

27 th December 2004

We hope all our supporters had a good Christmas and that taking part in the 'Virtual Vigil' made support for Zimbabwe a real part of your Christmas. We received several Christmas messages from Vigil friends from Britain and abroad, including Geoff Hill, author of " Battle for Zimbabwe " who visited the Vigil in September and gave an inspiring talk at the Forum. The fortunes of the calendar have dictated that we will not be holding a Vigil next Saturday as it's New Year's Day and neighbouring Trafalgar Square will be awash with all-night revellers still celebrating. We are asking our supporters to hold another 'Virtual Vigil' for New Year's Day. We wish you all a happy New Year and a better year for our friends in Zimbabwe . The Vigil will be back to normal on Saturday, 8 th January. Please come and support from 14.00 to 18.00 hours. Support for the Vigil in the lead-up to the March elections is crucial. Zimbabweans in the UK need to make every effort to raise awareness here.

18 th December 2004

A sparsely-attended Vigil today because some of our supporters were in Leicester taking part in a demonstration in protest at the ending of the moratorium on sending home failed Zimbabwean asylum seekers. One of our regular attenders, Patson, helped organise the demonstration. He reports that about 200 people turned up, and singing and dancing in Leicester City Centre drew great support from passers-by. There are a lot of awkward questions here. The MDC view, as far as we understand it, is that Zimbabweans should stay and work for change unless they are forced to flee for their lives. If everyone leaves where does that leave Zimbabwe ? What we are saying is that people here should demonstrate their support for change in Zimbabwe otherwise it is hard to support their efforts to stay in this country. We have the Vigil every Saturday: where are the thousands of Zimbabweans in London ? For the first time since the Vigil started 27 months ago, Christmas Day falls on a Saturday. As Central London is a desert on Christmas Day we will not be holding the Vigil. Instead we ask you to join us in a 'Virtual Vigil'. We are observing two minutes silence at our regular close time of 18.00 to think of the people suffering at home. We are asking everyone to contact at least three people in Zimbabwe to assure them they are not forgotten and have our support. At the close of tonight's Vigil there were about 10 people singing 'Ishe Komberera' as we do at the end of every Vigil. We are hoping SW Radio Africa will play this on Christmas day at the usual Vigil close (18.00 hours). FOR THE RECORD: 19 people signed the attendance register today. FOR YOUR DIARY: Monday, 20 th December at 7.30, Forum at the George, Fleet Street , London (opposite the Royal Courts of Justice). The Forum will discuss asylum issues including the next demonstration at the end of January. ALSO FOR YOUR DIARY: Saturday, 29 th January, our next demonstration on the anti-deportation issue. This will coincide with the Vigil and be held outside the Zimbabwe Embassy. For archive diary

11 th December 2004

Well, nobody could describe the Vigil as being a money-spinner today – a thief ran off with our takings just as we were packing up! Tawanda (Tom), Patson and others hared after him but lost him in the throng at Charing Cross . Suppose it's surprising it hasn't happened before given how exposed we are but we had somehow assumed we were safe because we are collecting for

victims of human rights abuse in Zimbabwe . We will be more careful in future. But the Vigil has never been about collecting money: it is about raising awareness and today we introduced an extra petition calling for the release of Roy Bennett. For further information on this, check www.freeroybennett.com. It was an exuberant Vigil helped by the mild weather. We had good attendance, with all our Leicester friends down for the day. The dancing, singing and drumming went on well past our usual close. Sadly it was Tawanda's last Vigil. He is going to South Africa to study. We will miss him – he has been at the heart of Zimbabwe human rights activism during his time in the UK and his fluent Shona has helped bridge any gap between black and white. Highlight of the day was a parade of 200 Father Christmases – it must have been very confusing for small children. Just as well they didn't bring us a present – it would probably have been stolen as well! Through our meeting before the Vigil we have gained some useful new members for our Vigil Co-ordinating Team. Thanks to those who made the effort to come early for this. FOR THE RECORD: 32 people signed the attendance register today. FOR YOUR DIARY: Next Saturday (18 th December), our Leicester friends are holding an anti-deportation march and rally. They will meet at 12.00 at Victoria Park and finish at the Secular Society Hall at Humberstone Gate. The rally with invited speakers will continue till 16.00. For information, contact: 07900 061 215, 07863 214 168, 07879 858 190. ALSO FOR YOUR DIARY: Monday, 13 th December at 7.30, Forum at the George, Fleet Street , London (opposite the Royal Courts of Justice). This Forum is dedicated to WOZA, Women of Zimbabwe Arise.

4th December 2004

A quiet Vigil. For the first hour there were only two people and, despite the remarkably mild weather, only 14 in all signed the attendance register. There are hundreds of thousands of Zimbabweans in the UK. Do they think they will change things in Zimbabwe by shopping in the Strand? What prompts this reflection was the appearance of a party of 6 or so Zimbabwean women from North London, accompanied by children, who just chanced along and stopped to sign our petitions. They had never heard of the Vigil although we have been outside Zimbabwe House every Saturday for more than two years and it is the only regular protest in Britain against the steadily worsening situation in Zimbabwe. One wonders how much Zimbabweans here really care. (STOP PRESS: Apparently they are beginning to care. As we were writing this, we received a telephone call from a distressed Zimbabwean saying her asylum seeker brother had been detained when he went to Hounslow today to report in as usual. As we mentioned last week the UK Government has ended its two year moratorium on sending back failed Zimbabwean asylum seekers. We will, of course, do what we can for him, although we note from our registers that he appears never to have attended a Vigil.) We were disappointed that no one from the MDC's Harare leadership stopped by or sent a message to the Vigil during their recent visit to London, although we did all we could to make their trip a success. Thanks for your support! At such a poorly-attended Vigil, donations were of course rather lower than usual. We are banking under £100. We mention this because of slurs suggesting that the Vigil is an unaccountable money-spinner. All takings are counted in the presence of witnesses before they are banked. As to what we do with it, regular statements are produced by our Treasurer, but a good proportion of it goes to causes in Zimbabwe. However the Vigil was not set up to raise money but to raise awareness and, judging by the scores of thousands of signatures to our petitions, we have succeeded in this. On a brighter note regular attender Dumi was delighted when an old school friend, Simba, suddenly appeared at the Vigil. They had been out of touch

