ethnic dynamics.

Zimbabweans are generally divided into two main ethnic groups, the Ndebele, and the Shona. There are, however, other ethnic identities subsumed under these two groups (Msindo, 2012). The Ndebele and Shona categories are used in this paper following Msindo's (2012) concept of being regional political identities. Furthermore, the Gukurahundi influences the meanings of these identities. Ndebele in this case can mean victim of the Gukurahundi and marginalised in Zimbabwe. Shona, on the other hand, is proxy for a group that the Zimbabwean State embraced while marginalising the Ndebele and other times stands in for Gukurahundi perpetrator. Gukurahundi is the popular name, which means the early rain that washes away the chaff, given to the violence that occurred soon after independence from 1983-1987 in the midlands and

southern parts of Zimbabwe (Alexander *et al.*, 2000). Scholars say that ethnic tensions emanating from conflicts between the two main Zimbabwean liberation movements, ZANU-PF and PF-ZAPU during the independence struggle, spilled over to the post-independence period (Alexander, 1998; Yap, 2002). Post-independence ZANU-PF became the ruling party in the post-independence period and used the national army to crush the now opposition PF-ZAPU. The violence, however, did not just affect the former armed forces but targeted civilians, with many unmarked graves that continue to be discovered and many disappeared (Eppel, 2004; Murambadoro, 2015; Ngwenya & Harris, 2015, 2016)

The Zimbabwean government has not officially acknowledged the Gukurahundi violence preferring instead silence (Alexander, 2021). Artists and other activist who have in the past attempted to speak about Gukurahundi in Zimbabwe have been arrested. This government stance of silence has been further reified by the fact that the president in power during the period the violence occurred remained in power until his removal in November 2017. However, he was replaced by the current president of Zimbabwe who was even more directly involved in the atrocities (Alexander, 2021). This new government created a Ministry of National Healing but did not allow for a discussion of Gukurahundi that victims wanted. Alexander (2021) argues that the government's preferred silence about the Gukurahundi has led instead to what she terms noisy silence where in different ways, affected communities continue to speak about their experiences. Gukurahundi scholars argue that the violence framed the Ndebele outside of the Zimbabwean nation, as non-belonging (Eppel, 2004; Muzondidya & Ndlovu-Gatsheni, 2007; Worby, 1998). Many of those I interviewed saw their trajectories from Zimbabwe to South Africa as a result of being pushed out to the margins of the Zimbabwe nation (Ndlovu, 2020). At the same time, others, by harkening back to the Mfecane, see their movement to South Africa as a return home to the Zulu nation from whence their forefathers hailed in the Mfecane migrations (Ndlovu-Gatsheni, 2008). Furthermore, many of these migrants adopt local dialects, culture, and dressing to camouflage their Zimbabweanness (Siziba, 2015). Ithemba lamaNguni celebrate Johannesburg as a space that allows them to speak about Gukurahundi, where they can embody their identity as victims of the Zimbabwean State. The migration linked to Gukurahundi (Alexander, 1998; Maphosa, 2007) which was mostly to South Africa is what this paper calls the first migration stream.

In the late 1990s Zimbabwe's socio-political and economic crisis triggered migration from across the different provinces of the country leading to more Shona Zimbabweans migrating to South Africa (Crush & Tevera, 2010), what this paper calls the second migration stream. It is harder for the Shona Zimbabwean migrants to camouflage themselves by blending in culturally in Johannesburg, compared to Ndebele Zimbabweans. This led to a visible presence of Zimbabweans in Johannesburg, for example, at the Central Methodist Church in the Central Business District of Johannesburg at one point (Kuljian, 2013). As earlier highlighted, in 2009, South Africa initiated a Zimbabwe Special Dispensation Permit offering documentation to Zimbabweans who were in the country but undocumented. It would seem the South African State recognised these newer migrants. This paper focuses on the music by migrants from the first migration stream, who link their experiences of Gukurahundi in Zimbabwe to their movement to Johannesburg, analysing how they negotiate their place in Johannesburg in light of the arrival of the more visible Shona Zimbabweans. In the next section there is a discussion of the conceptual mapping of this paper presenting literature on identity and spatial imaginaries.

