

Zimbabwe Proclaims Former President Mugabe (1924-2019) a National Hero

Millions pay tribute to founding leader of the liberated state and republic

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Region: [sub-Saharan Africa](#)

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During the early morning hours of September 6, a news item shook the international community saying that President Robert Gabriel Mugabe, known affectionately as “Gushungo”, had passed away at the age of 95.

Former President Mugabe had been receiving medical treatment in Singapore for several months. While he was president in his later years, Mugabe would travel to Singapore for his annual medical examinations.

In the immediate aftermath of his transition, the current President Emmerson Mnangagwa, declared his predecessor as a “National Hero”, an important designation reserved for the leading founders of the Republic of Zimbabwe, those who fought for the national liberation of the Southern African state. Zimbabwe won its independence from British settler-colonialism in 1980 having been under occupation since the latter years of the 1890s.

After the former president’s remains were returned to the country on September 11, his body was laid in state for two days at the Rufaro Stadium where thousands of people from various regions of the country came to pay their last respects. People lined up for hours over a two day period as mourners passed by the coffin.

A state funeral was held on September 14 where tens of thousands attended. The memorial services were attended by numerous contemporary and former heads of state.

Several of the leaders spoke in tribute to President Mugabe praising his legacy of courage, organization, comradeship and Pan-Africanism. Mugabe had served as both the Chairperson of the Southern African Development Community (SADC) as well as the continental African Union (AU) from 2014-2016. He had repeatedly called for African unification under the extreme threats of imperialist military and economic intervention aimed at hampering the realization of genuine development and social emancipation.

An article published by the Zimbabwe Sunday Mail on September 15 noted the importance of the historical significance of President Mugabe’s life saying:

“That he was a revered statesman was made apparent by the presence of a number of African Heads of State and representatives from China, Cuba and Russia. Among the African luminaries in attendance were Zambia’s founding President Dr. Kenneth Kaunda (95), Teodoro Obiang Nguema Mbasogo of Equatorial Guinea, Sam Nujoma of Namibia, Uhuru Kenyatta of Kenya and President Cyril Ramaphosa of South Africa. President Nguema was the last sitting Head of State to see former President Mugabe before he died. He was in

tears of grief upon arrival at the airport on Friday.”

Messages of condolences have poured into Zimbabwe since the news of the former president’s passing. The statements of sympathy were in actuality testaments to the solidarity evoked by the work of the people of Zimbabwe over a period of more than a century where the masses organized and fought gallantly against the crimes of imperialism which seized the land and colonized the farmers and workers, exploiting them for the benefit of international financial capital.

Image on the right: Zimbabwe ZANU-PF leaders Robert Mugabe and Emmerson Mnangagwa in Mozambique during the late 1970s.



The Zimbabwe African National Union Patriotic Front (ZANU-PF) remains in power nearly four decades after independence in April 1980. Zimbabwe has been a staunch pillar of the regional SADC and the AU particularly in reference to the support shown for national liberation movements which came after Harare and the ongoing struggle to free the Western Sahara, the Saharawi Arab Democratic Republic (SADR), the last remaining contested zone in Africa.

Historical Movements to End Imperialism in Zimbabwe

The onslaught of British settler-colonialism in Zimbabwe was consolidated after the military defeat of the First Chimurenga (revolutionary struggle) in 1897 when thousands of Africans were massacred and detained while millions more underwent the forcible removal from control of their national territory. Initial contact with the indigenous nations of Matabeleland and Mashonaland were made through missionaries who paved the way for the British South African Company (BSAC) headed by Cecil Rhodes.

BSAC was committed to the theft of the land and resources of the people. Their diamonds were looted by BSAC and the land was taken forcing Africans to pay “Hut Taxes” and to work on the agricultural plantations, mines and as agents of the British colonialists.

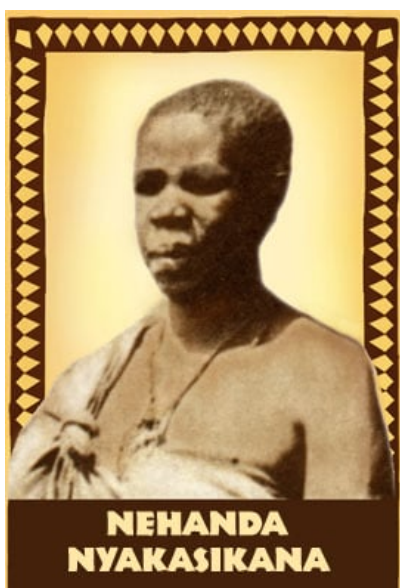
British soldiers first attacked the Ndebele who fought gallantly against them. After securing Matabeleland they then moved on in another genocidal invasion of Mashonaland.

The Africans utilizing captured weapons from the European enemies and traditional arsenals were able to kill hundreds of imperialist soldiers and their collaborators. Many Africans working with the Europeans deserted their positions and joined the revolutionaries. Scores of European settler homes, outposts and businesses were overrun and burned by the Ndebele and Shona fighters during this period of 1896-97.

