

Africa in the Eye of Contemporary African Child: A Psychoanalytical Reading of Noviolet Bulawayo's *We Need New Names*

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Abstract

Even with the immense global innovations in technology and education, millions of children in most African nations are out of school. They are denied education due to greedy political leadership and irresponsible parenting in their respective nations. Zimbabwe is one of such African nations. The unfortunate predicaments of children in this nation many years after decolonization are dramatized in Noviolet Bulawayo's *We Need New Names*. In this narrative, Bulawayo engages the technical elements of voice, action and settings to expose the vulnerability of contemporary Zimbabwean children. Through Darling, who is the child protagonist-narrator, we glimpse into the unfortunate realities of the contemporary Zimbabwean children: they are out of school, neglected, and starved, physically, emotionally and sexually abused amongst many other atrocities against them. Using the qualitative research method, as well as Sigmund Freud's Psychoanalytical strand of Child Development Theoretical paradigm, this study has not only examined the various aspects of physical and psychological abuses of the contemporary African child, but has also discovered that these supposed future leaders can only access qualitative education, decent shelter, food and modern technology through migration to other developed climes, particularly the United States of America and Dubai, a journey from which they are not likely to return soon. This unfortunate development portends a bleak future for most of these nations and the continent at large.

Keywords: Child rights, Neglect, Education, Zimbabwe, Migration, Africa.

Introduction

At the dawn of Zimbabwean decolonization in 1980, native leaders and citizens of the then Southern Rhodesian nation were full of joy and expectations due to the pleasant promises of independence. At this historical moment, citizens envisaged a better future devoid of colonial dispossession, repression and deprivation. They foresaw a nation that is truly independent from illiteracy, hunger, unemployment, external control and manipulations of majority by privileged few. Paramount amongst these expectations was the much-needed care and qualitative education of Zimbabwean children. It was expected that these future leaders of the nation would soon be on equal pedestal with their peers in other developed climes.

Unfortunately, many years after decolonization, the nation has remained perennially challenged in numerous aspects of its national life, including the neglect and denial of basic rights of children who are supposedly the nation's future leaders. It is the hunger, abuse, neglect and the struggle for survival of contemporary Zimbabwean children that Bulawayo (2013) dramatizes in *We Need New Names*. Bulawayo's choice of subject matter in this narrative is in tandem with the general ideology that society forms the raw material for the creativity of the writer. In her interview with Ireson Okojie, Bulawayo insists on the authenticity of her narration when she declares that "all fiction is drawn from real experiences, people will tell you it's fiction but it's real. It's either your own reality or somebody else's". It is through the "importance of creativity in the writer's society that makes it a document of historical intelligibility" (Culler, 2011, p. 20). Alou (2019, p.23) reiterates this unique role of art by observing that "the power of art in transforming society lies in its potential by exposing a bad situation. The writer or artist suggests ideas that could correct such situations and leaves the final decision to the reader" (as cited in Adeyanju, 1999).

On his part, Márquez (2021) declares that, "The worst enemy of politicians is a writer". Writers feel consciously driven to record and examine what transpires around them. In fact, they owe it to themselves and the times they are a part of. As a writer who experienced hunger and neglect in Zimbabwe which eventually drove her to the diaspora, Bulawayo fictitiously recreates her experiences as well as those of her

peers in Zimbabwe under the watch of Robert Mugabe. Acemoglu and Robinson (2013) reveal that the days of Robert Mugabe in Zimbabwe were notorious for electoral offences, tenure elongation, gross human abuses, economic mismanagement, and numerous social and political challenges including unemployment, poverty, hunger, migration in droves, diseases, child abuse and many more (369). In *We Need New Names*, Bulawayo dramatizes these challenges, particularly the abuse, neglect and deprivation of the nation's children under Robert Mugabe's watch. In her interviews by both Irenosen Okojie and Justin Torres, Bulawayo aptly describes this era in her beloved home land as "Zimbabwe's lost decade" and a period when "President Mugabe was bringing Zimbabwe to its knees" respectively. In this narrative, Bulawayo harps on the predicaments of her nation's children in this era. The question then is, who is a child?