Conceptual Framework

This paper explores identity categories that are narrated by Ithemba lamaNguni in the specific context of Johannesburg. The way we speak about identities many times flattens out complexities concretising certain categories while hiding others. In the introduction to the book "Categories of persons: Retaining Ourselves and Others", Jones and Dlamini (2013) argue against the idea of a fixed identity, showing instead the constructed nature and fluidity of identity as it emerges in different places differently. This is similar to Hall's (1990) theorisation of identity as contingent. Similarly, Erasmus (2017) elucidates the way identity categories are experienced differently by individuals within that category. Ithemba lamaNguni, at the time of the research, embraced the Zimbabwean identity. Members of MLF, on the other hand, disavowed being Zimbabwean. The two groups fall into the category of Zimbabwean as defined officially, however, the music presents other identities as will be discussed further below. In light of this, I will refer to the interlocutors according to their membership of migrant organisations instead of their national identity.

This paper explores the ways identities emerge and are narrated in the particular space of Johannesburg. Massey's (2013) conceptualisation of space is instructive here as she argues that we should see places as articulated moments in networks of social relations and understandings. The way we narrativize and tell about space creates the space or justifies certain modes of engaging in space. Importantly, these networks of social relations are not only those in that specific locality, as she argues for a power geometry (Massey, 2012). In exploring music, then, the ways in which Johannesburg is articulated can be linked to broader issues such as globalisation. The concept of spatial imaginaries as performative discourses is further informative here, these are "stories and ways of talking about spaces that transcend language as embodied performance by people in the material world" (Watkins, 2015, p. 509). Spatial imaginaries capture not only the place imaginary but how spaces transform and are idealised with the associated anxieties of this.

Globalisation is an example of a spatial imaginary; it is based on material realities, some imagined and with some anxieties of its impact. Despite initial projections claiming the decline of the significance of nations, contemporary technological advancements of globalisation reify the need to have an identity, as time-space compression brings the existence of 'others' into closer 'proximity' (Gilmartin, 2008). This has inadvertently sustained the significance of nations and nationhood. Firstly, the nation-state has remained significant in responses to economic crises (Desai, 2009). Secondly, although nations may have less control over economic issues with the advent of transnational corporations, they remain the arbiter of identity. Beyond being an imagined community then, the nation has material significance as citizenship is the only secure way of accessing economic rights (Brysk & Shafir, 2004). For migrants, this means that although economic rights may be extracted in their host city or nation as usufruct rights (Landau, 2014), the nation as home remains important. What happens, then, when migrants such as Ithemba lamaNguni can claim usufruct rights but have a complicated relationship with the home nation, Zimbabwe? Does music become proxy for the nation which does not yet exist but is imagined and narrated in the music?

Identities may emerge because of the place, at the same time, the place itself may be imagined in ways that result in people identifying in a particular way. In Britain, Morrice (2017) says migrant women were carving out valued identities in response to their context as a strategy of resistance. Similarly, in Spain, Dalmau (2015) presents Ghanaian migrants who were narrating identities to navigate their place in the face of precarity. In South Africa, Landau and Freemantle (2010) present the concept of tactical cosmopolitanism, defined as migrants' strategies to position themselves as ephemeral, superior, and unrooted in contrast to their South African hosts. The migrants distinguish themselves from the locals while also claiming space within the city. While this case looked at migrants holding different national identities, including Nigerians, Congolese, as well as Zimbabweans, it begets the question of in what ways could national or ethnic identity possibly influence the ways migrants negotiate their place within a host city. Focusing on Shona Zimbabweans in Giyani, a town in the Limpopo province of South Africa, Chekero and Morreira (2020), present migrants who form friendships with South Africans in order to access services.

In Johannesburg, Siziba (2015), working similarly with Ndebele Zimbabwean migrants, articulates the ways in which language and dressing is used to mimic being a South African Zulu in order to navigate different spaces, such as public transportation or the workplace. Siziba (2015) shows how this negotiation, conceptualised as cross-identification, is dicey and fraught with anxiety, as many of his interlocutors report fear of being found out as not authentically Zulu. This is an embodied negotiation of identity that structures, for example, whether one speaks or chooses silence, with whom to have relationships or not, and how people interact with others at home or work. As Palmary *et al.* (2015) have argued, many migrants in Johannesburg live with a precarity that transcends the physical, economic, spiritual, and social categories of life. The claim to a legitimate place in the city of Johannesburg is one that is constantly negotiated, as migrants live with a constant reminder of their non-belonging and have to engage in different strategies to fit in, while also on high alert against crime and violence (Kihato, 2013). So, in this paper I read music by Ithemba lamaNguni to explore how they imagine themselves in the space of Johannesburg.