An account of the First Chimurenga observed:

“British encroachment into the Ndebele territory, also known as Matabeleland was the main reasons for the revolt. In March 1896, the Ndebele (Matabele) people revolted against the authority of the BSAC in what is now celebrated in Zimbabwe as the First War of Independence. Mlimo, the Ndebele spiritual leader, is credited for fomenting much of the anger that led to this confrontation. He convinced the Ndebele and the Shona that the white settlers whose population has grown to about 4,000 were responsible for the drought, locust plagues and the cattle disease rinderpest ravaging the country at the time.” (See [this](#))

Image below: Zimbabwe Nehanda was the leader of the First Chimurenga in 1896-97 against British imperialism.



After the defeat of 1897, many of the leading figures in the resistance were imprisoned and executed by the British. Two of the most notable of the Mashona people, Mbuya Nehanda and Sekuru Kaguvi, were hung by the settlers in 1898. Nehanda said prior to her execution that she would die, however, her bones would rise again.

The Second Chimurenga which led to the renewal and independence of Zimbabwe from the settler colony of Southern Rhodesia, has its roots emanating from the First Chimurenga of the late 19th century. During the 1950s there was the advent of mass struggle by the Zimbabwe African National Congress. The organization was banned creating the conditions for the formation of the National Democratic Party (NDP), which was also proscribed by the Rhodesian authorities.

Later the Zimbabwe African People’s Union (ZAPU) was formed by Joshua Nkomo during the early 1960s. Nkomo was known as the “Father of the liberation struggle in Zimbabwe.” However, a split within ZAPU led to the founding of the Zimbabwe African National Union (ZANU) in 1963 under the leadership of Herbert Chitepo and Enos Nkala.

With specific reference to Mugabe, he was born in Katuma and attended missionary schools during his early years. He would later study at Fort Hare in South Africa where he was trained as an educator. He worked as a teacher in the then colonized Zimbabwe (Southern

Rhodesia) later travelling to Ghana under the presidency of Dr. Kwame Nkrumah in 1958. Mugabe would be inspired by the Pan-Africanist leader Nkrumah. He would marry a Ghanaian woman Sally Hayfron.

After returning to Zimbabwe in the early 1960s, Mugabe and his wife took on the settler colonial authorities. Both Mugabe and Sally were arrested. Mugabe spent a decade imprisoned between the years of 1964-1974. After his release, he traveled to Mozambique in 1975 after the neighboring country's independence from Portuguese colonialism. Mugabe became the uncontested leader of ZANU and its armed forces known as the Zimbabwe African National Liberation Army (ZANLA).

Eventually by the late 1970s, ZAPU and ZANU would form the Patriotic Front. After sending thousands of guerrilla fighters into Rhodesia, the white minority regime of Ian Smith, who had rejected majority rule through the Unilateral Declaration of Independence (UDI) from London in 1965, was forced to the Lancaster House negotiations in 1979. Mugabe reluctantly joined the negotiations maintaining an uncompromising position as a Marxist and Pan-Africanist.

A settlement was reached leading to multi-party elections in April 1980. ZANU-PF won a majority in the new government becoming the dominant force within Zimbabwe politics for the next 39 years.

Third Chimurenga began in 2000 after two decades of false promises by the British and the United States to fund a land reform program negotiated at the Lancaster House talks of 1979, where the aims of the Zimbabwe Revolution were articulated. ZANU-PF passed parliamentary measures mandating the transferal of land from the white settler minority to the African majority.

In response sanctions were leveled against the Republic of Zimbabwe. An opposition party Movement for Democratic Change (MDC) was formed and financed by the dispossessed white farmers and western imperialism. The capitalist states have maintained sanctions against Zimbabwe since 2000. Even after the forced resignation of Mugabe as president and ZANU-PF leader in November 2017, the imperialists have still refused to lift the sanctions, illustrating clearly their ultimate desire to remove the ruling party from power.

The Contested Legacy of Imperialism

ZANU-PF even today is under constant propaganda and economic attacks by the imperialist forces and their allies. The passing of President Mugabe has provided an opportunity for corporate and capitalist governmental news agencies to spread their venom against Zimbabwe promoting the false "Hero to Dictator" narrative related to the legacy of Gushungo.

Image on the right: Zimbabwe President Robert G. Mugabe casket carried by soldiers to Rufaro Stadium on September 12, 2019.



The British Broadcasting Corporation (BBC) coverage of the death of Mugabe referred to the imperialists as “donors” alienated by ZANU-PF under the former president’s tenure. Never did they refer to their country as settler colonizers of Zimbabwe.

Today when the British state is facing its most formidable crisis since World War II, where the parliament and successive prime ministers have not been able to draft an agreeable program for their exit from the European Union (EU), there is obviously a lack of admiration for their leaders such as David Cameron, Theresa May and Boris Johnson.

Mugabe as the Chair of the AU raised \$1 million in donations for the continental organization to demonstrate the necessity of self-reliance in Africa. His speeches repeatedly denounced imperialist interventions in Africa and throughout the world.

Consequently, the legacy of Mugabe is secured within the historical struggle for Pan-Africanism based upon genuine sovereignty along with complete economic and social liberation.

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Featured image: Zimbabwe President Robert Mugabe presents fundraising check of \$1 million to the AU Summit; all images in this article are from the author

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