Defining the criteria for who should be considered as a child, the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (1989) declares that a child is "A human being below the age of eighteen". In most civilized climes, this group of humans is regarded as minors and cannot make decisions on their own. In other words, they are vulnerable. Thus, they depend on their parents, community and government for direction, proper upbringing and education (Awosola & Omoera, 2008). Their vulnerability and the need to protect them have led to the emergence of organizations which are preoccupied with numerous efforts geared towards protecting them and their rights in all capacities. Commenting on the rights of the child, Olowu (2002) identifies four principles on which the rights of the child is to be implemented, namely, non-discrimination, best interests of the child, the right of life and the views of the child. Taking this further, Megan, Jacobus and Gilbert (2014) recommend that "children's rights should be addressed individually and collectively by the following entities: government departments, training entities, families, individuals, and humanity at large (p.14). Implicit in both government and training entities are the child's right to qualitative education. The care of the child should be the responsibility of all in the adult society (Omoera & Awosola, 2008), and this has been emphasized by the popular African proverb which declares that "it takes a village to raise a child."

Unfortunately, in the Zimbabwean nation which Bulawayo portrays in *We Need New Names*, (WNNN henceforth), both the government and the community have glaringly reneged on their expected statutory responsibility towards the child. WNNN is an interrogation into

the numerous predicaments of contemporary Africa, including the challenge of leadership failure, child abuse and neglect and the inordinate quest for a better life through migration to more developed climes, particularly South Africa, the United States of America and Dubai. Most importantly in this narrative, the novelist harps on the debilitating everyday realities of the contemporary African child and the urgent need for his rehabilitation. But, before we delve substantively into Bulawayo's preoccupation in this narrative, we shall consider the theoretical paradigm adopted in this study.

Theoretical Paradigm

This study adopts the psychoanalytic strand of Child Development Theory. This theory is hinged on the premise that childhood plays an important role in the course of the rest of life (Cherry, 2021). This theory takes cognizance of the different influences that contribute to the growth of the child from prenatal through adolescence and as an adult. These influences include social, emotional, mental, moral and physical experiences. In his advancement of this notion, Saracho (2021) posits that those essentials in children's social and environmental situations have tremendous impact on their development and behavior as adults. Thus, the concern for the need to engender proper physical and psychological growth of the child in preparation for his future leadership roles has led to the emergence of many sub-strands of child development theories. Theorists in this category include Sigmund Freud, Erik Erikson, Anna Freud, Alfred Adler and Karen Horney and the common thread which permeates their respective sub strands is that childhood experiences, to a large extent, determine his dispositions as an adult. However, our interest in this study is particularly anchored on Sigmund Freud's literary perspective of the Child Development strand of psychoanalytic theory entitled "Creative Writers and Day-Dreaming" (1908). In this essay, Freud argues that the meaning of a creative work is determined by an in-depth study of the author's experiences and psychology.

Within this terrain, some critics have argued that the artist engages their milieu, experiences, morality and social situation as raw material for their craft. In tandem with Freud in this position are his academic sons, including Habib (2011, p.233), and Lodge and Wood (2013, p. 51), who also claim that through literary creativities, an artist expresses memories of earlier experiences, which is usually an infantile one. In the advancement of their argument, Freud maintains that childhood

experiences, phantasies and day-dreaming are major influences for the creative writer and that indeed is how a literary work comes into being. To him, the writer expresses his childhood pains, unpleasant events and day dreams through his artistic creations. He argues that, creative writing is simply an attempt or desire to alter the existing often unsatisfactory or unpleasant world of reality, and that the artist transmits “childhood plays to phantasies, to dreams, to works of art. Based on this premise, he declares that “artists are not mad but they are unsatisfied; the artist is simply a successful neurotic. Neurotic because his creativity is an unfulfilled childhood pains and events” (p.420). While insisting that there is an unbreakable connection between the artist and their work, he further declares that, “A strong experience in the present awakens in the creative writer a memory of an earlier experience ... usually belonging to his childhood, from which there now proceeds a wish which finds its fulfilment in the creative work. The work itself exhibits elements of the recent provoking occasion as well as the old memory” (pp. 426-427).

