

The Depictions of Expectation Versus Reality in Noviolet Bulawayo's *We Need New Names*

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ABSTRACT

In the post-colonial era, Zimbabwe experienced a period of political and economic upheavals with a political regime whose ideology of socialism regimented Zimbabweans under an authoritarian state. In 1999, the opposition to President Mugabe and the ZANU-PF government grew considerably after the mid-1990s in part due to the worsening economic and human rights conditions brought about by the seizure of farmlands owned by white farmers and economic sanctions imposed by the Western countries in response. This economic upheaval was, and is still the cardinal reason why the citizens of Zimbabwe have almost not been a priority in the former regime, leading to their migration to seemingly better-off countries. No Violet Bulawayo is one such Zimbabwean who has left her motherland and now lives in America. In her novel, *We Need New Names*, she beautifully elaborates how the non-prioritized state of citizens in Zimbabwe is responsible for the huge number of immigrants who have left Zimbabwe and continue to leave, with hope as beautiful as a rainbow high up on their minds that maybe, just maybe, in a land far away from home, life can meaningfully

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reward their dreams which ironically, their mother country has so painfully failed to help them achieve.

Keywords; exile, prison, nostalgia, expectation, alienation, Bulawayo, Paradise, appear, come.

INTRODUCTION

NoViolet Bulawayo's debut novel, *We Need New Names* has received a number of awards with the available critical analyses' central interest being on the dual meaning and importance of names. These names are analyzed in a social-political sense with commentators arguing that the names of Darling and her friends; Bastard, Stina, Godknows, and Chido correspond to the political and economic realities in post-independent Zimbabwe.

This kind of reading is quite informative but it ignores a very interesting tangent of the novel- the depiction of Paradise as a form of prison which puts Darling in a dreamy mode about life in the USA and how great it must be. Vaso says: "The temptation of a different life seems better from afar and the easy accessibility to other countries hinders the decision to stay." (Exile. 19). I explain that Bulawayo uses powerful insights to explain how prison isn't just a four-walled guarded room but also a state of mind that the people of Paradise painfully suffer from, having been deprived of the basics of life in her novel. It is this prison which like many other forms of prison, causes Darling the protagonist, to seek a better life in the USA a place far away from Paradise, her home, a shanty town in Zimbabwe. I, therefore, elaborate that Bulawayo's text acts as an example to children who are deprived of the basic necessities of life in post-colonial countries and how their expectation causes them to go to other countries where they encounter the harsh realities of exile life, just like Darling.

A prison is a building in which people are legally held as punishment for the crime committed or while still awaiting trial. I argue in this paper, that there is a different form of prison which Bulawayo helps us to appreciate. That state of being in one's country with the inherent right to access services like health and education yet remains

with not even any hope of ever accessing them. This kind of prison like the physical one holds the Inhabitants of such a land as prisoners in the same measure, robbing them of all hope and the will to live on, just like the physical one.

Exile, on the other hand, is defined by Saidi as “a discontinuous state of being because exiles are cut off from their people, land, roots, and their past.” It can also be a state or period of being forced absent from one’s country or home. In the case of Bulawayo and in turn Darling, the protagonist in this text, it is the economic situation that in turn leaves very many social services broken down that presents their urgent need to leave Zimbabwe, a country they have known since their birth as home.

Important to note is the realization that the desire to live in exile is always fostered by a fear of being imprisoned for life in one’s own country. In this paper, I argue that Bulawayo expounds on the different ways and forms in which the government of Zimbabwe has constructed different types of prisons for its citizens besides the conventional ones. It is important to note that it is not necessarily a four-roomed guarded space but also the different ways/forms as Bulawayo elaborates as discussed below.