Unlike Siziba's (2015) interlocutors, who try to minimise differences between them and South Africans, the music foregrounds differences, while also highlighting points of solidarity. This seems to be in line with what Landau (2014) has argued, that migrants claim usufruct rights and do not aim to 'belong'. The music here, then, is not only a narrative of Johannesburg, but also of how people inhabit the city. The concept of spatial imaginaries as a performative discourse is useful here, as the relationship between the material realities and practices, in this case living in Johannesburg, and the music which is the representation can be mutually constructive. By this I mean that the music may be a reflection of Ithemba lamaNguni's material realities, what it means to live in Johannesburg, leading them to identifying in particular ways. The representations in the music may influence the performative material practices and how people identify themselves in Johannesburg. The music under analysis here narrates the migrants' histories and a particular story of Johannesburg. The interest of this paper is not on how this relationship of causation is configured, but on spatial imaginaries that are narrated in the music and the identities that can be performed.

According to Allen (2004), music is the most widely appreciated art form and a popular site for thinking through politics in Africa. Furthermore, music can create space for personal pleasure and enjoyment in contexts where one's humanity is not recognised, providing an outlet for issues and emotions that would normally be difficult to express (Makina, 2009; Mapuranga and Chitando, 2006; Stasiulis *et al.*, 2020). The Zimbabwean music industry is described “*as a dance of the pained who still smile*” (Mhiripiri, 2012, p. 21) as it remains vibrant in a difficult environment of failed systems. This raises the question of what role music plays in such a context, for it to be sustained in spite of the circumstances. As earlier discussed, contemporary technological advancements have led to a disembodiment of time and place, leading to the importance of being seen and distinguishing oneself, the concept of visibility Kirkegaard (2002). In this context of a convergence of different cultures (Bishop & Starkey, 2006), music is being produced through the mixing of different features from across the world, as these are ‘free floating’ in an increasingly globalising world. In Zimbabwe, the emergence of the urban grooves music genre is an example of music which is created from a mixture of local rhythms with R&B, reggae, and acapella (Mhiripiri, 2012). Theoretically, any feature of music is available to Ithemba lamaNguni in the creation of their songs. What then informs their choices of particular musical features?

Using an intersectional lens, the paper engages with the ways Ithemba lamaNguni narrate differences that emerge in the specific context of Johannesburg. Intersectionality makes visible the multiple positioning that constitutes everyday life and the power relations influencing this which makes it relevant to this paper (Collins, 2019; Nash, 2018). This paper moves beyond the usual race, gender, and social class intersections that are usually the focus of intersectional analysis to explore the factors that migrants, in the specific context of Johannesburg, deploy in their negotiations for space. As Fresnoza-Flot and Cheung (2023) argue that intersectionality must take into consideration the temporality of events, the analysis presented in this paper focuses on music produced in 2009. The ways migrants identify may have shifted over time, as Ndlovu (2020) has shown. However, analysing the music remains instructive on how past histories are resources for different contemporary projects of identification, as people negotiate their locations to lay claim to a place in the world. It is important to note here, however, that while this paper discusses the ways in which migrants resist certain identities in favour of others, this is in a context of precarity where the nation state and migration regulation regimes remain a powerful factor in these negotiations, many times limiting the options and ways in which migrants can manoeuvre. Intersectionality provides the framework to keep the structures in view, while exploring the negotiations of identity (Collins, 2019). I further discuss the specific ways intersectionality informed the analysis in this paper at the end of the methods section.

Methods

As a newly arrived migrant in Johannesburg, I worked for a non-governmental organisation as a trainer for refugees and migrants. During this time, I interacted with many migrant organisations, including the Zimbabwe Action Movement (ZAM), of which Ithemba lamaNguni artists group was a part of. ZAM was a pressure group advocating for democratic change in Zimbabwe, while also simultaneously calling for the acknowledgement of Gukurahundi by the Zimbabwean government. My research questions, which I pursued towards a Masters and PhD degree from 2009-2017,¹ first emanated from observing the different ways in which Gukurahundi was being spoken about by ZAM in Johannesburg, in contrast to the narrative I had grown up with in Zimbabwe, which was of Gukurahundi being spoken of in code, referred to as ‘that time’, or just never blatantly mentioned, yet everyone knew about it. I attended meetings where songs about the Gukurahundi were being sung and people talked openly about it. I was curious to understand what function these narratives about the Gukurahundi served in Johannesburg.

