

25 August 2021

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## NEWSLETTER FROM BEN FREETH IN ZIMBABWE

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*Zimbabwe's Gonarezhou National Park with the Chilojo cliffs and life-giving Runde river*

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### *Dear Colleagues and Friends*

We apologise for the long delay since our last newsletter but it's been a very challenging time for everyone.

Our chairman, Claire Freeth, became very ill and suffered from delirium as a result of severe pneumonia caused by the exhaustion of my father's degenerating condition. She was admitted to hospital, after which she needed two months of complete rest. Fortunately she's now fully recovered, which is a great relief for us all.

After death of my father, Zach Freeth, a founding trustee of the Mike Campbell Foundation, we were unable to organise a memorial service due to Covid-19 restrictions. His thanksgiving service was finally held on Wednesday 18 August and the [link for the recording](#) will be live until Wednesday 25 August – or soon after – for any friends who would like to watch it. (Note: the actual service starts at 6:30 minutes).

Once the stringent Covid restrictions had been lifted in Zimbabwe, it was good to get back into the country. My immediate objective was to engage with what has been happening on the ground and with key non-governmental role players, and to try to make a positive difference. The situation continues to be deeply difficult, with complex dynamics at play, but there are also rays of light and hope.

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## AN OVERVIEW OF THE CURRENT SITUATION

**Mbuya Nehanda statue:** President Mnangagwa's unveiling of a huge statue to the spirit medium Mbuya Nehanda in central Harare on 25 May (Africa Day) - amid the collapse of the health system and economic chaos - has become a highly controversial issue. Mbuya Nehanda is regarded as a liberation heroine and anti-colonialism figurehead whose spirit is believed to have lived on in different people since then. During a worship ceremony beneath the statue, President Mnangagwa proclaimed that "her bones had risen".



*(Left) The statue of Mbuya Nehanda; (Right) The complex walkway structure to the statue*

Unknown millions of US dollars were spent on the project and infrastructure - overseen by Vice President Constantino Chiwenga. To have a spirit medium take centre stage in the capital with such a worship ceremony presided over by the president is prophetically very disturbing for the future. I have been speaking to various key people about this, and there is clearly a stirring of dissent.

Regarding the implications for the 2023 elections, a 2018 [research paper on the ancestors, violence and democracy](#) noted: "In Zimbabwe, each cycle of election is characterised by constant reminders concerning the voices of the departed, reminding the voters that their democratic exercise through elections must align with the wishes of the nation's ancestors such as [Mbuya] Nehanda ... [The] world of the ancestors is used effectively to bring fear by those in power, serving their own political interest at the expense of the democratic rights of the people to choose their own leaders."

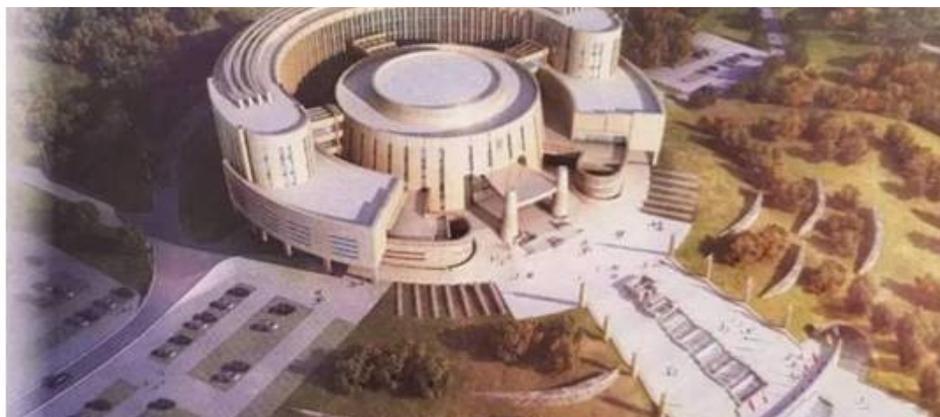
**The Zimbabwean currency:** The highest denomination note of 50 Bond dollars was released in July with an image of Mbuya Nehanda on it - as well as people with arms of war. When it was printed last year, it was worth US\$50. It is now worth less than 40 US cents. I believe that there is a prophetic lesson in this. There is massive corruption involved, with an official exchange rate that is nearly half the value of the unofficial exchange rate.