Freud’s stance aptly captures Bulawayo’s real-life experiences as a child and her preoccupation in *We Need New Names*. Bulawayo, who is currently a Zimbabwean immigrant in America, engages this medium of the novel to narrate her painful and unpleasant childhood experiences in her nation. Accordingly, she equates her real-life experiences to those of her protagonist named Darling. In her interview by Justin Torres, Bulawayo declares that “Darling’s story draws on my own experiences... I also reached America. Darling is Zimbabwean” (p. 4). Thus, in telling her story through the lens of Darling, she engages the first-person point of view, in the form of a child narrator who relives her childhood experiences in Paradise, a fictional Zimbabwean community before migration to the United States of America. Thus, with Bulawayo’s childhood experiences which form the raw material for her preoccupation in this narrative, Freud’s perspective of the childhood development theory becomes the most appropriate paradigm for the analysis of this text.

A Critical Analysis of Noviolet Bulawayo’s *We Need New Names*

Noviolet Bulawayo’s *We Need New Names* tells the childhood and adolescent story of a Zimbabwean girl named Darling and her friends named Bastard, Chipo, Godknows, Sbho and Stina. Darling and Godknows are ten years of age. Bastard and Chipo are eleven years, while Sbho is nine years old. Stina’s age is unknown because, according to the protagonist-narrator, Darling, “he has no birth certificate” (p.9). This gang

of childhood friends lives in a fictitious Zimbabwean shanty neighborhood named Paradise. Ironically, Paradise is a setting for poverty, unemployment, hunger, death, child neglect and abuse. Darling describes this location thus "Paradise is all tin and stretches out in the sun like a wet sheepskin nailed on the ground to dry; the shacks are the muddy color of dirty puddles after the rains, the shacks themselves are terrible" (p.36). Darling's mother complains that "their life in Paradise is now a misery. No food no decent clothes and everything else". On the other hand, a house located on Robert Street in Budapest which is the abode of the rich and influential is described as a decent environment with lots of luxury for its residents. It's like being in a different country all together. "Budapest is big, big houses with satellite dishes on the roofs and neat graveled yards of trimmed lawns, and the tall fences and the Durawalls and the flowers and the big trees heavy with fruits" (p.6). A typical house in this abode of the privileged is described as "a huge large house that looms like a mountain. The house has big windows and sparkling things all over, and a red swimming pool at the front. Everything really looks pretty" (p.12).

According to Darling, her family and others in their neighborhood have come to reside in Paradise due to the sudden demolition of their former more decent homes by a group of gun-wielding men in bulldozers who are agents of government. Darling tells us that the order to suddenly demolish their more comfortable homes was issued at the instance of those in authority who are insensitive to the plight of the masses. Sadly, on the day of the demolition of their homes, a woman who left her sleeping child for the market returns to be given a dead child dug out from the rubbles of her home. Darling tells us that as this woman named "Nomviyo comes running from the bus stop ...she throws all her groceries and bags down, screaming, My son, my son! I left my Freedom sleeping in there! Then they are helping her dig through the broken slabs and then, Makubongwe appears carrying Freedom, and his small body is so limp and covered in dust you think it's just a thing and not a baby. Nomviyo looks at the thing that is also her son and throws herself on the ground and rolls and rolls, tearing her clothes until the only things she has on are her black bra and knickers" (p.69). Ironically, Nomviyo's child named 'Freedom', dies as a result of a new form of colonization by Zimbabwean native rulers. The insensitivity of these leaders responsible for the sudden demolition of homes of masses lies in their failure to issue prior notice concerning the demolition to enable residents remove their valuables, including humans

from the site for demolition. Thus, baby Freedom's death could have been averted. Aside from the unfortunate fate of Baby Freedom, the narrative is indeed, replete with numerous instances of heart-rending predicaments of children in this clime as represented by Darling and her friends.