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Written by Administrator

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for 15 years. This is not the first time that the Vigil has brought old friends together. A meeting of regular Vigil attenders is to be held before next Saturday's Vigil. Meet at the Vigil at 12 noon and we will find a venue. Subject: the way forward for the Vigil. FOR YOUR DIARY: We have our usual forum venue back. Monday, 6th December at 7.30, Forum at the refurbished George, Fleet Street, London (opposite the Royal Courts of Justice). The speaker will be Tor of the Zimbabwe NGO forum. For archive diary

27th November 2004

The arrogant posturing of the English cricket authorities was displayed for all the see at the Vigil today. They argue that the England team was obliged to tour Zimbabwe for contractual reasons following Zimbabwe's tour here last year. Well, we dug up some of our banners from nearly two years ago and put them up again today: "Murder, rape and torture: it's not cricket" said one. We vividly recall how we tried to stop the last England tour to Zimbabwe: our petition to the English cricketing authorities, our invasion of Lords . . . They said then they could do nothing . . . and yet still entered into a further deal involving Zimbabwe. We can only conclude that they are self-serving liars – certainly the resignation of their Director of "Ethics", Des Wilson, suggests this. But it certainly wasn't all cricket at the Vigil today. The government has acted quickly following its announcement that it was ending the suspension of expulsions of failed Zimbabwean asylum seekers after a two year moratorium. We are, of course, aware that Zanu-PF have been coming here because they can no longer survive in their own homeland but we are doing all we can to ensure that Mugabe opponents are protected and have launched the following petition to the Home Office. "Please make sure that you are not sending home Zimbabweans whose lives are at risk because of their support for the Zimbabwean opposition party, the Movement for Democratic Change or because they are perceived to be opponents of Zanu-PF, the ruling regime. The UK Government's announcement that it is to reinstate forced removals of failed Zimbabwean asylum seekers, after a two-year moratorium, has caused great alarm among the Zimbabwean community in the UK. It understands the problem caused by bogus asylum seekers, but begs the Home Office to ensure that the many genuine victims of torture, rape and violence are protected, as well as those whose political activism has put them in jeopardy." Vigil supporters rushed to Gatwick Airport to help Crispin Kulinji, an MDC activist in Zimbabwe, who was an early victim of the asylum decision. We think that thanks to the efforts in contacting the media and MPs of Anna, Puck, Patson, Tawanda and Sarah, Crispin was not put on the plane. Lovely to see Caroline and Sue from so far away and thanks to them for working so hard at the Vigil. The closure of the Strand eastbound caused widespread traffic chaos which made our lives very difficult today. Fortunately the weather was mild for the end of November. FOR THE RECORD: 30 people signed the attendance register today. FOR YOUR DIARY: Monday, 28th November at 7.30, Forum at the George IV Pub, 28 – 30 Portugal Street, London WC2A 2HF (our temporary accommodation). For archive diary

22nd November 2004

MORGAN SPEAKS IN LONDON. Morgan Tsvangirai received a tumultuous reception when he addressed a gathering of the Zimbabwean diaspora and MDC supporters in London on Sunday, 21st November. Appropriately, the main hall of the Society of Friends (Quakers) was chosen for the meeting as they are also dedicated to peaceful transformation. The eager crowd filled the

600-seater hall to overflowing and were entertained by impromptu singing, drumming and dancing until the President arrived with other senior MDC leaders, such as Welshman Ncube, hot from a separate meeting of MDC UK elected officials. Morgan made it clear that the party's decision on whether to take part in the March parliamentary elections was still on hold. He said no opposition party in the region would accept the electoral arrangements in place in Zimbabwe. Nevertheless, the way ahead remained through the ballot not the bullet. "We want no Somalia in Zimbabwe." Outlining the situation at home, he said the Zanu-PF regime had destroyed jobs and food production, turning the country from a bread basket to a basket case and producing the fastest shrinking economy in the world. The President repeated that the party is in favour of land reform – but said it must be real reform not patronage. He assured the audience he would continue to campaign for Zimbabweans in the diaspora to be allowed to vote and insisted "No homelink without votelink" – referring to the Zanu-PF attempt to corner the foreign exchange from the diaspora. Mr Tsvangirai pulled no punches in criticising the lack of committed support from Zimbabweans abroad – and didn't spare the MDC UK District itself. He suggested that branches in the UK should twin themselves with branches in Zimbabwe to take a greater part in the struggle. The President was introduced by Ephraim Tapa, Chair of the Central London Branch, which hosted the event at the request of the UK District. Mr Tapa said the Branch's weekly forum was the first point of call for many in the diaspora who were later relocated from London. It was also showing the way with the Vigil which has been taking place outside the Zimbabwe Embassy every Saturday for more than two years.