Using a qualitative approach through purposive sampling, I conducted interviews with members of the Zimbabwe Action Movement, including some members of Ithemba lamaNguni. This is where I learned about their music, purchased a copy of the CD, and subsequently included the music as a case study. I conducted several interviews with Bongani including a specific one about the music, as he was a leader of Ithemba lamaNguni and organising secretary of ZAM. I also interviewed members of the Mthwakazi Liberation Front (MLF). The MLF are a group advocating for the cessation of borders to create a new state for the Ndebele outside of Zimbabwe with Gukurahundi being the main grievance against the government of Zimbabwe. A greater number of my interlocutors were employed as security guards, domestic workers or waiters and waitresses. They lived in the inner city of Johannesburg, Hillbrow, Berea and Yeoville. For many, Johannesburg is a place with opportunities for employment to support their family in Zimbabwe, as well as building homes to return to once too old to work. This paper is informed by this research with a specific focus on the music. The CD is called Inkulu lendaba (Ithemba lamaNguni, 2009) which means this is a big/significant matter.

Intersectionality provides the framework for understanding the social locations narrated in the music alongside the structural conditions under which the migrants live. However, Erasmus (2017) argues that it is not possible to completely categorise and understand experiences through pre-set categories. This is similar to Yuval-Davis’ (2006) contention for a situated intersectional analysis as she warns of the danger of homogenising members of a group and missing other differences that intersectional theory is so well placed to explore. Moving beyond focusing on race, gender, and class as the categories of intersectional analysis, this paper follows Stasiulis’ *et al.* (2020) argument for a situated genealogically deep exploration of differences in a specific context. Focusing on intersectionality and migration, Stasiulis *et al.* (2020) suggests -which this paper

1 I received ethical approval from the University of the Witwatersrand Ethics Board.

adopts- the following as possible combinations of intersecting power dynamics, that is, sexuality, ethnicity, indignity, religion, age, generation, ability, citizenship status in addition to the ‘trinity’ of gender, race, and class.

Furthermore, taking heed to Stasiulus *et al.* (2020) and Yuval Davis (2006) to consider the genealogy of the identities presented, my analysis is enriched by knowledge of the ethnic differences between the Shona and Ndebele in Zimbabwe, and how they are further complicated by the ways in which Gukurahundi is remembered. Equally so, the significance of recognising Johannesburg as a space in which victims of Gukurahundi could narrate their memories, unlike the noisy silence (Alexander, 2021) experienced in Zimbabwe. This genealogy allows a view of how these identities emerge and why they are significant. In this sense, a further dimension to my intersectional analysis is victimhood, as the songs Ngekesikhohlwe, Iqiniso and Inkulu lendaba narrate memories of the Gukurahundi violence that the singers locate themselves as victims of.

In addition to this intersectional analysis, this paper explores what music features were chosen and for what purpose, that is, reading the music through genre. Genre refers to the intrinsic characteristics of music artists choose, together with the meaning ascribed to these characteristics by both the artists as well as the audience to the music (Lena & Peterson, 2008). Exploring genre here facilitates an analysis of the choices made in reference to the context in which the music is composed and or performed. The song Inkulu leNdaba, for example, mimics the South African poet Mzwakhe Mbuli’s protest style. This shows the influence of their location in South Africa, as well as audience for this song is South Africans to garner sympathy in the context of xenophobia. It could also be Ithemba lamaNguni’s differentiating themselves from popular Zimbabwean music as Ndebele Zimbabweans. Mhiripiri (2012) speaks of sungura as a popular genre of Zimbabwean music, which none of the Ithemba lamaNguni’s songs follow. Other choices explored are the language and cultural symbols used in the songs.

Results

Table 1 presents a summary of the key messages in the music.