Bulawayo, a shanty town where different people ‘*appear*’ as a result of being displaced from their original habitations becomes an economic prison considering the fact that Darling and many other families simply ‘*appear*’ there but do not ‘*come*’. Bulawayo uses the word ‘*appear*’ not to mean ‘*come*’ because;

*They did not come to Paradise. Coming would mean that they were choosers. That they first
Looked at the sun, sat down with crossed legs, picked their teeth, and pondered the decision. That
they took time to gaze at their reflection in long mirrors, perhaps pat their hair, tighten their belts, check the watches on their wrists before looking at the red road and finally announcing: Now we are ready
for this. They didn’t come, no. They just appeared.
They appeared one by one, two by two, three by three.
They appeared single file, like the ants.*

*In swarms, like flies. In angry waves, like a wretched sea.
They appeared in the early morning, in the
afternoon, in the deed of the night. They appeared with the
dust from their crushed houses clinging to
their hair and skin and clothes, making them appear like
things from another life ... (Bulawayo. 73)*

Bulawayo uses this non-hyperbolic description to highlight the different formalities that they should have done but didn't do because of the rushed, forced way in which the inhabitants of Paradise appeared there as well as the manner in which they did. This extract shows the author's literary ability to recreate events as they happened (Mlambo.) I, therefore, argue that in appearing unevenly, that is, at different times and in no particular numbers per group, they didn't have a plan as they would if they had 'come'. Appearing in this case therefore is caused by a rude, heartbreaking, unprecedented, eviction from their homelands which in the novel is the bulldozing of their houses (on top of which debris children sit with empty eyes looking into space with pain written all over their faces and in their empty expressions) to resettle them "in those wretched reserves" (Bulawayo.75) for the rich yet evil citizens to build factories or residential houses at the expense of the easy- to-displace poor citizens.

The cause of their appearance is even made worse by the realization that their fellow black people are taking part in demolishing their houses to which Mzilawulandelwa notes, "Better a white thief do that to you than your own black brother. And just like that, they appeared in Paradise with nothing of their own except their own memories and those handed down by their mothers and mothers' mothers - a nation's memory." (Bulawayo. 75-76)

Bulawayo uses the image of a black stool left behind to symbolize a lost history, an erased past that was only embodied in Mzilawulandelwa's great grandfather's black stool which had been passed on from 'Sindimbe to his son Silile who passed it on to his son Ngalo who passed it on to his son Mabhada who passed it on to Mzilawulandelwa who was to pass it on to his son Vulindlele.' This in essence illustrates a crush/ loss of their history which means that they will never be the same again for in that black stool lay their foundation

as well as their future prospects. In appearing in Paradise, they have not only lost their houses but also who they are as a people which makes it a typical feel of prison life. Such a life of a tattered past ruined history, and hopelessness initially draws them into silence for a very long time. This feeling of disillusionment makes Paradise a typical prison which prompts Darling to leave Zimbabwe for the USA, the land of endless opportunities.

“In Paradise, the external signs of life indicate disease rather than health.” (Vaso .21) Darling’s father plays the symbolic role of the inhabitants of Paradise who go to other countries to work for survival only to contract diseases like AIDS and return home on their death beds. I argue that if he had got work opportunities in Zimbabwe as the university graduate that he was, he may have been a responsible husband and father, raising Darling his daughter with all the basic needs that she yearns for in America. In coming home very sick, he scares Darling to the core of her being, which makes her so angry, hurt, and unsympathetic. Bulawayo introduces this chapter with an arresting sound perhaps to help the reader understand Darling’s pain:

SHHHH

Father comes home after many years of forgetting us, of not sending us money, of not loving us, not anything us, and parks in the shark, unable to move, unable to talk properly, unable to anything, vomiting and vomiting and defecating on himself, and it smells like something died in there dead and rotting, his body a black, terrible stick; I come from playing Find Bin Laden and he is there.

Just there. Parked. In the corner. On mother’s bed. So thin, like he eats pins and wire, so thin at first, I don’t even see him under the blankets. I am getting on the bed to get the skipping rope for playing Andy- over. when F---- lifts his head and I see him for the first time. He is just length and bones. He is rough skin. He is crocodile teeth and egg-white eyes, lying there, drowning on the bed.” (Bulawayo.89-90)

Bulawayo deploys this powerful metaphorical description to help the reader have a full insight into the conditions which cause Darling to

feel this, sad, pained, and unsympathetic towards the only man he calls her father. She uses a variety of figures of speech-like imagery to describe the state of Darling's father upon his return home as 'length and bones, rough skin, crocodile teeth, egg white eyes' which are all carefully deployed for the reader to understand the state he is in and maybe not judge Darling so harshly. His form is only an exhibit of what the product of prison life looks and feels like. That product should naturally invoke feelings of anguish, pain, and resentment in his only daughter who fails to take it all in. Bulawayo uses allegory in the deployment of Darling's father as a demonstration of what the citizens of Zimbabwe have had to endure at the expense of a cruel and mean government whose priorities, unfortunately, exclude the welfare of its people.