20th November 2004

Some old friends joined us today, including the Vigil baby, Tinotenda, looking extremely well despite living in Leicester. Patson, Bernita, Hilda, Jerry, Chipo and Tawanda accompanied her from Leicester for Sunday's address by the MDC President, Morgan Tsvangirai. Also with us on a cold, wet afternoon was Siphewe who came all the way from Stockton-on-Tees and we were pleased to make the acquaintance of Jonathan Leavens who chanced by from the Scotland Zimbabwe Group. The prospect of seeing Morgan fired the Vigil and the singing and dancing went on long after the scheduled close. Your reporter could hear the drumming from a pub around the corner a hundred yards away where he was considering the future of the universe over a pint of beer. We had to confiscate the drums at 19.30 – our latest ever Vigil so that we could prepare for Morgan Tsvangirai's day with us on Sunday. A reminder to everyone who can get to London: Mr Tsvangirai will speak to the Zimbabwean diaspora at 2pm on Sunday, 21st November at Friends House, 173 Euston Road, London NW1 2BJ opposite Euston Station. The meeting will be preceded at 11.00 by an assembly of MDC UK District Branch Executive members. FOR THE RECORD: 31 people signed the attendance register today. FOR YOUR DIARY: Monday, 22nd November at 7.30, Forum at the George IV Pub, 28 – 30 Portugal Street, London WC2A 2HF (our temporary accommodation). Puck De Raadt will address the forum on the new developments in the British government 's policy on asylum seekers from Zimbabwe. For archive diary

18th November 2004

MORGAN TSVANGIRAI'S MEETING IN LONDON ON SUNDAY. Reports that the meeting has been cancelled are untrue. Ignore efforts to undermine the MDC's struggle for a peaceful

resolution of the Zimbabwe crisis. Mr Tsvangirai has confirmed he will address the meeting of the Zimbabwean diaspora at 2pm on Sunday, 21st November at Friends House, 173 Euston Road, London NW1 2BJ opposite Euston Station. For directions

15th November 2004

NEWSFLASH: MDC President Morgan Tsvangirai is to address the Zimbabwean Diaspora at a public meeting in London on Sunday, 21st November at 2pm. Come and bring your friends. The venue is at Friends House, 173 Euston Road, London NW1 2BJ opposite Euston Station. For directions

13th November 2004

A suggestion that Morgan Tsvangirai might visit the Vigil next Saturday galvanised us all! It's unofficial but we have heard that Morgan is to visit the UK next week and plans are being made for a public meeting. It is several years since the MDC leader came here and we still remember his inspirational address at Westminster Central Hall. Also inspiring us today was the sight of cavalry in splendid gold and red uniforms passing by the Vigil heading, apparently, for their barracks after taking part in the Lord Mayor's Show. The Show ended with a firework display which the 30 or so people at the Vigil took to be an augury of good things to come. The Lord Mayor's Show has been going on for 800 years – hopefully the Vigil won't need to continue that long. Today was the first indication that winter is really on its way despite the brilliant sunshine. It was good to have so many faithful supporters turning up in the cold weather. **FOR THE RECORD:** 26 people signed the register today.

9th November 2004

NOTICE FROM THE ZIMBABWE FORUM: our regular venue, the George, Fleet Street, will be closed for refurbishment for a few weeks. During this refurbishment, the forum will continue to meet at other venues. We have booked upstairs at the George IV pub, 28 – 30 Portugal Street, London WC2A 2HF for 15th and 22nd November and will meet as usual at 7.30 pm. We will keep you posted about venues after that date.

6th November 2004

End of British Summer Time. Change the clocks. Winter approaches – though there were many people in summer gear passing the Vigil today. No wind, no rain but it was very overcast. We needed a lantern to light the table so that people could sign our petition calling on the international community to intervene to ensure free and fair elections. We were pleased to welcome Mr Rene Kabala, a leading human rights lawyer from Congo Kinshasa. He has been speaking to the Bar Human Rights Conference and other bodies in London about the appalling human rights situation in his country. It was cheering to have such a dedicated man spending time with us. He was brought to the Vigil by Puck, a tireless activist for asylum seekers. She brought him to the Vigil to show him that there are people who are making the effort to protest at the unacceptable situation in Africa. Our new start of 1400 today, coincided with the end of British Summer Time. We were there at 12 noon to greet those who hadn't got the news and tried out our later closing time. Gredia's two young sons were enthusiastic drummers today and we have great hopes for them. **FOR THE RECORD:** 34 people signed the register today.

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Written by Administrator

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31st October 2004

NEW VIGIL START TIME: 1400 hours. Please see Vigil Diary, 30th October for details. FORUM tomorrow will discuss the Vigil: reason for time change and other issues - Monday, 1st September at 7.30, at the George, Fleet Street, London (opposite the Royal Courts of Justice).

30th October 2004

What a turn-around. After last Saturday's rain and wind, with the threat of winter, today was sunny and warm, with people out in t-shirts – and a reminder of summer. Evelyn from Middlesex was sensational on the drums, joined by Myriam and Tonderayi and Enock. Enthusiastic dancing and singing by the ladies drew many appreciative passers-by, several of whom joined in. One lady in a wheelchair insisted on a detour to visit us. Kath was very upset by the jailing of her friend, Roy Bennett, the MDC MP, but nevertheless was there to support the Vigil – which was begun in response to a challenge by Roy. He asked why there was no regular protest in London by Zimbabweans like the old anti-apartheid vigil outside South Africa House. Well, we took up the challenge and are still meeting it two years later. But experience has now persuaded us to change the time of the Vigil. We are taking the opportunity of the end of British Summer Time to move the Vigil hours to a 1400 start and a later finish. The early part of the Vigil has always tended to be quiet, with comparatively few passers-by. But we have found ourselves packing up when the Vigil supporters are having a ball, with the authentic Zimbabwe voice being heard by throngs of passers-by going to the theatre or restaurants in the evening. So from next Saturday the Vigil will end later and we will set up at 1400, although some people will be there at 1200 to greet those who haven't received notification of the time change. The MDC Director of Elections, Mr Remus Makuwaza, tried hard to extend his stay in the UK so he could be with us at the Vigil today. Unfortunately, it was impossible, but he was emphatic in his support for the Vigil at the Forum of the MDC Central London Branch on Monday and at other meetings in the UK. FOR THE RECORD: 31 people signed the register.