Table 1.
Inkulu lendaba

Song Title on CD/ Title Translation	Language of Song Lyrics	Summary of the song
Iphupho/ The Dream	Ndebele	This person has a dream in which their father reminds them of the importance of a home and not to forget it. Their mother convinces them to come home in a poem that talks about the nurturing aspects of home
Amaganyana/ Animals of prey	Ndebele	This song talks of the natural beauty of Zimbabwe that has been eroded by animals of prey and has become a desert.
Hungry Lions	English & Ndebele	The singers say they escaped the dark days of slavery and colonialism only to be led by ‘hungry lions’, leaders motivated by personal gain and not for the masses. They issue a call for Africans to unite and respond to their plight as African people are being destroyed by hunger, wars and disease.
Inkomo Zikababa/ Our Father’s Cattle	Ndebele	In this song the <i>Ndebele</i> are presented as cattle that have been led astray by a wayward rooster (ZANU PF). This imagery is used to show the predicament of the <i>Ndebele</i> in Zimbabwe under the leadership of ZANU PF.
Ngekesikhohlwe/ We Will Never Forget	Ndebele	Singers state that they are heartsore because of growing old in foreign lands and they will never forget <i>Gukurahundi</i> .
Hango/ Work	Kalanga	This song is a celebration of culture prior to colonisation. The colonial project is presented as a continuing evil, which is corrupting the good aspects of the singer’s culture and should be fought against. It presents contrasts between the colonizer and the colonized, reclaiming what was before the arrival of the colonisers.
Silandela Amaqhawe/ We Follow Our Heroes	Ndebele & English	This song commemorates political and musical heroes also including Ithemba lamaNguni within this list. Some of the heroes are officially commemorated in Zimbabwe as well as some names not officially recognised as heroes in Zimbabwe.
Amabalengwe/ Tiger Spots	Ndebele	This song traces the genealogy of the singers to <i>Ndebele</i> warriors who fought the whites when colonisers arrived in Africa and claims they are equally able now to face the current obstacles.

Song Title on CD/ Title Translation	Language of Song Lyrics	Summary of the song
Iqiniso/ The Truth	Ndebele	The singers declare they will stand for the truth about <i>Gukurahundi</i> even if this means risking their lives.
Inkulu Lendaba/ This Is A Big Matter	Ndebele	This is a call for those with the ability to write history to memorialise Ndebele history to include <i>Gukurahundi</i> and the difficult experiences of being a migrant.
ULobhengula/ King Lobhengula	Ndebele	In this song the <i>Ndebele</i> are traced back to being subjects of King Lobhengula a valiant warrior who survives a battle where all his brothers are killed
Usizi/ Grief	Ndebele	This is a prayer to God to walk with them because the life of a migrant is a difficult one.

To illustrate the contextual significance of the identities narrated in the music, I first present below a quote from Tshengi, a member of the MLF. Ithemba lamaNguni were members of the ZAM, they embraced their Zimbabwean identity, while also calling for acknowledgement of the *Gukurahundi*. In contrast the MLF wanted the creation of a separate nation for the Ndebele as the basis for healing of the wound of *Gukurahundi*. Tshengi's story presents the view of MLF, however, is useful to contextualise the music.

They said control your children, I said no I will not, you came to the wrong place, this place is for the Ndebele, you came knowing fully well that Hillbrow, Berea, Yeoville is for the Ndebele or else you can and hold your rally in Zimbabwe, not here in South Africa or maybe Pretoria where there are many Shona where they get asylum paper not here in Ndebele spaces you came to start a conflict (Interview: Tshengi)

Tshengi, a woman in her late fifties then, relayed an event that occurred at a meeting organised for a Zimbabwean government minister to address Zimbabweans in Hillbrow, Johannesburg. This meeting was disrupted by angry Ndebele youth after its conveners attempted to open it by singing the Zimbabwean national anthem. She claims Hillbrow, Berea, and Yeoville, which are residential areas in the inner city of Johannesburg by saying *this place is for the Ndebele*. This is a claim to space as well as prescribing what identities are welcome to be performed in it and singing the Zimbabwean national anthem is not. By this logic, the Zimbabwean identity should not be performed in Johannesburg. Further to this however, Tshengi speaks of the Shona as those who are able to secure an asylum permit from the South African State and who may be found in Pretoria. One of the South African refugee reception offices that issues asylum permits is located in Pretoria. Although it remained nearly impossible to secure an asylum permit, this was a significant issue for Tshengi to narrate in differentiating the Ndebele from the more recent Zimbabwean Shona arrivals. Tshengi

constructs Johannesburg as Ndebele territory in which Zimbabwean identity should not be performed. Tshengi's response carries an anxiety that Shona Zimbabweans are encroaching onto Ndebele territory. Linking this to the previous discussion on ethnicity where the Shona are seen as those who were embraced by the Zimbabwean State, while the Ndebele were marginalised. This anxiety seems to be well founded leaving Tshengi with no choice but to defend Johannesburg territory for the Ndebele.