Ambiguity is equally deployed in the way Darling's mother pushes her by the neck causing her to stagger forward and almost fall onto the 'terrible bones'. (Bulawayo.90). It is further evidenced in the way she almost addresses him as 'F— '(for father) but before she can utter the whole word, she immediately realizes that she is addressing the wrong person, a person who is just 'length and bones' yet her known father went to South Africa a long time ago and as far as she is concerned, is still there. I demonstrate that this realization brings into perspective the extent of Darling's denial and subsequent disillusionment in accepting the fact that her dear father is suffering from a disease that has eaten up all his flesh, leaving in his place mere lengthy bones.

This state makes Darling a symbol that Bulawayo constructs to depict the nature of denial which the Zimbabweans live in and painfully strive to thrive in yet like the sick man on his death bed, it is just left in a state in which Darling like the citizens just prays for its end to come sooner. This demonstrates how Darling has failed to get to terms with the state in which her father is to the point of wishing that he dies sooner so that she can go back to play with her friends. Referring to him as "terrible bones" shows how disgusted she is with the state her father finds himself in today. The reader sympathizes with her because seeing

one's father in such a state naturally feels the pain with which she emphasizes him as 'terrible bones'.

Bulawayo excels at displaying the pain and anguish that the citizens of Zimbabwe feel towards a government that has promised service delivery time and time again but has not delivered, thus causing a strained relationship between the two parties, the state, and the citizens, just like that relationship between Darling and her father is, he having left home with a promise to send money for supplies which he never delivers as promised. AIDS which eventually kills Darling's father is only but a symbol of the economic crisis that wrecks Zimbabwe, draining its citizens of all hope and the will to live, in the end leaving them dead in all fronts.

The citizens of Zimbabwe undergo a unique kind of death. Theirs is that emotional and psychological death that comes for them, as a result of living in prison, a prison fashioned by the state to kill its own citizens. Even if in both, the two parties undergo different types of death, the cause is the same-- a government that has given up on the citizens that it is meant to look after. Just like Darling's father may never come back to life, the Zimbabwean economy may never recover from its financial crisis which proves a dead end to its citizens. In the end, a prison for these citizens becomes the torture and hopelessness meted on them. Consequently, this torture, a form of prison, becomes the motivation for the Zimbabweans to move to other countries including Darling, the protagonist in this novel, to move to other countries.

Darling and her friends have always been hungry and have mastered the art of stealing guavas from Budapest, not so far away from Paradise where people live in affluent homes which only points to the unequal distribution of resources. It is ironic that the homes where people have it all in life are the same ones with guava trees so ripe and tasty as if to remind the reader that indeed 'To those who have, more will be given, and they will have abundance! (Mathew 25: 29) This clear divide between the rich and the poor brings into play Marx's theory by which the rich continue to amass wealth as the poor become

poorer with hunger as their frequent companion et both parties live in close quarters. It is this hunger that prompts Darling to go to the USA with the hope of finding food and eating to her fill, always.

Chido, one of Darling's friends who is pregnant courtesy of her grandfather, brings the issue of incest to the table. She tells her friends that, her grandfather A grandfather who is supposed to instill morals and ensure his granddaughter is well-behaved literary goes against all expectations and rapes her on the occasion of her grandmother's absence leaving her so wretched and violated. This act brings out the view that the grandfather violates his granddaughter in the same measure that Zimbabwe has done to its citizens, draining them of all the will to live just like Chido.