23rd October 2004

Rain and wind – always a challenging double for the Vigil. It rained steadily all day, puddles collecting in running pools on our heaving tarpaulin – only to bucket down on innocent people signing our petition when we were hit by a particularly fierce gust. Our petition calls on the international community to ensure free and fair elections in Zimbabwe. Despite the weather, many sympathisers stopped to sign. The rain-sodden signatures will be presented to the UN, the African Union, SADC and other interested parties. Talking about parties, the kids brought to the Vigil really enjoyed rushing to rescue banners blown from the trees and tried to engineer it so the water in the tarpaulin fell on a friend. A baby-on-back was sublimely oblivious to all the fuss. Thanks particularly to Addley, James and Jean-Francois who helped to launch the Vigil on one of our most trying days. Nevertheless, it ended buoyantly with more than 20 damp people singing the national anthem. FOR THE RECORD: 23 people signed the register.

16th October 2004

The highlight of our busy week was a special Vigil in support of Morgan Tsvangirai on Friday –

the day of the verdict in his main treason trial. As you can imagine, it turned into a joyful celebration, despite the wet weather. We had loads of coverage on BBC Television News 24, the BBC World Service and other outlets. The Vigil was mounted with the active support of the MDC UK District and Suzeet managed to get through to Morgan by phone to tell him about it. She says he was very touched that a special Vigil was being held for him. It was opportune to be there also because the infamous Zimbabwe Homelink programme seemed to be having a reception in the Embassy. Very few people seemed to be there. Mike and Wiz opened Saturday's Vigil, relieving the usual team of Dennis and Rose. Before coming to the Vigil, Myriam, Mrs Biba and some of our other supporters attended a meeting in Kensington Town Hall "Rebuilding Africa". The meeting was told by a Mugabe man that Zimbabwe was now free and people in the diaspora should send money home through this wonderful scheme, Homelink. An enraged Myriam stormed up to the speakers and declared "You chase us from Zimbabwe and now you follow us here for our money". She went on to say "You can't rebuild Africa until the dictators have gone". Myriam says she was sympathetically led away by the (black) mayor of Harrow – but not before she had opened a few eyes. Myriam says some people – particularly British Caribbeans – are very hard work because of their outdated commitment to the Mugabe liberation struggle. Our third day this week outside the Zimbabwe Embassy was given a powerful boost by Clifford on the drums. People in Edinburgh were complaining! Tonderayi, Dumi, James and Emily were there to support us as always. Unfortunately Remus Makuwaza didn't visit the Vigil as arranged because of travel delays but he will be addressing the Forum on Monday night. FOR THE RECORD: 22 people signed the attendance register today. FOR YOUR DIARY: Monday, 11h October at 7.30, Forum at the George, Fleet Street, London (opposite the Royal Courts of Justice). Remus Makuwaza, MDC Director of Elections will be the speaker.

12th October 2004

Today is the actual anniversary of the Vigil – 12th October. So we arranged to have the petition to President Mbeki calling on him to sack Mugabe delivered on this day. Our delegation was met courteously by South African diplomats. We have no doubt where their sympathies lie. Our delegation was also well received by our Nigerian brothers. A senior diplomat there expressed great interest. We also delivered copies of the petition to Mozambique and to Mauritius, which hosted the summit of the Southern African Development Community, which adopted recently a protocol on good governance which has been ignored by Zimbabwe even though they signed up to it. This week promises to be an active time for us. **WE ARE COMBINING WITH THE MDC UK TO HOLD A SPECIAL VIGIL FROM 12 NOON ON FRIDAY, WHEN THE VERDICT ON TSVANGIRAI'S TREASON TRIAL IS DUE TO BE DELIVERED.** At the regular Vigil on Saturday, we are expecting Remus Makwasa, Director of Elections for the MDC in Zimbabwe. He is also booked to speak at the Forum on Monday, 18th October.

9th October 2004

What a wonderful day. Supporters came from all over the place to mark our second anniversary. Great to have back Patson, Bernita, Hilda, Jerry and the Vigil baby (now sitting up) from Leicester. It was also encouraging to welcome back supporters from the early days of the Vigil. The singing, dancing and drumming drew crowds of people. Jerry, Myriam and the all-star

dancers brought back summer. The weather favoured us: the green tarpaulin was danced underfoot in the autumnal sunshine. It was moving to have nearly a hundred people singing the national anthem at the close. And a good many of them continued the singing at Theodore Bullfrog pub across the Strand where we gathered afterwards. There was a great feeling of solidarity. We discussed the 12th October, our actual second anniversary, and our plan to present a petition on that day to the South African High Commission calling on President Mbeki to take a tougher line on Zimbabwe. The petition has been signed by more than 22,000 people and copies are also to be given to other SADC countries, as well as Nigeria. To anyone who can come we are gathering at 1 pm on Tuesday, 12th October outside the Zimbabwe Embassy, FOR THE RECORD: 75 people signed the attendance register today. FOR YOUR DIARY: Monday, 11h October at 7.30, Forum at the George, Fleet Street, London (opposite the Royal Courts of Justice). Firming up arrangements for 12th October. Discussion of what to do about Tsvangirai's treason trial verdict (15th October).

