

ZIMBABWE – THE COLOUR OF HOME

It is estimated that well over three million Zimbabweans have left the country for political and economic reasons in the last six years. This represents almost a quarter of our population.

For the people who have stayed in Zimbabwe, either by choice or because they have no choice, it is hard to understand what it must be like to live in exile. From here, we wish we were somewhere with single, double or even triple figure inflation. We dream of being able to afford the most basic things again -everyday things once taken for granted and now just permanently off the shopping list because they are simply too expensive.

We long for an end to fear and oppression and ache for the time when we will again be able to afford to travel to the beautiful places in our own country. We long to be able to speak freely again, to stop whispering and looking over our shoulders wondering who is listening, who is a spy, who we can trust. Mostly though, we long for our families and friends who have gone, we miss the community life, the gatherings and the laughter.

And for the people who have left, the aches and longings of being strangers in strange lands are probably even harder. The longings are for familiarity, for friends and family left behind, for the climate and countryside, and for the laughter in the wind of the country that will always be home. Recently someone living in exile said how much they missed the colours of Zimbabwe and it made me realise how we take the richness and beauty of Zimbabwe for granted.

Winter is almost over now although we are still waking to blankets of frost sprinkled on the ground in the early mornings. The days are mostly clear, bright and sunny and the skies are a brilliant blue.



The grass is golden and yellow in the fields and in the vleis and stream beds the red hot pokers have almost finished flowering. In the bush the lucky bean trees are just opening their clusters of red flowers and in our towns the poinsettias are covered in scarlet. In the highveld the Msasa trees have begun shedding their load and the ground is covered with hard, curly, deep brown pods, their shiny dark brown seeds lying in the sand waiting for the rain when they can start the cycle all over again. And to end our days are the sunsets which are filled with

spectacular colour: pink and then lilac, and at last orange and polished copper.

These are the true and permanent colours of Zimbabwe, refreshed and replaced every day. They are the colours of home and frankly, for many of us, it is the simple things like this that someday prevent total and utter despair at the horrific situation we are living in. The other colours that are temporarily Zimbabwean - brown, purple and green - they are just imposters. They are the colours of our bank notes which aren't really bank notes and which have expiry dates. They are the colours of inflation, oppression and despair and hard as it is to believe, we know they will be gone - we pray it will be soon.

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