Darling and her friends are hungry, neglected, abused and out of school. Persistent exposure to hunger has driven them to numerous antisocial and criminal activities including stealing and insensitivity to the sacredness of life. Darling tells us of their numerous escapades in search of guava which serves as food to cushion their hunger. To these children, stealing is a necessary act for survival and they are forced to wander away from Paradise to Budapest for their needs. Darling tells us that "There are guavas to steal in Budapest, and right now I'd rather die for guavas. We didn't eat this morning and my stomach feels like somebody just took a shovel and dug everything out" (p.4). She further paints a vivid picture of their stealing pattern: We finished all the guavas in that tree so we have moved to the other house as well. We have stolen from so many houses I cannot even count. It was Bastard who decided that we pick a street and stay on it until we have gone through all the houses. Then we go to the next street. This is so we don't confuse where we have been with where we are going. It's like a pattern, and Bastard says we can be better thieves (p.7).

Devoid of hope for a better future, Darling and her friends also plan to change their stealing strategy when they grow older. Darling tells us that this idea is initiated by Bastard "Bastard says when we grow up, we'll stop stealing guavas and move on to bigger things inside the house" (p.12). As children, their insensitivity to the sacredness of life is portrayed in their reaction on sighting the dead body of a woman who had hanged herself on a tree. Instead of fear and immediate alarm for the attention of adults, Darling and her friends engage in argument and acts which portend inhumanity and disregard for the sacredness of life. "Bastard picks up a stone and throws; it hits the woman on the thigh ... Bastard throws another stone and hit the woman on the leg" (p.19). Interestingly, Bastard's stones draw their attention to the dead woman's shoes. They fearlessly contemplate on the possibility of disposing of the dead woman's shoes for money. Thus, they exclaim, "Look, did you notice that woman's shoes were almost new? If we can get them, then we can sell them and buy a loaf, or maybe even one and half" (p.20).

Darling and her friends are damaged morally, psychologically, and physically. Morally, they are unsupervised because majority of their

parents have either migrated in search of greener pastures, or are engaged in unproductive activities in Paradise. This is implied in Darling's statement that getting out of paradise in search of places for their mischief is not so hard for them because "their mothers are busy with their hair and idle talk, which is the only thing they do" (p.4). On the other hand, the men who remain back home in Paradise are busy with "their eyes never lifting from the draughts (4). Because they are unsupervised, Darling and her friends often delve into lots of uncouth talks and activities. For instance, at nine, Sbho is already perceiving the quality of man she will marry. She tells her friends that "I'm going to marry a man from Budapest. He'll take me away from Paradise, away from the shacks and Heavenway and Fambeki and everything else" (p.14). Most times, Darling and her friends are often exposed to sexual immorality to the extent that they carelessly engage in it whenever they have the opportunity to do so. In this regard, Darling narrates the story of the strange man who visits her mother at night and the sexual activities between them. She notes that all "he does is come in the dark like a ghost and leaps onto the bed with Mother. She declares:

I don't know his name but I know it's him and nobody else because he always knocks five times... Mother pulls the blanket over my head and then blows out the candle before opening the door. But what she doesn't know is that I'm always awake when this happens. I don't know what he looks like because I can never see his face in the dark. I don't even know his name ... Now Mother is moaning; the man, he is panting. The bed shuffling like a train taking them somewhere important that needs to be reached fast. Now the train stops and ... and the man lets out a terrific groan. Then, Mother and the man are still. (p.66)

Their loss of childhood innocence is portrayed in their active engagement in "the adult thing" whenever they have the opportunity to do so. For instance, after the abduction of the white couple on Julius Street, Darling and friends are seen, not only stealing the couple's food and valuables including perfumes, but also pairing up and engaging in sexual immorality, known to them as 'the adult thing' "Let's do the adult thing, Sbho says, and we giggle. Now her lips look like she's been drinking blood, and she smells expensive. We look at each other shy-like, like we are seeing one another for the first time. Then Bastard gets on top of Sbho.

Then Godknows moves over but I push him away because I want Stina, not chapped-buttocks Godknows, to get on top of me" (p.129).