2nd October 2004

A magical double rainbow after a heavy shower seemed symbolic to those at the Vigil waiting for a new beginning for Zimbabwe. After a fellow from the Congo had swaggered past repeating Mugabe's mad message to the UN: "Bush is God and Blair is his prophet", and a regular passing delivery driver shouted yet again: "God bless Mugabe", it was encouraging having two Zimbabweans from Switzerland under our leaky tarpaulin asking advice on how to get active there. We were pleased to welcome a sympathiser from Togo, all too familiar with ranting megalomaniacs like Mugabe. But we were most touched by the man in the wheelchair, who persevered for five minutes to sign our petitions. (On last reckoning our petitions are signed every 30 seconds or so, so he is the equivalent of ten . . .). It was good to have Dominic from Watford help to start the Vigil. Welcome back to stalwarts Jean-Francois, after a trip to Uganda, and Bonny, now a student again. Their return invigorated the Vigil which will be marking its 2nd anniversary next Saturday. It's not something to celebrate, but we hope to mark it with a big attendance followed by a social at a local pub – sadly not the former Bad Bobs, which closed suddenly leaving debris and debts Anyone reading this in Zimbabwe? A message tonight to the Vigil email in response to our invitation to the 2nd Anniversary: " I'm more than happy to receive emails from Zimbabwe Vigil. I will be there, I have been there and I will always be there until our country is free". FOR YOUR DIARY: Monday, 4th October at 7.30, Forum at the George, Fleet Street, London (opposite the Royal Courts of Justice). The forum is hosting the presenters of Afro-Sound FM a recently launched Zimbabwean radio station broadcasting through the internet from London.

25th September 2004

Geoff Hill, author of "Battle for Zimbabwe", was with us from the start and helped to set up the Vigil. He was very bullish about the situation back home, having just been in South Africa where he says hundreds of thousands of Zimbabweans have emerged into the open and expressed their opposition to the Mugabe regime. His assessment was that there had been a sea-change in the SADC attitude to Zimbabwe. He donated some T-shirts from the Zimbabweans in South Africa – our thanks to them. Some 40 people attended the Vigil on a damp day. It was great to have Patson and others down from Leicester and also Abbie and Rennesia from Leeds. They

have made the trip to the Vigil almost every Saturday recently. Miriam and Dumi on the table engaged and informed the public. Patson and Moses on the drums enhanced the singing and there was some brilliant dancing. FOR THE RECORD: 37 people signed the attendance register today. FOR YOUR DIARY: Monday, 27th September at 7.30, Forum at the George, Fleet Street, London (opposite the Royal Courts of Justice). Vigil Anniversary – planning continues.

18th September 2004

Farewell to the Springbok (formerly the aptly named Bad Bob's) the pub/club just up the road from the Vigil. They have been sympathetic supporters, allowing us to store our gear there and providing a friendly – if noisy – place for donations to be counted in a transparent manner – and for our occasional celebrations in the louche lounge, Lillie's Bordello! We arrived to collect our things for the Vigil only to find the Springbok had been closed without notice. Bad Bob's revenge? They certainly were not making much money from us but the place was always full on Saturdays with free-spending South Africans watching sport on telly. Fortunately, a caretaker chanced by with a key and we were able to salvage our banners, drums, posters etc accumulated over almost two years. Addley worked heroically hauling the stuff down to the Vigil – doing her back in. She spent the rest of the Vigil sitting bolt upright on a drum while her hair was plaited under the green tarpaulin as the rain came and went and came again. The first wet Vigil we have had for ages, but we were cheered by Hugh, our ever-generous non-Zimbabwean friend who brought pizzas for the group – including some new asylum seekers. The leaflets we distributed at last week's Zimfest do not appear to have brought in much fresh blood from that quarter – but we were heartened by messages from the US of new vigils being opened there based on our model. They ask our advice: persistence. We ended the Vigil with a lively meeting to discuss how we could commemorate our second anniversary on 9th October. FOR THE RECORD: 36 people signed the attendance register today. FOR YOUR DIARY: Monday, 20th September at 7.30, Forum at the George, Fleet Street, London (opposite the Royal Courts of Justice). Zimbabwean journalist, Geoff Hill, author of "Battle for Zimbabwe", is back in town. Geoff is a lively speaker so come and experience an entertaining night as Geoff presents an update on activism in South Africa where he is presently based.

11th September 2004

Big competition today: Zimfest with beer, braai, sport and talk. So we were fewer than usual at the Vigil and were delighted to welcome the Monopoly pub crawl. They set themselves the challenge of going around the Monopoly board and found their way to us in the Strand from Trafalgar Square. They were keen to sign our petitions --hope they don't end up "in jail"! Thankful to have Tonderayi with us and lovely also to have supporters from Leeds, Luton, Southend and our engaging sisters, Priscilla and Patience. Glad also to see James from Basildon and Ephraim, Chair of MDC Central London Branch, on the drums. The Vigil sent two representatives, Dumi and Clifford, to Zimfest to put forward our message. "YOU CAN HELP ZIMBABWE: Mugabe's regime is rapidly running out of steam and we need help with the final push. Come and join the Zimbabwe Vigil outside Zimbabwe House held every Saturday from 1200 – 1800. Meet friends from home and catch up with the news. Archbishop Pius Ncube joined us recently. Why don't you? We have been going nearly two years, keeping the

Zimbabwe crisis in the public eye. COME AND BE COUNTED.” We may have reached new supporters because Clifford and Dumí reported back that many at Zimfest had not heard of the Vigil. Well, on a bright but rather windy day – the table nearly blew away – we had seven people to sing the national anthem at the close. We didn't feel alone. FOR YOUR DIARY: Monday, 13th September at 7.30, Forum at the George, Fleet Street, London (opposite the Royal Courts of Justice). A discussion of the Vigil as it approaches its second anniversary – not a cause for celebration.