In giving herself up for an abortion procedure to her friends, Chido demonstrates a lack of hope and the will to carry on with the pregnancy any longer just like the citizens of Zimbabwe have got to the end of their hope in their government and have decided to leave for better-governed nations. Her friends realize the need for new names to become relevant to the procedure. Sibho who has previously watched what happens in the hospital in Harare on television distributes the new names complete with descriptions and he himself becomes Dr. Bullet the beautiful, while Darling becomes Dr. Roz the tall one, Forgiveness becomes Dr. Cutter, and Chido is the patient. The script is set for the naivety of the desired procedure that this team of doctors is set to execute— removing the fetus with just a hanger as the patient dismisses the need for the doctors to remove her pair of shorts saying, “If I take off my shorts then you will see my thing.” (Bulawayo: 85)

This pitiful scenario mirrors a situation where both the patient and the doctors are at a loss as to what is supposed to actually be done. Such pathetic scenarios are real in Zimbabwe where people who have not studied and got permission to assume particular professions that they have no idea about - particularly in hospitals - may leave many people dead with medical procedures gone wrong. So Darling painfully leaves Zimbabwe, the only country she has ever known yet it fails to provide

the necessary social services like health care, to embrace America with the hope of accessing better service delivery.

In this novel, Zimbabwe is described as a ‘wretched’ country and its citizens are said to have inherited its wretchedness.

I argue that this assertion naturally leaves out any room for courage and hope to thrive, later alone flourish. This assertion is concretized by Stina, one of Darling’s friends who says that ‘a country is like a Coca-Cola bottle that can smash on the floor and disappoint you. “When a bottle smashes, you cannot put it back together.” (Bulawayo: 160) I read from this statement, Stina’s realization that a country like Zimbabwe has fallen from its former economic glory and down to its current economic crisis, an emptiness which is a powerful way for a child, young as she is to describe that wretched state which Zimbabwe has become today.

This argument is backed by Darling’s father, a university graduate who says, ‘We should have left this wretched country when all this started.’(Bulawayo.92) seemingly cementing his daughter’s resolve to actually leave Zimbabwe, that wretched country, and go to America, a seemingly better land of promise and countless opportunities. Having been imprisoned for so long in the Zimbabwean prison, and in a particular cell called Paradise, like any former prisoner who has been rehabilitated, she longs to reconstruct her life and this time live it meaningfully. This is why she wants to start out in a place so far away, a place with no in-built reminders of her former prison, a place that can welcome her with open arms and clothe her with boundless opportunities to be the girl that she has always longed to be.

Darling is set to go to America which she imagines has everything she has ever dreamt of with beautiful and kind people like those five of the NGO who always give them items like toy guns, some sweets, and some clothes to wear. From these NGOs, as she said, “I get a T-shirt with the word Google at the front, plus a red dress that is tight at the armpits. Thank you much, I say to the pretty lady, who hands me my things, to show her that I know English, she doesn’t say anything back, like maybe I just barked.” (Bulawayo. 55).

Those kind Americans seem greater to her than the people of Paradise yet it is ironic that she still finds it relevant to get some protection against evil after being convinced by her mother to go to Vodloza who makes her sneeze and cough after smoking from a guard with some protection from her ancestors and adds a bone attached to a rainbow-colored string which she gets tied around her waist against the evil people she might encounter in America. Her satisfaction is however cut short when the machines at the airport detect a 'nting nting' noise and her aunt Fostalina helps the police by personally throwing the bones away in the dustbin. The irony here is how Darling feels uncomfortable without her charm/weapon in America where she doesn't have any known enemies, she feels comfortable among her own people in Paradise whom she still leaves behind. This very clearly explains the reality of how she actually feels at ease at home yet prides herself in going away to a place where it is worse even with plenty of food yet she still feels so insecure. 'Darling exchanges a life of hardship but with happiness for an easy life but with sadness and uncertainty.' (Lisa.2013)

Chapter 10 of this novel titled, 'How They Left' explains which people from Zimbabwe left their wretched country and moved to other countries with relevant promises;

Look at them leaving in droves, the children of the land, just look at them leaving in droves. Those with nothing are crossing the borders. Those with strength are crossing the borders. Those with ambitions are crossing the borders. Those with loss are crossing the borders. Those in pain are crossing the boarders. Moving, running, emigrating, going, deserting, walking, quitting, flying fleeing to all over, to countries near and far, to countries unheard of, to countries whose names they cannot pronounce. They are leaving in droves.