Continuing in this immorality, Darling further paints a vivid picture of this engagement in immorality, Stina climbs on me and lies still and we all giggle and giggle. I feel him crushing my stomach under his heavy body and I'm thinking what I'd if it burst open and things splattered all over ... We are lying like that, giggling and doing the adult thing on the white people's soft bed (p.129). They further portray their persistent hunger by descending on the white couple's kitchen, devouring all edibles in sight: When we open the fridge, we find it untouched, which surprises us. We gorge ourselves on the bread, bananas, yogurt, drinks, chickens, mangoes, rice, apples, carrots, milk, and whatever food we find. We eat things we have never seen before, things whose names we don't even know (p.131). Other than hunger and poor moral upbringing, Darling and her friends lack institutional care. Darling tells us that she and her friends are out of school because their teachers have migrated to saner climes in search of better remuneration, "I don't go to school anymore because all the teachers left to teach over in South Africa and Botswana and Namibia where there is better money" (pp.32-33).

It is more worrisome to note that these helpless and vulnerable children are sexually abused by adults who should protect them. For instance, eleven-year-old Chipo is sexually abused and is now pregnant. According to Darling, Chipo won't tell anyone who put the baby inside her stomach. Instead, she's rather quieter and hates to talk about her condition. However, when Chipo's grandmother takes her to Fambeki mountain church for prayers, Chipo is forced to break her silence and confess the identity of the man who is responsible for her pregnancy, "He did that, my grandfather, I was coming from playing Find bin Laden and my grandmother was not there and my grandfather was there and he got on me and pinned me down like that and he clamped a hand over my mouth and was heavy like a mountain, Chipo says" (pp.42-43).

Chipo is further traumatized when the Girls; namely Darling, Sbho and Forgiveness attempt to forcefully remove the baby in her stomach with a metal cloth hanger. But for the timely intervention of Mother Love, Chipo and her unborn baby would have been seriously injured.

On her part, Darling is traumatized when she is forced to stop playing games with her friends, in order to care for her sick father who returned from South Africa in a terminal stage of AIDS disease. Her father's homecoming in this despicable condition is a painful reminder of

the many years of abandonment of his family. Darling complains that all these years, "Father is in South Africa, working, but he never writes, never sends money, never shows love, never nothing. It makes me angry thinking about him" (p.24). Darling is sad because her father returns home, not only sick, but also oblivious of his daughter's gender. She tells us that in his sick condition he consistently refers to her as "My son. My boy, he says ... my boy he keeps saying, but I don't tell him that I'm a girl ... my boy, he says again. He keeps saying, my boy, my boy, until I finally say, I'm not a boy" (p.93). Darling's father's affliction with the dreaded disease is portrayed as the common cause of death of most young people buried in most of the graves at Heavenway cemetery routinely visited by Darling and her friends:

When you look at the names together with the dates you see that they are really now names of the dead. And when you know Maths like me then you can figure out the ages of the buried and see that they died young, their lives short like those of house mice. A person is supposed to live a full life, live long and grow old, like Mother of Bones, for example. It's that sickness that is killing them. Nobody can cure it so it just does as it pleases-killing killing, killing, like a madman hacking unripe sugarcane with a machete. (p.135)

Interestingly, Darling and her friends exude in-depth knowledge of national and international matters. Nationally, they're aware that their president is old and that citizens are clamoring for change in leadership. Like the adults, they are disappointed when their democratic electoral process is scuttled by politicians with vested interest. Darling expresses this disappointment through her description of the disposition of adults around her during this time thus, "In the days right after the voting, the adults stayed up for many nights, dizzy and restless with expectation, not knowing how to sleep, not knowing how to do anything anymore except stand around fires and talk about how they will live the new lives that were waiting for them" (p.136). To their greatest chagrin, their votes did not count as the ruling insensitive government continue to perpetuate their grip on power. Darling continues her description of the disappointment of these pitiable adults in her nation, "They talked like that, stayed up night after night and waited for the change that was near. Waited and waited and waited. But then the waiting did not end and the change did not happen" (137).

