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A STUDY OF NOVIOLET BULAWAYO'S 'WE NEED NEW NAMES'
FROM THE POINT OF POLITICAL DIMENSION.

ABSTRACT: This paper will present us the issue of Contemporary African fictions with special reference to Noviolet Bulawayo's 'We Need New Names'. It will study various aspects of politics, political dimensions like imperialism, colonialism, migration, hybridization, social movements and social conflicts, working of NGO's and so on. It will also present us the chaos and degradation caused by political instability in Zimbabwe which led to the movement of masses, leaving their own places to a small new place where there is no space to move around and no proper houses.

The paper will also study the struggles faced by the people of Zimbabwe because of the political clashes which is represented in the novel by Noviolet Bulawayo through the main character Darling, her family and her friends. It will also give us the positive and negative effects of political clashes and violence.

Key words: Politics, Imperialism, Conflicts, Migration and Hybridization.

INTRODUCTION

Political dimension refers to the intensification and expansion of political interrelations across the globe. It deals with all types of political affairs within the state and the people and the world. The political dimension considers how this process raise an important set of political issues pertaining to the principles of state sovereignty, the growing impact of the inter-governmental organizations and the future prospects for regional and global governance, global migration flows. It deals with imperialism where people tries to expand their territory or land inorder to impose power on the weaker section of people which leads to social movement of people from one place to another. It also gives rise to social conflict between different groups of people, war conflict, terrorism and political violence which sometimes kills large number of innocent people. Democratic practices, human rights and global NGO's are another dimensions of politics. It is through these small social groups that people tries to run the world. When we talk about politics it is always associated with people, it is through the works of different groups of people politics works.

Politics is another important issue in Contemporary African Literature. Contemporary African writers like Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie, Sefi Atta, Petina Gappah, Adaobi Tricia Nwaubani, Noviolet Bulawayo and other young writers took a different turn from the first and second generation groups of writers. Writers like Chinua Achebe, Ngugi Wa Thiongo, Wole Soyinka particularly writes on the themes like the effects of colonialism, lives of the Africans before and after colonialism, their traditional roots, cultures, and so on but the contemporary African writers presents their writings in a different way although their themes are sometimes

somewhat similar. With the emergence of globalization in Africa, the old age traditions and customs have loosen up their hold. The impact of globalization can be clearly seen in the works of these new groups of writers. Their works are an example of the twenty-first century world where everything is globalized. Their works represents the lifestyles of the present generation people of Africa.

Noviolet Bulawayo is a famous Contemporary African novelist and her debut novel reflects the story of the political struggle in Zimbabwe. Noviolet Bulawayo is a contemporary African writer from Zimbabwe and her novel *We Need New Names* was the only African novel shortlisted for the 2013 Man Booker Prize and she is the first black African woman to achieve the feat. Her work has been published in numerous anthologies, *Boston Review*, *Callaloo* and *Newsweek*. She earned her MFA in creative writing from Cornell University in 2010, where she was recognised with a Truman Capote Fellowship.

POLITICAL DIMENSIONS IN NOVIOLET BULAWAYO'S "WE NEED NEW NAMES"

The novel 'We Need New Names' was written by Noviolet Bulawayo which was published in the year 2013. The novel reflects the political instability that has affected Zimbabwe for a very long period of time. The whole novel centres around the main Protagonist Darling, her family and friends and the political tensions bought by the Zimbabwean crisis which forces them to move from one place to another inoder to sustain their lives. The novel is set in a small town called Paradise but this Paradise is not really a Paradise, it is a sprawling suburb of hell. Bulawayo echoes out the sounds of despair, reverberations of people living without any hopeful hope triggered by the repressive rule of resident president, Robert Mugabe. Paradise is a dirty

smelly place full of thousands of tin shacks and no real houses. Darling with her friends live in that tin shacks. Bulawayo gives a child's-eye view of a world where there is talk of elections and democracy but where chaos and degradation become everyday reality, where death and sickness and the threat of violence lurk in , where people try to hold on to dignity while families fracture. The children spend their days getting into mischief, stealing guavas from rich neighbourhood know as Budapest, inventing a life of adventure and make believe, day-dreaming of enjoying luxury overseas in places such as Dubai and America. The Zimbabwe in which Darling and her friends live is one of poverty. Chipso, Darling's eleven years old friend is pregnant for her grandfather and the children poignantly attempt a futile abortion on her. It is like every dark thing happening is normal to them. But more than that, they enjoy life like other children playing games like Country games, Find Bin Laden game, Funeral game in For Real, Adult game in Blak Power. Since they cannot go to schools and their teachers have all and their homes have all been destroyed because of the political clash, they have nothing else to do other than play and eat guavas to constipate themselves and drive away their hunger.