When things fall apart, the children of the land scurry and scatter, like birds escaping a burning sky (Bulawayo.145)

This chapter mainly informs the reader that those people who left did so because when 'things fall apart', the movement of people happens. Bulawayo, in using Chinua Achebe's title in this line

powerfully pays homage to him and also agrees with him regarding post-colonial ruin in Africa. Darling re-echoes the same feeling when she asks, “Who wants to be in a country full of hunger When things are falling apart?” Bulawayo uses such repetition to particularly emphasize the fact that people mainly leave in droves because things are no longer the same- when things fall apart, a country like Zimbabwe is left with nothing to offer its citizens! Bulawayo in this way, shows unity in adding to the list of issues that cause people to leave their countries in search of better lives elsewhere.

The extract above demonstrates that they are not only the lazy ones with nothing much to offer who leave but also those people who are strong, and ambitious, and that they hope to actually leave in search of a better country where to establish themselves and try to call it home too. I suggest that those citizens who had ambition could have been the ones who went running and eventually ended up deserting Zimbabwe considering that they had the idea of what they wanted to do as opposed to those who had nothing but still went anyway. Vaso says “The temptation of a different life that seems better from afar and the easy accessibility to other countries hinders the decision to stay” (Exile .19) Darling like other citizens chooses to leave and she flies with her aunt Fostalina to ‘Destroyed Michigan’ – in America.

The 16th chapter describes how they lived in America. On a positive end, they enjoyed the food in big quantities, at MacDonald’s they devoured Big Macs, AT Burger King, they enjoyed Whoopers, white rice KFC they mauled bucket chicken, went to Chinese buffets where they ate fried rice, chicken, and beef, shrimp as well as those whose names they could not read and merely pointed out saying, that too. And they Wolfed down fries with supersize Cokes which made them so happy to the point of, ‘rummaging through the dustbins of our heart to retrieve the stained broken pieces of God where we had flung him during our desperate moments when we were dizzy with hunger’. They ate like pigs, wolves, dignitaries, vultures, stray dogs, monsters, and kings. They ate for their past hunger, for their relatives and friends back home. Uttering their names between mouthfuls brought up their

hungry faces in that moment. Bulawayo's use of an elephant figure is relevant in elaborating how heavy and sluggish they move after filling their stomachs this much. It is this kind of food that makes them remember God and choose to redirect their trust in him. During such moments, however, when out in the city they met other people:

And when they asked us where we came from, we exchanged glances with Shyness of child brides. They said Africa? We nodded. What part of Africa? We smiled. Where the life expectancy is thirty-five years? We smiled. Is it where dissidents shove AK-47s between women's legs? We smiled. Where people run around naked? We smiled. Is it where the old president rigged the election and people were tortured and killed and a whole bunch of them put into prison and all, there where they are dying of cholera- oh my God, yes we've seen your country on TV; it's been on the news.

And when these words rumbled through their lips like crushed bricks, we exchanged glances again and the water in our eyes broke. Our smiles melted like dying shadows and we wept; wept for our blessed, wretched country. We wept and they pitied us and said, it's okay- it's okay, you are in America now, and still we wept and wept like widows, we wept like orphans. (Bulawayo. 237 – 238)

This lengthy description explains the raw emotions that Darling lives in while in America. Random people find it easy to approach her and remind her of the wretchedness of her country which does not help her at all in finding rest from the constant reminders of what Zimbabwe her home country is. This state is mainly brought out by the race factor. Being black, it is so easy for the non-white citizens of America to be easily identified. This state in a way constitutes her second prison though this time a lighter and bearable one.

Nostalgic memories of her childhood days convey a sense of complete comfort and happiness on arrival in Michigan. The memory of Bastard and Sibho, God knows and Chido who have always called her to Budapest to look for guavas provide the warmth she needs when

she looks through the window and instead sees neither the Jacaranda tree nor a trader singing what she is selling but just nothing that is familiar to her to which TK (uncle Kojo's son and Aunt Fostalina's live-in husband) intimates, 'This is America, you won't see none of that African shit up in this motherfucker' (Bulawayo.147). Darling's first day in Michigan makes her yearn for home, particularly because of her friends whom she already misses so much. This is the first time she notices her dissatisfaction despite the fact that she is now in 'her' America.