Darling and her friends are in tune with matters on the international scene. They respond to such issues in childish ways. For instance, most of their games like "Find Bin Laden", "Country-game" and "Andy-over" are woven around international affairs and names of different nations in the world. They are aware of the non-durable quality of Chinese products. Thus, they brand malls built by Chinese as Kaka malls and footwears from China as *kaka* Shoes (49). They are also aware that the youth are migrating in droves due to harsh economic realities. It is these realities of hopelessness for a better future in the nation that drives Darling's lifelong dream of joining her mother's twin sister, Aunt Fostalina in America. In order for her friends not to be taken by surprise when she leaves, Darling always reminds them of her planned relocation to America with its promises of numerous opportunities. While playing the Country-Game, she tells them: If I'm lucky, I get to be the U.S.A., which is a country-country; who doesn't know that the U.S.A. is the big baboon of the world? I feel like it's my country now because my aunt Fostalina lives there, in Destroyedmichygen. Once her things are in order she'll come and get me and I will go and live there also (p.51).

Interestingly, her dream of relocation to America comes true as Aunt Fostalina eventually comes for Darling. Through the technicality of the point of view (POV), Darling takes us along with her to America. This affords us the opportunity to make comparisons between the quality of lives of American children and those back home in Paradise, and Zimbabwe at large. We shudder at the sharp difference in the existential quality of lives of children in these two climes. Firstly, she observes the serenity of the atmosphere and coolness of the weather with its falling snow and the way people dispose of it. She is fascinated watching American children at play with the snow heaps thus, "There are also little children playing in the snow. They touch it, kick it, throw it at each other, just play with it like it is meant to be played with. Now they have even gone on to make a thing that almost looks like a round person, and they have put a hat on it and a red rag around its neck and a carrot on its face" (p.159). Secondly, Darling observes that young people in America represented by her cousin TK, play computer-based games, with ipod and loud headphones (p.165). She is also amazed at the dignity accorded to children in this civilized clime. She observes that here, children are neither forced nor beaten up by adults irrespective of the degree of offence. Instead, their opinions are sought on issues concerning them. She expresses surprise at the dignified treatment she receives from aunt

Fostalina and compares it to the harsh treatments she received from adults back home, "I shake my head, no, when aunt Fostalina asks if I want to go places with her. She leaves me alone and does not force or beat me up like perhaps Mother or Mother of Bones would if I was not doing what they wanted me to. She always asks me if I want to do things – Do you feel like eating mac and cheese? Do you want to go to bed? Do you prefer this or that? Are you sure? – as if I have become a real person" (pp.160-161).

Thirdly, Darling observes that unlike her friends back home who are lean due to hunger and starvation, most children in America are robust. She tells us that aunt Fostalina's son TK is fat and consumes lots of sophisticated food which he heats in the microwave (158). Darling keenly observes him as he prepares his food: When the microwave says *nting*, fat boy TK takes out a pizza and eats it. When the microwave says *nting* again, he takes out the chicken wings. And then it's the burritos hot dogs. Eat eat eat. All that food TK eats in one day, me and Mother and Mother of Bones would eat in maybe two or three days back home (pp.158-159). This abundance of food in America is later reiterated by Andrew who is also known as Tsaka Zulu. He tells Darling that: In America, we saw more food than we had seen in all our lives; Chinese buffet, Mc Donald's, Burger King, KFC, all had abundant varieties of food and snacks. We ate for all our past hunger- for our brothers, sisters, relatives and friends who are still back there" (p.240). While at work in Mr. Eliot's House, Darling shudders at his daughter's poor choice of food in a home with "a fridge bloated with food" when her friends back home are hungry. She is amused at Miss Kate's deliberate starvation because of the intention to lose weight in order to look sexy, "I watch her move around the kitchen like a cat, opening the fridge, opening cabinets and drawers. When at last, she has her breakfast arranged on her plate – five raisins, one little round thing, and a glass of water – I burst out laughing ... (pp.269-270). These incite her reminiscences of the poverty and hunger suffered by her friends and families back home, "I open my mouth, maybe to tell Kate about Bastard and the others and Paradise, but then I close it" (p.269).

