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ZIMBABWE: A CASE OF MORE THAN JUST SIXTEEN OFFICIAL LANGUAGES

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Located just north of Africa's foothill is the Republic of Zimbabwe, a relatively small country with respect to territorial aptitude yet is a literal cultural, race, tribal and ethnic diversity. The supreme law of the land is stating that, "*We the people of Zimbabwe, united in our diversity by our common desire for freedom, justice and equality, and our heroic resistance to* Throughout the constitution, the notion of Zimbabwe being home to people of diverse race is consistently reinforced qualifying Zimbabwe to be equally dubbed a rainbow nation as is our southern neighbour, South Africa. Against such a rich literature background, defining what a Zimbabwean is can be argued to be an issue of just paraphrasing the introductory notes to the constitution. People are more than just what is arguably a collection of well-tailored words. People are complex and annoyingly dynamic. People are defined by their way of life not superficial traits as race, creed, tribe and or tongue. The scope of this paper seeks to take stock of the journey the Zimbabwean people embarked on the 18th of April 1980.

For long it has been chronicled that Zimbabwe is a Christian nation, but of late, religious liberty has been enshrined in the constitution thus generalization with regards to religion is in addition to be a breach of the constitutional provision in mention but also discriminatory. The concept of diversity continues with regards to religion. A number of beliefs are however predominant, ranging from the native African traditional religion in which God is worshipped through mediation of ancestral spirits, to Christianity with its many denominations. Islam is also a noteworthy inclusion with respect to religion in Zimbabwe amongst the many which for the purposes of this paper cannot be exhausted. Religion is a core value to the Zimbabwean people as it unites the people in moments of tribulation, want and trial.

A commonly accepted principle in Zimbabwe is that it takes a community to raise a child. What this means is that imparting the requisite values in an involves more than just the individual's immediate family. As with any community, a number of methods are used to advise and instil

values in individuals. Idioms play a significant role in the Zimbabwean community and are a choice method of instruction. For instance, children are told that seating in the road will make them develop boils on their bottoms. This is an abject lie, but since children can relate to the pain of boils, they refrain from dangerous play on the roads thereby protecting them from being run over by vehicles. In addition there are a select group of idioms which in theory are African proverbs which serve the same purpose of instilling the social values within individuals. An example of such is one which states that the son of a king is a servant elsewhere teaching individuals to be humble irrespective of social standing.

Language is equally important to people as it is the main way of attaining communication on the journey. Officially there are sixteen official languages in Zimbabwe. English is the business language but socially, Shona and Ndebele are widely spoken. The remaining thirteen languages are dialects of the latter two or closely related derivatives thereof. Communication is seldom a problem in most parts of the country, as most people are conversant with at least two of the stated three languages. Exceptions are remote rural areas where people may only be fluent in just but their local language but government efforts to educate the whole nation have been yielding results in curbing the communication barrier as English is the language of command in all schools.

The citizens of Zimbabwe all hope to live in a prosperous country where everyone is not only tolerated but accepted irrespective of differences both superficial and deep. The hope is that Zimbabwe be a land where every citizen can live responsibly and enjoy their constitutional rights.

In conclusion the main differences between the Zimbabwean and Ukrainian cultures are mostly skin deep. It is the social composition, the weather, paradigm shifts in dominating religion but the attributes boil down to the same things. Both countries are an amalgamation of communities comprising individuals going about to achieve the same objectives. The two countries are separated by physical boundaries and a vast expanse of geographical landmarks but both find homage in being communities in the global village. From this perspective, all humans are one as our needs boil down to love, acceptance and tolerance.

I am proud to identify as Zimbabwean and equally thrilled to be in Ukraine, and learn of the diverse cultures the world has in the offing.

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