4th September 2004

Our 100th Vigil and we were favoured by the gods. 28 C with a brilliant cloudless sky when we started and 26 C with a few wispy clouds at the close. Sorry for the preoccupation with the weather but a lovely day like today seems to bring out the best in everyone. Liberty, London's Disability Rights Festival, was a rival attraction in Trafalgar Square, with high wire acts and people paddling in the fountains. But for us it was great to welcome young Musa (brilliant at handing out leaflets) and his parents from Newcastle and supporters from Leeds, Hastings and Luton. Addley came after working a night shift and Emily straight from King George's hospital where her son had an emergency operation. We pray for him. Good to have Ancilla on the drums with Moses and Dumí. It was discouraging to have yet another Zimbabwean couple passing by who asked us why we were bothering when there was no hope of change. Our view is we must try and keep Zimbabwe in the public eye at a time when it is fading out of the news. Perhaps this couple will be happier at Zimfest in Wimbledon next Saturday when Zimbabwean exiles will gather for Castle lager, braais and games. Many of them – now rebuilding their lives in prosperous Britain – will speak nostalgically about the “old days”. The Vigil will be leafleting them to try to get their support for our efforts to keep Zimbabwe on the international agenda. We need the help of everyone if we are to change things. It is so sad to see Zimbabweans forgetting the suffering of those at home. Why do we have so little white support for the Vigil? FOR YOUR DIARY: Monday, 6th September at 7.30, Forum at the George, Fleet Street, London (opposite the Royal Courts of Justice). A discussion of MDC suspension of participation in future elections. Guest speaker, Dr Brighton Chireka, MDC UK representative.

28th August 2004

Brilliant music: Patson and Jerry on the drums, familiar songs (rather unflattering to Zanu-PF and Mbeki), uninhibited dancing and Bonny's Olympic-standard whistling. A passing tribe of Italian scouts was fascinated: they probably got some badge for joining in – anyway, they had to be dragged away. Talking about joining in: Joyce from Manchester got up at 5 am to be with us at the start of the Vigil. She expected to be back in Manchester at a quarter to midnight to catch a connection home. Did it do any good? Well it gave the Vigil HEART. And Joyce wasn't alone: we had another from Manchester and also supporters from Leeds, Derby, Hastings and Luton. People make great sacrifices to be at the Vigil. But there are hundreds of thousands of Zimbabweans now in the UK. Two white Zimbabweans dropped by and asked our mainly black supporters how things were going. It was sad to see how they had given up and felt there was no future for them at all in Zimbabwe. We really must get the message through to all Zimbabweans – black and white – that they must not give up the struggle for a free and fair Zimbabwe and their right to a future there. PLEASE NOTE: no forum this week because

Monday, 30th August is a UK public holiday and our usual venue is closed.

21st August 2004

As we write this, a sadza party is going on in Bermondsey to mark the departure from London of some of the Vigil's most faithful supporters. They include Bernita Magaya (plus Vigil baby), and our inspirational singer and drummer, Patson Muzuwa. With the high cost of everything in London, It's tough here for Zimbabweans and we hope they will find it easier in Leicester. The good news is that they will continue to come down to the Vigil – they have been at the heart of it. Patson spent an hour today explaining the situation to an ill-informed Rasta and then another half an hour disposing of a Greek "I'm all right, Jack" who said his business in Bulawayo was flourishing. As for Bernita, her baby girl, Tinotenda, has made us all think of the future of Zimbabwe. Mike Popham, the BBC producer ("From our own Correspondent"), called by and offered his help. We were particularly grateful to Caroline who comes from the West country when her commitments allow and Wiseman down from Leeds and we mustn't forget Hugh, who has no connections with Zimbabwe, but whose father was a consul in Asmara (now capital of Eritrea). He always buys very welcome pizzas for our hungry Vigil supporters. What else? It was a beautiful late summer day, no torrential rainfall, no humidity. And a long crocodile of Bavarian schoolchildren signed the petitions – they were very alarmed at seeing the words torture and starvation on our banners. FOR YOUR DIARY: Monday, 23rd August at 7.30, Forum at the George, Fleet Street, London (opposite the Royal Courts of Justice). A Zimbabwean quiz night with prizes. For diary archive [Click here](#)

14th August 2004

An exuberant vigil with many old – read familiar – faces and some new ones – not Bernita's baby, Tinotenda, 6 months yesterday and an "old" attender. We were joined by Zimbabweans from as far afield as Manchester, Leeds, Stockton and Stoke on Trent. We numbered about 50, almost all black – sorry our prejudiced visitors from two weeks ago (see vigil diary of 31st July) weren't there to see it. We were conscious that our good cheer was at odds with the message we were putting out about the unspeakable horrors of Zimbabwe. But how could we be miserable in such good company and in such balmy sunshine? Some of the ever-fascinating parade of people from all over the world passing down The Strand stopped by only to ask the way to Covent Garden – but stayed to read Mike and Wiz's notice boards with newspaper cuttings detailing the latest lunacies of Mugabe's fracturing regime. Our faithful dustman signed the petitions yet again – hope the UN and President Mbeki don't notice when we send them! Taking a break – at the old Lemon Tree pub nearby – one could hear the choir rehearsal from the practice rooms of the English National Opera in one ear and the singing and drumming from the Vigil in the other. The energetic dancing of Moses on his birthday (he dances lower than anyone) accompanied by the drumming of Patson and Jerry, wrapped up a great day. FOR YOUR DIARY: Zimfest 2004, Saturday, 11th September at Old Wimbledonians Clubs, SW20. Zimbabwean food, music, sport and entertainment for the benefit of Zimbabwean charities. Tickets £16 available from www.wezimbabwe.org. The vigil will use this opportunity to canvass for more support and will have a stand there. For diary archive [Click here](#)