Darling who is now in her teens, observes the abundance of opportunities that America holds for her youth, particularly the opportunity to work and school simultaneously. This reality is implied in Uncle Koyo's advice to Prince who recently arrived America from Zimbabwe, "You are in America now and you can actually be anything you want to be. Look at Obama" (p.160). Thus, on arrival in America, Darling is enrolled in Washington Academy to acquire qualitative

education which was denied her and her friends back home in Africa (p.176). As a student, Darling integrates herself into the American privilege of schooling and working simultaneously in order to fund her education. In the section entitled "My America", she lets us into details of her job at the store, "When I'm not cleaning the toilet or bagging groceries, I'm bent over a big cart like this, sorting out bottles and cans with names like Faygo, Pepsi, Dr Pepper, 7-Up, root beer, Miller Budweiser, Heineken. They are collected over at the front, where they have been returned for deposit, and then wheeled back here, where I have to separate the cans and put them in the rows of tall boxes lining the wall" (p.253). Through the voice of Andrew who is now psychologically challenged, the author takes us on a journey into the numerous predicaments and frustrations of African emigrants in America. In his usual habit of voicing his predicaments in America to anyone who cares to listen, he tells Darling that majority of them live in fear and in shame because of expired visas, documentation and involvement in crimes. Thus, they are branded as 'illegals' in the country. Andrew further paints a vivid picture of their unpleasant everyday realities in America: We dropped our heads because we were no longer people; we were now illegals. When they debated what to do with illegals, we stopped breathing, stopped laughing, stopped everything, and listened. We heard: invasion, deportation, illegals, illegals, illegals. We bit our tongues till we tasted blood, sat tensely on our cheek, afraid to sit on both because how can you sit properly when you don't know about your tomorrow? (p.244).

Because of their illegal status, they have no option than to take up low paying jobs such as cleaning of toilets, picking of fruits under harsh weather, working with dangerous machines which have maimed and killed many of them. As the narrative races to the end, Darling calls home and speaks with her friend Chipo who updates us on the fate of other members of the gang back home. Chipo is delivered of a baby girl who is named Darling. The baby is so named because of the need to fill the void left by Darling's departure. Bastard has migrated to South Africa. Godknows is in Dubai. Sbho joined a theatre group that travels all over the world. Stina is not up to anything. Chipo is still in Paradise with her daughter. She is obviously tied down in paradise because of her baby. From the foregoing, it is obvious that these are smart and intelligent children who only desire both parental and institutional encouragement in order to attain their full potentials. Unfortunately, it is obvious that these children can only make progress by leaving their home land for

other climes with better policies for the youth. No wonder Bulawayo describes her Zimbabwean nation as a place “where people live and hope and dream and leave”.

Conclusion

In this study, we have deployed qualitative methodology as well as Sigmund Freud’s Psychoanalytical strand of ‘Child Development Theory’, in order to examine the influence of Bulawayo’s real-life childhood experiences on her choice of characters and subject matter in the narrative. In this theoretical paradigm, Freud has argued that childhood experiences have indelible influence on man’s behavior and personality and that childhood unconscious desires to a large extent influence his behaviour as an adult. Freud’s position is in tandem with Bulawayo’s preoccupation in this narrative. As stated above, Bulawayo has severally stated that Darling’s story is her story, the story of her childhood experiences in Africa and the story of her life as an emigrant in America. Here, she harps on the frustrations of being born in Africa. Narrated through the lens of a child protagonist named Darling, *We Need New Names* brings to the fore the numerous challenges of the child in contemporary Zimbabwe, and by extension, most nations in Africa. This African setting is portrayed as a place where children are perpetually out of school because their teachers have all left in search of greener pastures in more developed climes; a place where innocent babies lose their lives due to insensitivities of leaders as portrayed in the death of baby Freedom; a place where vulnerable children as young as eleven years old are impregnated by adults who should protect them as portrayed in the case of Darling’s friend named Chipu who is impregnated by her grandfather; a place where democracy and electoral processes are truncated by ‘sages’ in government because of their desperation to perpetually remain in power; a place where parents are unemployed and cannot provide for their children, a place where the youth can only realize their potential by migrating to other climes, particularly America and Dubai, a journey from which they are not likely to return. This study, therefore, recommends a reorientation of the mind and consciousness of leaders in Africa towards the formulation of policies which are friendly to citizens, particularly children who are their nations’ future leaders.

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