When Darling begins to feel at ease with her aunt Fostalina, she realizes that the aunt keeps in the sitting room, walking to nowhere in particular. Darling later discovers that Faustalina actually exercises in trying to cut her weight so as to look like the white women who are so thin and slender yet Uncle Kojo dislikes skinny women who don't represent Africa. Such a disagreement in a family definitely breeds conflict which is not good for family stability and well-being. Darling watches the difference in opinion in disbelief wondering who even refuses to eat such nice American food! Kojo goes on to question why Fostalina doesn't cook hot meals every day, do laundry, and iron as well as clean and keep clean. TK mutters to his father's suggestion, 'patriarchal, motherfucker' as if defending his aunt Fostalina's lifestyle, as Fostalina throws her remaining food on the plate in the dustbin, a sign that Kojo's outburst takes with it her appetite. Such a household with such conflict is not what Darling had anticipated in her quest to go to America. She must wonder silently why the 'well-off' people in her new home are never at peace with themselves. The discord in Aunt Fostalina's marriage in a way illustrates Darling's American dream which she never really gets to wholly embrace, in her whole adult life she stays in America.

Another surprising issue that strikes Darling in America is the way people change their body shapes and sizes with a lot of ease. She takes this to be a huge problem as she can't imagine someone feeling that she is in the wrong body, "Doctor I was born in a wrong body, just make it right. Doctor, I don't like this nose, these breasts, and these lips" (Bulawayo.239.) This in my view makes Americans look half-hearted

and lacking as far as self-appreciation is concerned. Darling further wonders why they have to send away their aging parents to be taken care of by strangers. This feels like the highest level of irresponsibility considering that parents spend a lifetime raising these children who do not see the need to do the same for their aging parents. Darling looks at this as strange because of her background in Zimbabwe where the younger generation looks after their aging parents in the comfort of their homes. Darling further thinks that the practice where parents have no right to beat their children is too strange for one has to really pay for the wrong action done which makes America not that beautiful place she has always dreamt of while in her wretched country, Zimbabwe.

Darling finds the English language such a huge problem because of the way it is meant to be used. When she has not mastered it, she cannot use her own language because she is not in her country which causes her to keep quiet for such a long time. When she finally tries to speak, her voice is bruised which I think is caused by a lack of relevant grammar, intonation, and a lack of confidence. This explains why “when we talked, our tongues thrashed madly in our mouths, staggered like drunken men. We said things we did not mean, yet what we wanted to say remained folded inside, trapped.” (Bulawayo.240).

This language issue in itself becomes a prison that she has to live in each day until she can find a fellow Zimbabwean to ‘summon the horses of their languages, mount their backs and gallop past skyscrapers.’ This beautiful feeling of speaking their home languages usually makes them reluctant to have to realign themselves for English. This terrible feeling is always brushed away by remembering how getting the American Visa is as hard as “crawling through the anus of a needle. Darling remembers how it takes begging, despair, promise, charm, groveling- anything to get out of her country. (Bulawayo. 240) This in a way, calms her down as she gets resigned to the torture of an unknown language, a prison for her, among many other forms of prison in America.

Darling and her new friends Marina and Kristal often hang out at Darling’s home in the basement where they watch disturbing images of pornography which terribly gets them hooked and she gets addicted to assuming the female role just like her two friends who moan so loud

and fiercely as the man in the flick tears inside her, “Now the boy is pumping, grinding digging. We imagine he is fire and we scream as if we are burning in hell. Usually, Kristal is the loudest because she has a high-pitched voice, but today Marina surpasses us all.” (Bulawayo.202). The adverb *usually* is deployed strategically by Bulawayo to help the reader realize that these girls have been watching such movies and playing the female role in the movies for such a long period of time. Kristal’s voice which sounds so low like maybe she is dying of thirst helps the reader to realize that these girls actually get sexual satisfaction. It is through watching such movies that these girls get to realize how men actually have ‘long dangling things ‘which causes them to wonder’ if they don’t dangle in the water when these men sit on the toilet to do number two’. Darling gets introduced to sex and addicted to it in America right in her own home without the watchful eyes of her aunt Fostalina, getting wretched in America, her dream country.