7th August 2004

A high-spirited day in sizzling temperatures. 31C would not raise an eyebrow in Zimbabwe but in the humid heart of London it had us all fanning ourselves in the shade of our 4 maple trees (last week's pigeon has unfortunately departed). A cloudless sky with hardly a breeze, it was still 29C when the 40 or so people at the end held hands to sing "Ishe Komberera Africa/ Nkosi Sikelele Africa" at 6 pm. This is our most potent moment:: all our banners are down and we form a circle, holding hands – a gesture of solidarity with the brave people back home. Another lovely thing, someone who has taken a liking to us came over with pizzas for everyone, as he has done several times in the past. This time he was particularly taken with our vigil baby, Tinotenda, who wins the medal for best vigil attender since she was here before she was born. We were pleased to welcome an Irish sympathiser, Derry Healy, who said Archbishop Ncube has been invited to address Bishops in Ireland, in October. FOR YOUR DIARY: Monday, 9 August at 7.30, Forum at the George, Fleet Street, London (opposite the Royal Courts of Justice). A discussion on Heroes Day – what it means to us all. For diary archive [Click here](#)

31st July 2004

Racist abuse. We had thought we had got beyond this, but it was the problem we faced in the early hours of the Vigil. Most of our regular supporters had gone off to the wedding of the UK MDC representative, Dr Brighton Chireka, in Surrey. He has been a tireless activist for Zimbabwe. We wish him and his wife, Prisca, all happiness. So it was three Murungus who had to confront a succession of vitriolic "Africa for the Africans" British Caribbeans. "You white people leave black people alone". Human rights abuses? "It's all white propaganda". Normally we have black faces in the early part of the Vigil who disarm this sort of abuse. Fortunately our faithful local (black) dustman intervened and signed our petitions (as he does every week). A lovely Catholic nun carrying a 3 foot high Madonna and child on her way to gospel singing in the open air (it touched 30 degrees today) dropped by – some continuity with Archbishop Pius Ncube's visit last week. Some of us attended the service at Westminster Cathedral last Sunday at which he preached (an outspoken denunciation of the Mugabe regime). The congregation broke into spontaneous applause. Some of those who attended spoke to him after the service and it was clear that he felt the Vigil was enormously important because of its consistency and the commitment of its supporters. Mike and Wiz (see vigil diary 3.7.04) prepared a newsboard today which picked up on a comment by Brian Kagoro (of Crisis in Zimbabwe Coalition). He said "Mugabe's proposed electoral reforms are like putting lipstick on a frog". Mike's cartoon of a frog with lipstick saying "Riggitt, riggitt!" said it all. By the way we discovered a pigeon nesting in one of our maple trees. She didn't move a feather when we almost poked her with our flagpole.

24th July 2004

Today was one of the most memorable vigils in the 21 months we have been gathering on Saturdays outside Zimbabwe House. Placards we had made said it all: "Welcome Pius Ncube – voice of the oppressed". The Roman Catholic Archbishop of Bulawayo, foremost critic of the Mugabe regime, spent one and a half hours with us – happy to be with his own people in warm sunshine, blessing those on bended knees who sought his help. As red cards bearing the names of Mugabe's victims fluttered in the breeze, the Archbishop signed our petitions and spoke of his pain at seeing so many Zimbabweans driven from their homes. "Don't be

discouraged. Keep up the pressure," he exhorted us. "Good will overcome evil". The crowd of exuberant Zimbabweans was joined by a number of pastors, including two Methodist ministers. One of them, 85-year-old Merfyn Temple, jailed last year in Zimbabwe, carried a placard around his neck: "Ashamed to be a Methodist". Another, Dr Martine Stemerick, will speak at the forum on Monday about her recent visit to Zimbabwe.

17th July 2004

Plenty of music today. The singing, dancing and drumming drove the rain away and we had to take down our green tarpaulin because of the heat. A very good attendance from Zimbabweans here – many travelled a long way, from places as far away as Glasgow, Sheffield, Gloucester and Leicester. They included Mike and Wiz back from their honeymoon (see diary of 3.7.04). Loads of people signed our petitions – even a cow (even we could see it was a cardboard creation on a bicycle!). She just happened to be passing along the Strand – with the ever-interesting parade of Londoners and visitors. Many of them, such as the Spanish school group today, show an unexpected enthusiasm for our cause. We were treated to a display of expert juggling from another supporter, which we were able to accompany with our drumming. We do seem to be reaching out to many people. FOR YOUR DIARY: Monday, 19th July at 7.30, Forum at the George, Fleet Street, London (opposite the Royal Courts of Justice). Briggs Bomba a student activist from Zimbabwe will be speaking.

10th July 2004

The global warming-type weather we have been having this month – with torrential rain suddenly giving way to warm sunshine – eased up for the vigil . . . but only a bit. Our green tarpaulin strung up between the four maples outside Zimbabwe House was buffeted by swirling winds, occasionally ballooning up to drench people signing our petitions! But still they came. Incidentally, people on the table noted a significant shift in attitude from our West Indian visitors. In the past it has been gut support for the Mugabe liberation struggle, but increasingly we are finding a readiness to sign in support of human rights and acceptance that Mugabe is not the answer they believed he was. It seems our efforts to inform the black British community are reaping dividends. The singing and dancing was enlivened by the drumming of our friends from Sunderland, Fanuel and Jerry. The better the music the more support we get.