*The new 50 Bond dollar note features Mbuya Nehanda*



**The new parliament building:** A few years ago, we tried to erect a very large cross with the Ten Commandments on it on Mount Hampden outside Harare. The hill is owned by a church and was known as “the prayer mountain”. The air force stopped us from doing so and the hill was compulsorily acquired subsequently for the massive new parliament building “gifted” by China. The Chinese, not known for their parliamentary democracy, are currently constructing the US\$140 million complex. This is an inauspicious start to the life of the new parliament. Building on private church property that has not been paid for by government goes against both the 8th and 10th Commandments, i.e. not stealing or coveting. David Drury, the Harare lawyer who assisted us with the Campbell case at the SADC Tribunal, has been trying to help with rectifying this.



*(Left) A poster in the Chimanimani district depicting the progress of the new parliament building;  
(Right) Structural work on the massive complex was completed during mid 2020*

**Gift Konjana election case:** It is now more than three years since the MDC-Alliance’s candidate for the Chegutu West constituency in the 2018 parliamentary elections, Gift Konjana, won the seat but was not installed as the MP! The Constitutional Court eventually allocated a date to sit, but the case was delayed again. However, the ConCourt did finally sit and judgment has been reserved. Presumably, due to the glaring failure of the courts to hear the case within the mandatory six months specified in the Constitution, the court will continue to delay. [Click here](#) to read our press release in ZimLive on 7 April 2021.

**Seed project:** It was an excellent season for our open-pollinated maize seed project and Bruce Campbell did exceptionally well on the 10ha of land that we have leased. The crop, which yielded more than 5 tonnes per hectare, has been harvested and packed and, together with our distribution partners, we have already begun handing out approximately 12,000 free open-pollinated seed packs to those rural people who are most in need across the country. This is an amazing blessing for them. Bruce had Covid-19 recently, but thankfully has recovered well with use of the drug Ivermectin.



*One of our maize plants yielded five good quality cobs which we’ve never seen before!*

**The National Crop:** In the wake of a very favourable rainy season, our farmers have done well this year as a record area was planted. Numerous skilled farmers are also back and are leasing land. Furthermore, the *Foundations for Farming* conservation agriculture (CA) principles are being taught widely, now that government has finally accepted them. This is partly due to the success of our CA demonstration plot last year, which the Permanent Secretary of Agriculture heard about through social media. For the first time since the farm invasions began in 2000, Zimbabwe will have a national surplus of maize. The yields average only about 1.4 tonnes per hectare, but are significantly higher than previous years since land nationalisation. However, we have a long way to go when we compare them to South Africa, with its still strong commercial agricultural sector, which is achieving an average of 5.9 tonnes per hectare.

**Continued farm invasions:** I have been assisting an elderly white farmer with a small plantation of eucalyptus trees who, after asking a “war veteran” not to cut down his plantation trees, was threatened, and had his cottage burnt down. Later, he was threatened again and so went to the police to get a peace order to stop the “war veteran” coming onto his property. That night an assassin got into the house and knocked the farmer down with a shovel. He managed to get to the bedroom and locked the door but was shot in the hip through the window. Fortunately (by God’s grace) the gun then jammed and he did not take any more bullets. It is most distressing to have these lawless situations continuing to persist.

**American programme:** During the last weekend of July, I was sponsored to attend the Christian Economic Forum’s Global Event held in Beaver Creek, Colorado. It was a wonderful opportunity to meet with people from around the world and explore sound solutions to so many difficult issues around the globe, in a world that has become paralysed by fear. This was a very positive time.

**School fees project and Foundations for Farming courses:** Unfortunately, due to the continuing Covid-19 lockdowns, schools have remain closed and we have not been able to run any conservation agriculture training courses. The government has said churches can meet again but only if people are vaccinated. There is a strong reaction against this, especially as most vaccines have been banned in Zimbabwe.