On getting to America, Darling, like many other people doesn’t see herself becoming the person she has set out to be. This is because she realizes that she actually has no school fees to pay for her tuition irrespective of the fact that has a school visa, ‘The spirits back home are hungry and only crawl instead of dancing because they wanted blood and meat and millet beer, they wanted sacrifices, they wanted gifts. And save for a few grains of tobacco, we had nothing to give, absolutely nothing.’ (Bulawayo. 241). On realizing this sad fact, ‘we get hold of our American dream, look at them tenderly as if they were newly born children and put them away, we would not be pursuing them’. (Bulawayo. 241)

This is the most important realization which among many others breaks Darling down. She breaks the law and works even when she is not supposed to as a ‘student’. The irony here is why Darlings chooses to break the law in America, the land of beautiful promises which she doesn’t think of when she is at home in Zimbabwe. I assert that the extreme in changing from the status of being a student to now someone illegally living in America is such an extremely sad state. This is because she has to hold her breath every time the debate on illegals is on. “We bit our tongues till we tasted blood, sat tensely on one butt

cheek, afraid to sit on both because how can you sit properly when you don't know about your tomorrow?" (Bulawayo.242)

The illegal state of not having legal documentation is a life estrangement from her family back home which causes Darling like many illegals to keep lying to their parents about returning home soon saying, "We are coming very soon, we are coming next year. And next year came we said, Next year for real. And when next year for real came, we said next year for sure. And when next year for sure came we said we are coming, you'll see, just wait. And our parents waited and they saw, that we did not come. We could not attend their funerals because we still had no papers." (Bulawayo.248) She loses her relatives back home and the best she can do is to mourn from afar which she does by turning on her music so that she does not attract attention to herself as she 'writhes and wails on the floor.'

This state keeps Darling, like many other illegals in restricted relationships, associating mainly with fellow illegals so as not to be found out. This is the best way for her to avoid their wrath, curiosity, and attention as an extreme measure not to be smoked out. These illegals assign themselves new names whenever one asks their name as a way of being fluid. Whenever they are asked to produce papers, they leave such a job and hop to the next. In finding fellow illegals with names so hard to pronounce, they then refer to them by their countries:

So how on earth do you do this Sri Lanka? Mexico, are you coming or what?

Is it really true you sold a kidney to come to America, India? Guys, just give Tshaka Zulu a break, the guy is old. I'm just saying. We know you despise this job, Sudan, but deal with it man.

Come, Ethiopia, move, move, move; Israel, Kazakhstan, Niger brother, let's go! (Bulawayo. 243). This is the second instance where characters require to get new names to fulfill their roles which brings out the relevance of the novel's title, *We Need New Names* for indeed they need survival. The bottom line is that they all speak different languages but share the same experience like 'wallets with faded photographs of mothers and fathers who are as defeated as Darling's. 'The back-breaking jobs that gnawed at the bones of our dignity,

devoured the meat like cleaning toilets, bagging groceries, sorting out bottles and cans where she often finds nasty things like blood stains, pieces of trash, cigarette stubs drowning in stale beer, the color of urine and one time, a used condom which makes her vomit on every shift' (Bulawayo. 244).

Bulawayo uses the word 'gnaw' to help her reader understand the feeling which wears Darling down in her struggle to remain in America. And for them to work, first they iron their pride flat and are able to clean toilets, pick tobacco and fruit under the boiling sun, "until we hung our tongues and panted like lost hounds. We butchered animals, slit throats, and drained blood. We worked with dangerous machines, holding our breath like crocodiles, our minds on the money and never on our lives." (Bulawayo. 244).

Such a state of affairs should ideally make Darling loathe America yet hers is a closed deal and she cannot look back. This state makes America not as desirable as Darling makes it appear when she dreams about it while still in Paradise. Personification beautifully deployed by Bulawayo helps the reader to get a clear picture of what the protagonist has to endure. In 'ironing her pride' for instance, lies her resignation to whom she has become, an illegal migrant in America. This illegality of her no longer makes America, 'her America' as she fondly refers to it, that desirable.

Darling earns so little yet has to send it back home through Western Union or Money Gram as a way of looking after her family. Constant messages from home keep such illegals busy working like dogs, slaves, and mad men yet messages saying Hunger, Help, and Kunzima keep coming in. The irony is that there is more money to send home than what they can earn yet those relatives keep mocking them for working hard to which Darling smiles, knowing that they will never understand the pain she endures to afford the alleged little money. This makes working far away from home such an unrewarding venture.