This above discussion shows the context within which Ithemba lamaNguni created their music album, *Inkulu lendaba*. In an interview with Bongani, one of the Ithemba lamaNguni leaders, about the music, he explained their intentions in their art performances and music as follows:

I think (I) like to conscientize more people about our plight... So, to me if we continued doing all those things maybe someone would have recognised that there is a problem in Zimbabwe, like what we did was to show what the media has not shown about Zimbabwe, like the really bad side about Zimbabwe. Because people say the problem began in 99 [1999] whilst we disagree to say no the problem with Zimbabwe started in the 80's once Zanu Pf came to power (Interview, Bongani)

Bongani says their music was to show that Zimbabwe had problems prior to 1999. The audience for the performances was in Johannesburg local community centres. The CD *Inkulu lendaba* was distributed and sold by members of *Inkulu lendaba* through word of mouth. Showing that Zimbabwe had problems prior to 1999 would make a case for the presence of Ithemba lamaNguni in Johannesburg. In addition, showing that Ithemba lamaNguni had been on the receiving end of the earlier Zimbabwean problems located them as more deserving than the more recent migrants. Below is a discussion of the music.

Discussion

The first song in the album, Iphupho, reflects the gendered dynamics in the Ithemba lamaNguni's identity constructions firstly in the way the migrant is imagined as a male. Secondly, the song consists of a poem about home recited by a female voice, persuading the son about the beauty of home, placing the female in the domestic and nurturing sphere, whereas a male leads the singing admonishing the migrants about the dangers of being far from home. The male is imagined as the authoritative with the woman imagined differently as nurturing. Similarly, the last song, Usizi, a woman leads the poetic rendition of a prayer declaring that the migrants are desperate for divine help. The woman is assigned the caring voice expressing grief. The title track of the CD Inkulu lendaba is similarly structured to the above two songs, however, with two male voices, one leading the singing and another reciting poetry. The song speaks about the xenophobia Zimbabwean migrants have faced in South Africa and Botswana. In this song, which presents the main problematic for Ithemba lamaNguni as it is also the title of the album, women take on a secondary role in the singing. The rest of the songs in the album are led by male singers with female voices included in the backing vocals.

In addition to this gendered dimension, the music also presents how Ithemba lamaNguni locate themselves racially. In the song, Amabalengwe, the racial identity of Ithemba lamaNguni, is presented, as they locate themselves as heroes who fought against colonisers. Racial identity is further conflated with class in the song Hango, where technological advancements like cellular phones and aeroplanes are disavowed as colonial and corrupting good culture. Importantly here is that the use of aeroplanes is a technology largely out of the reach for the singers. As Massey (2012) argues that we view space as a power geometry. This song presents the ways in which Ithemba lamaNguni experience the racial inequality of technological advancement. How coloniality persists and structures the world locating them at the fringes.

In addition to the race, gender, and class analysis that intersectionality allows, Stasiulis *et al.* (2020) argue for ethnicity, citizenship status, among other categories. Citizenship and ethnicity are narrated, for example, in the song ULobhengula, Ithemba lamaNguni celebrate themselves as subjects of a Ndebele king, distinguishing themselves as Zimbabweans but who are not Shona. The king represents precolonial ethnic and national identification, which has no currency in the present for Ithemba lamaNguni, however distinguishes them from Shona Zimbabweans. The last song in the CD, Usizi, also comments on citizenship through presenting the status of being a migrant as a negative which requires divine intervention. Zimbabwean citizenship is also presented in the songs Amaganyana, Inkomo Zikababa, Silandela Amaqhawe and Usizi (Ithemba lamaNguni, 2009). In these songs, the negative impact of being a Zimbabwean and Ndebele is shown through presenting the Zimbabwean political leaders as self-serving and corrupt, leading to a deterioration of the country's resources, thereby justifying the presence of Ithemba lamaNguni in South Africa. This also presents how Ithemba lamaNguni's postcolonial subjectivity sadly coheres with Fanon's (2004) predictions, which is aptly expressed in the following excerpt from the song Hungry Lions that says:

'From the slave trade to the dark days of colonisation,
To be led by the hungry lions'
(Song Lyrics: Hungry Lions)

The hungry lions being referred to here are the corrupt African governments that have continued the project of colonisation as predicted by Fanon (2004). In this song, Ithemba lamaNguni issue a call for Africans to unite through the question "what have the Africans done to deserve this?" The song is sung in English signifying an agenda to reach an audience beyond the local Zulu/Ndebele languages that the other songs use. Appealing to their racial identity is more beneficial in this context where black African migrants have been the target of xenophobic violence. Xenophobic violence is referenced in the following excerpt from the song Inkulu lendaba:

It is the issue of the Ndebele nation that was killed without consequence
It is the issue of Zimbabweans who are oppressed by their leaders
It is the issue of Zimbabweans who are killed in South Africa
It is the issue of Zimbabweans who are treated badly in Botswana Write
it, this is a big matter
(Song Lyrics: Inkulu lendaba)

The above excerpt presents an intersectional view of the migrants' victimhood as Ndebele victims of the Zimbabwean State and also victims of xenophobia in South Africa and Botswana. In the two song excerpts presented above, the migrants are located as victims at the intersection of the slave trade, colonialism, Gukurahundi, corrupt African leadership, and xenophobia. Both songs have a call to action. Inkulu lendaba calls for the documenting of the events that are important for Ithemba lamaNguni; the song Hungry Lions calls for Africans to overthrow their current status and location at the bottom of the world hierarchy. At this intersection of violence and victimhood, Ithemba lamaNguni members live in Johannesburg, with a constant threat of xenophobic violence. The call to action is to Africans. Despite xenophobic violence being the most recent experience, Ithemba lamaNguni prioritises documenting what is happening, so that it is not forgotten, and changing the status quo of Africans.

In the construction of identity in the music by Ithemba lamaNguni discussed above, different spatial imaginaries are simultaneously fashioned. The spatial imaginary of home is constructed in gendered ways. Zimbabwe, South Africa, and Botswana are constructed in opposition to this idea of home as they are violent against the singers. A global spatial imaginary is brought to the fore in the music through locating Ithemba lamaNguni as Africans, victims of the slave trade, colonisation, corrupt governments, and specifically as subjects of Lobhengula, a Ndebele king. Being subject to Lobhengula has no currency in the current, nation-state complex, where the nation remains a powerful arbiter of identity and, by default, of access to socio-economic rights. Identification as a subject of Lobhengula, however, provides the exegesis of the global racialised hierarchy of belonging. It presents the continuing coloniality of power that locates some post-colonial

subjectivities outside of the power geometry. The claim to space is made from the position of being a post-colonial subject, the African, which speaks to a global spatial imaginary. The music in this way creates a space for Ithemba lamaNguni that is not available in the contemporary world.

Conclusion

This paper began with a discussion of the negative sentiments towards migrants globally and their location outside of the nation-state power geometry. It then focused on the specific of Zimbabwean migrants in South Africa complicated by the ethnic tensions rooted in past events and in Zimbabwe; however, these tensions have specific expression in their contemporary context of Johannesburg. Understanding identity as contingent and constructed in relation to others, and using the concept of spatial imaginary, this paper explored music by Ithemba lamaNguni, Ndebele Zimbabwean migrants in Johannesburg, South Africa. The paper presents local and global spatial imaginaries that are constructed in the music with corresponding identifications. The music constructs identities that are resources for claiming space in Johannesburg and globally for the Ndebele migrants. In this way, the music also provides commentary on the interplay of political and economic global dynamics in locating the musicians at the bottom rung of the racialised hierarchy of humanity. While the gendered dynamics in these spatial imaginaries require further exploration, most significantly, Ithemba lamaNguni music shows the predicament that migrants face on the margins of the nation-state complex.

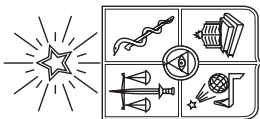
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