**Supreme Court of Appeal in South Africa:** We await a date in the Supreme Court regarding the appeal in our damages claim against the South African government for the loss of our farms in Zimbabwe. The High Court essentially ruled that only South African citizens could claim from the South African Government as a result of prejudice caused when former SA president Jacob Zuma was complicit in disbanding the SADC Tribunal. Our argument is that people who suffered prejudice, irrespective of their nationality, should be able to claim. This will add pressure to the system to re-establish the SADC Tribunal.

**SADC Administrative Tribunal:** Encouragingly, a panel of three judges at the Southern Africa Development Community Administrative Tribunal, sitting in Gaborone, Botswana, threw out an appeal by the SADC not to pay Malawian Judge Mkandawire his contractual emoluments (calculated at US\$380,184.71) after his contract as Registrar of the SADC Tribunal was illegally and unfairly terminated. **Note:** The regional human rights court, the SADC Tribunal, was closed down by the SADC heads of state in 2012 at the instigation of then President Robert Mugabe. The SADC Administrative Tribunal (SADCAT), established in 2014, only has jurisdiction to hear administrative matters between SADC States and SADC secretariat staff. Unlike the SADC Tribunal, it does not have jurisdiction to hear human rights cases, and individuals in the SADC region will not have direct access to it when justice systems fail them in their individual countries. We are persevering with initiatives to have the SADC Tribunal reinstated.

**Compensation:** We are very concerned about the continued propaganda surrounding the compensation of dispossessed commercial farmers. A poster-sized cheque of US\$1 million was recently displayed from a very shady mining company called Kuvimba. Even at the highly discounted government figure for compensation (US\$3,5 billion), it would take 3,500 such cheques to finish paying this compensation amount agreed to a year ago by farmer representatives.



*The US\$1 million cheque from shady mining company Kuvimba.*

**UK targeted sanctions list:** We are very pleased that Kudakwashe Tagwirei, a politically connected businessman and presidential adviser who was sanctioned for corruption by the US last year, has been added to the British sanctions list. He has been very involved with state institutionalised corruption and state capture amounting to vast sums of money.

**Zambian elections:** It’s very encouraging that Zambia’s opposition UPND leader, Hakainde Hichilema, has secured a landslide victory over incumbent Edgar Lungu in Zambia’s presidential elections. Mr Hichilema is a highly successful business man, commercial farmer and politician. He holds a BA Economics and Business Administration (University of Zambia) and an MBA Finance and Business Strategy (University of Birmingham). Mr Lungu’s six-year rule was widely criticised for alleged human rights abuses, corruption, a failing economy and massive unemployment, notably among the youth.

With deeply felt and grateful thanks for all your support, prayers and understanding during these very difficult times.

*Ben Freeth*

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## DONATIONS IN MEMORY OF ZACH FREETH



*Zach and Claire shortly after they were married 54 years ago  
when Zach was Captain of the British ski team*

If anyone would like to make a donation in memory of Zach for his dedication over 10 years to the work of the Mike Campbell Foundation to Restore Justice and Restore People, there are a number of options:

Via our website: [www.mikecampbellfoundation.com](http://www.mikecampbellfoundation.com) (PayPal, JustGiving, Stewardship, CAF and CAF America, etc):

### **Bank Details:**

Beneficiary: Mike Campbell Foundation  
Currency: £ Sterling  
Bank: Barclays Bank  
Branch: High St, Sittingbourne, Kent, UK  
Account Number: 63039331  
Sort Code: 20 54 11  
SWIFTBIC: BARCGB22  
IBAN GB77: BARC 2054 1163 0393 31

Cheques can be made payable to Mike Campbell Foundation and send to Woodgate, Borden, Nr Sittingbourne, Kent, ME9 8JX, England.

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***"What does the Lord require of you? To act justly, to love mercy and to walk humbly with your God"***  
***Micah 6 v 8***