Darling and her fellow illegals keep in a constant fight to take pictures in fancy places like the White House, lady Liberty, Niagara Falls, and Times New Square and then send them home, "showing off a country that would never be ours." (Bulawayo.245). In these pictures,

the motivation for sending them is never written about “because that is an inheritance which you achieve and have no wish to share.” (Saidi. 2000) when such pictures stir the desire of their relations to come to America, she doesn't stop them, she like many other illegals sends money for visas and tickets for the youth itching to join the American dream. In the end, Darling's work in America benefits everyone else except herself.

Waves of nostalgia sweep Darling off her feet very often like when people from Zimbabwe go to America especially workers like her, she immediately wants to establish how the earth smells like right before it smells, how it smells after the rain, the news about their land whether big or small and how after the rain flying ants explode from the ground like fireworks. In missing her home, she asks about particular people like the crazy Prophet Revelation Bitchington Mborro and places like City Hall, as well as the Jacaranda trees that line the streets in town. The greatest of them is that she longs to see the elderly faces of her people from which she can understand whether life has been kind or unkind to them, during her absence.

The most painful event that happens to her is the inability to name her children after herself or her other relatives. This she does so that they do not fail to pronounce their own names in the future, also that their friends and teachers do not fail to pronounce their names in class as well as ensuring that these children can find belonging. She gives her grandchildren names that mean nothing like Aaron, Coley, Jack, and Kathleen. She also does not bury their umbilical cords under the land to bind them to the land because she has no land of her own. She does not hold her children's heads over smoking herbs to make them strong, does not tie fetishes around their waists to protect them from evil spirits, and does not even spill tobacco on the earth to announce their arrivals because she of her being in a completely different setting where some of the requirements are not available. This pain still lies in her inability to tell her children what to do as new parents as a way of orientation.

Darling, like many illegals in America, painfully watches herself as transitions through whom new generations are brought forth in America. She helplessly watches painfully her children sham listening to stories from their motherland in favor of being on their computers

and giggling all day. She accepts many facts like not being able to draw blood and teach raw lessons to last her children a lifetime. ‘When those children became young adults, they still do not seek approval to marry, their parents do not get the bride price and gifts. They do not spill beer and tobacco on the earth and cannot even beat drums to thank their ancestors. ‘That they live independent lives with no need for their parents’ advice only leaves Darling with a feeling of uselessness which is in turn explained by the way she and other aging illegals are sent to nursing homes to live at the mercy of strangers. This state transmits into searing pain as Darling realizes that she will never be mourned properly on her demise for;

They will not go mad with grief, they will not pin black cloth on their arms, they will not spill beer and tobacco on the earth, they will not sing till their voices are hoarse.

They will not send us away with mphafa trees. We will leave for the land of the dead naked, without the things we need to enter the castle of our ancestors. Because we will not be proper, the spirits will not come running to meet us, and so we will wait and wait and wait - forever waiting in the air like flags of unsung countries. (Bulawayo.250)

I argue that this sad anticipation of not getting a befitting burial and the fear of not crossing over to the land where her ancestors find rest causes Darling to question if at all the price, she pays in enduring all the heartache that comes with being an illegal migrant in America is not enough to let her soul finally rest in peace. Her question is relevantly answered by Saidi who states that “the achievements of exile are permanently undermined by the loss of something left behind forever and like death it has torn millions of people from the nourishment of tradition, family, and geography.”

CONCLUSION

In the discussion above, it is clear that Darling leaves her home and moves to America – Detroit Michigan with a promise so beautiful and real. In leaving, she thinks she finally leaves the trappings of pain and misery behind her which is not the case as evidenced by the many terrible reasons already discussed. The horror of the life she leads in

America gives her all the reasons to refer to her place of residence As 'Destroyed 'and not Detroit Michigan because it is responsible for the brokenness she now endures which endurance she has to carry forward even to her afterlife considering the fact that her incomplete burial will not ensure her safe transition to the land where her ancestors now rest. Darling indeed, exchanges a life of hardship where she was happy for a life of counter misery where she is not only pained but also frustrated. To Vaso, Darling's internal exile results from the incongruity between her inherent nature and the requirements of the external exile. (P.5) This paper therefore is a demonstration of the old adage which says that 'all that glitters is not gold' which Darling discovers rather too late in Bulawayo's novel, *We Need New Names*.

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