When elections fails, men returns to their disillusioned lives. Men are portrayed as immoral beings, who impregnates their own granddaughter, Bulawayo also portrays different types of people like a false prosperity-preaching prophet called Prophet Revelations Bitchington Mborro, a senselessly verbose security guard, an AIDS- ravaged father, barbaric men looting from houses and writing on a wall with excitement, a mentally deranged old man called Tshaka Zulu. Darling experiences all these horrors in her locality with childlike naivety but she has a deep sense of hope. She has a utopian view of America and does not pause to think of the country's own challenges as she dreams of it and says "I'm going to America to live with my aunt Fostalina, it won't be long, you'll see". She actually makes it there and is amazed by the

variety of choice and food but she also faces many problem when she lives there. Bulawayo also talks about emigration and the problems that come with the illegal status of some Africans. Bulawayo also writes a chapter titled “How they lived” where she tells their life there. Darling misses her home and friends alot but she equally feels detached and somewhat snobbish and cold to them on the phone. The cultural dislocation and dilemma creates a gaping rift in her mind as she reaches adolescence, to the extent that she does not even call her own mother, which brings to mind many Africans in the diaspora. She inherits many habits of the American teenagers like the American accent, cruising as a group in town with the car of her friend’s mother which they drive without her knowledge, watching pornography online and texting. Bulawayo’s literary techie exploits; texting, skype conversation in making it a very contemporary book and all more impressive. There is also utmost conflict in the novel between Chipso and Darling, Chipso accuses Darling of becoming Americanized and abandoning their country which she pretends to call home. The accusation angers Darling and she even hurls her computer to the wall which she later regrets.

It is all because of the political conflict that brings up countless themes in the novel like poverty, stealing, kids play, religion, false prophecy, destruction, death, emigration, cultural dislocation, conflict, longing, infidelity, illegality and so on. Politics is constantly hinted in *We Need New Names* all through Darling’s eyes. When Darling and her friends were younger and living in Paradise, they help hang up political posters that promise change, watch as the adults leave to cast their votes in an election, and come back proud and hopeful, dancing and singing long into the night. They also witness this change that does not take place, and the way people are buried after being killed for their involvement in such political matters. Furthermore, the children love to play imaginative political games having to do with global domination and

worldwide search for Osama Bin Laden. These hints at politics through Darling's eyes and the children's games and discussions means that the focus of the novel stays on emotions and relationships, the way that politics has affected the real people in Zimbabwe. Darling becomes more aware of the political sphere when she went to America, she witness the election of Barack Obama, which makes her family very happy. She also witnesses a speech made by the Zimbabwean president which makes her uncle very happy but her aunt unhappy, which is something that she does not understand, as it has to do with complex lines of trade and interaction between Zimbabwe and the west. Throughout the novel she interacts with Zimbabwean politics by watching it on TV and tries to understand how it affects Paradise, her friends, and her family.

This study examines literary representations of Zimbabwean political instability that has affected Zimbabweans over the last decade is widely referred to as the 'crisis', the Zimbabwean crisis has attracted global debate and many scholars have attempted to find answers as to what has contributed to the demise of a country that was once the pride of Africa. The crisis in Zimbabwe cannot be attributed to a single cause but a series of events, dating from the attainment of independence in 1980. It attributes the economic collapse that has led to the internal and external displacement of citizens largely to the political unrest within the country. The cause of the Zimbabwean crisis are complex, it concerns itself primarily with the aftermath of the Fast Track Land Reform programme, which appears to have caused the disruption of the lives of many citizens. The Fast Track Land Reform programme, initiated by government from 2000, was meant to correct land ownership imbalances that the 'willing seller, willing buyer' 1979 Lancaster House had failed to do. Ironically, the crisis appears to have resuscitated literary creativity, such that a large body of new writing has emerged which engages with the multiple

aspects of post crisis. Bulawayo's novel focus on the displacement of Zimbabweans to the diaspora and the hardship they face in their quest to integrate into American culture. The analysis focuses on the literary strategies, the author uses to narrate the crisis including her choice of narrative voice and her experimentation with English. Bulawayo engage with the dystopian Zimbabwean landscape and reflect on the mass movement of people, within the country and to the diaspora, to escape political persecution, poverty, hunger and disease. Bulawayo explore the re-imagining and transformation of post Zimbabwean diasporic identity. The fact that Bulawayo has lived and studied in America since the age of eighteen may suggest that distance from home and her interaction with different people informs the way she represents migrant life. Her sensitive portrayal of American culture and migrants' with it is evident in her depiction of the young narrator Darling and her aunt, Fostalina. Bulawayo's personal experience is similar to that of Darling's. Darling express reflective nostalgia because she has accepted that Zimbabwe has changed and that she may never return home. Her survival as migrant depends on the reflection of her identity, which entails assimilating into American culture. Bulawayo narrates these experiences through a young narrator, Darling whose innocent, almost naive voices allows for a candid critique of the ruling party and the devastation it has brought onto its citizens. The text represents the extent to which all Zimbabweans, despite their different background have been severely affected by corrupt governance, particularly the chaotic fast land redistribution programme. Bulawayo employs a number of literary strategies, such as the child's narrative voice, experimentation with language and distinctive naming of characters.

CONCLUSION

'We Need New Names' is thus the political struggle of the Zimbabwean in particular to get a new name of their own. It is a cry for the search of their identity which Bulawayo has

presented with the story of Darling and her friends. The struggle of Darling represents the struggle of the general masses during that period of time. Starting from shifting their homes to that small shanty town of Paradise because of political issues, going through many hard times like fighting for survival, crisis of food, fake and unfulfilled political promises, working of NGO's which turns the people into angry young man, burning their heart and soul deep inside which makes them to behave wildly with their own dear ones. Bulawayo here voices the voice of many Africans particularly Zimbabweans through the fictional story of Darling. Apart from that Bulawayo also portrays the bad side of politics that brings tensions and chaos in the life of people. Bulawayo is the first Zimbabwean fiction writer to experiment with English and Ndebele. She transposes African expressions that originate from her native Ndebele language into English, and in doing so, introduces readers to the cultural norms of her society.

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