3rd July 2004

A wedding in the Zimbabwean expatriate community inevitably drew many of our regular supporters away from the Vigil today. Tying the knot at a ceremony in Kew Gardens were Mike Bennett, the long-serving information and IT co-ordinator for the MDC-UK, and Wiz Bishop, sister of Cathy Buckle, whose books and regular commentaries (available on <http://africantears.netfirms.com>) have brought home to people around the world the grim realities of the situation in Zimbabwe. It meant a busy Vigil for the stalwarts outside Zimbabwe House. Thank you to those who turned up, including supporters from as far away as Newcastle, Liverpool and Sunderland. We have now been here for 90 weeks without fail. The Vigil, because of its consistency, is becoming a force to be reckoned with. It's a place where people can meet, feel less lonely in a strange country, get help with their asylum cases etc. It's also a

useful base for other demonstrations – June has seen numerous protests in addition to our regular Saturday Vigils. Our banners, posters, flyers and petitions are always in place for others to build on. Talking about flyers, we were faced today with boisterous winds, which at least blew the showers away (probably to Wimbledon or Lords or even Kew Gardens!). It took Herculean efforts to keep our green tarpaulin from taking off. But our petitions drew steady support and the day was further enlivened by a Gay Pride march. Oddly enough, they seemed to dislike Mr Mugabe and were happy to sign our petitions!

26th June 2004

The UN day drawing attention to torture was marked at the Vigil today. More than a hundred people joined an informal procession from St Martin-in-the-Fields in Trafalgar Square to lay flowers at the Vigil in solidarity with Zimbabwean torture survivors. Zimbabwe was named by the Law Society in London as the worst country in the world for torture two years ago – and things certainly haven't got better since then. The church service was addressed by Beatrice Mtetwa, a human rights lawyer, Tinashe Chimedza, student leader and youth activist, and Evelyn Masaiti, an MDC MP, among others. "Purge this realm of bitter things", sang the congregation of Zimbabwean activists. "In the heartland of oppression sound the cry of liberty". The Vigil was joined by leading members of the MDC in the UK, including the chairman, Washington Ali. Among the visitors during the day was Andrew Meldrum, whose new book on Zimbabwe, "Where We Have Hope", was launched in London yesterday. When the Vigil broke up at 6 pm we left the maple trees outside the Embassy festooned with flowers and tributes to those who've suffered in Zimbabwe. The Vigil was the third in as many days. On Thursday and Friday, Zimbabweans gathered outside Zimbabwe House to mark the anniversary of the stolen Parliamentary elections of 2000.

19th June 2004

Today the Vigil expressed solidarity with the WOZA protests in Zimbabwe – Women of Zimbabwe Arise – to mark world refugee day. We were pleased to be joined by other WOZA supporters who brought posters and flyers and sold scarves in support of women in Zimbabwe. We sang WOZA songs and signed sisterhood bonds in support of our sisters who are at the forefront of the suffering. The protest was made more poignant when we received texts from Zimbabwe to say a number of protesters there had been arrested. Once again we realised we were the voice of the voiceless and it was our obligation to speak for them because we could speak without fear. It was good to be joined by Geoff Hill, author of "The Battle for Zimbabwe", who has a new book on Zimbabwe coming out shortly. After our protest last week we were cheered to receive text messages from Johannesburg that Zimbabwe Reserve Bank Governor, Gono had been routed by Zimbabwean protesters there. (Gono, Gono gone). Gono has made it clear that the brain drain is now Zimbabwe's main export because of their foreign exchange remittances which keep the regime afloat. Must we now sell our own people.

12th June 2004

Watching jets in formation fly low up the Strand on their way to the Trooping of the Colour to celebrate the Queen's official birthday was a wonderful sight at today's Vigil. However the Vigil

was dominated by the visit to the UK by the Governor of the Reserve Bank of Zimbabwe, Gideon Gono. He is here to raise funds for the Mugabe regime through his Homelink initiative. Zimbabweans in the UK are furious that the British Government has allowed him in and not expanded targeted sanctions to include him. The Vigil was extended well into the evening so we could protest while a reception took place at Zimbabwe House hosted by Gono. Excitement mounted during the day as caterers delivered and Embassy minions watched the Vigil balefully. As 6 pm approached more protesters arrived and proceeded to barrack those waiting to attend the reception. The catcalls, whistles, singing, dancing and drumming increased in volume as Zimbabwean officials arrived. The message of our protest was that however tempting the exchange rate offered by the Homelink roadshow, Zimbabweans should not succumb as they will be propping up the regime and perpetuating human rights abuse in Zimbabwe. Some of our supporters managed to sneak in to the reception. They reported that Gono's presentation was very short and he did not take any questions. All in all, the Embassy was pretty rattled by the time we left.

5th June 2004

Welcome to the first Vigil Diary. Today we were honoured by the presence of the MDC National Chairman, Mr Isaac Mtongo, visiting the Vigil after addressing the MDC UK District Assembly held at the Springbok Bar near the Vigil. An inspirational address inspired a great feeling of working together from the MDC UK District. Exuberant MDC members from all over the country joined the Vigil after the assembly and kept it going well beyond its closing time because we stayed to catcall Zimbabwe Embassy officials when they emerged at what they thought was the end of the Vigil. They looked very crestfallen. It was wonderful that Mr Mtongo was there to celebrate the birthday of Addley, one of our core activists. We had the usual selection of interesting visitors, most notable being a group of people dressed up as a whole zoo of animals. Very like Zanu-PF. For our friends in Zimbabwe the weather was benign, and the singing and dancing reflected the high spirits of the group.