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**Interview of Tendai Tagarira : Zimbabwean
Author, poet, blogger, exile, dreamer, activist
–Dr. Sunil Sharma**

Q: What does it mean to be an exiled writer in a globalized world?

Exile is not easy. Speaking up is not easy. In my case, the price I have to pay for free speech is exile. As for globalization, that notion is a confusing one because it implies some things I don't quite fully agree with. The way I see it, I am one of the many voices that are persecuted for exercising their freedom of opinion by a government bent on suppressing its peoples freedoms, in Zimbabwe. Living in Denmark allows me to write or speak my opinions without a petrol bomb being thrown into my apartment. That is why I put up with the cold Danish winter, because I must exercise my free speech in order to speak for my generation in Zimbabwe.

Q: What role does memory play in the writing of the exiled?

In Africa, we have a storytelling tradition that involves metaphors, usually of animals representing the human social condition. This method has proved an indispensable way to keep ancient knowledge and history through the art of African story telling. It is easy to remember a good metaphor. For example, in the West, many remember Gorge Orwel's Animal farm. So, before I talk about memory, I must talk about metaphor, as it is good for method to keep an important lesson engrained in the readers memory. In most of my writings I use metaphors and irony, but sometimes I am too impatient and I write as if holding the barrel of a smoking gun. When that happens, it is as if my memory is a Tsunami wave. The end result is that I can write volumes of work everyday.

Q: can we re-produce a Proustean memory? Careful recall of certain lapsed moments and their artistic presentation?

Yes. I think the human mind is a powerful tool and even the latest sciences are only uncovering the secrets of the mind. I believe artists and writers are gifted in different ways and there is no one particular method that works. There are several methods, depending with one's experiences and background. Some authors make better use of their proustean memory, others don't.

Q: What is the role of the land exited? Does she call you back---a silent mother---on lonely, snow-covered, moon-lit nights?

Yes, and much more.

Q: What is the identity of an exiled writer? Hyphenated? Pull of the land receding behind; pull of the new welcoming shores? Are you capable of reconciling these competing pressures?

Identity of the exiled writer is one the writer chooses, but in most cases one cant help but feel rootless. Yet some embrace their new exile cultures, others hang on to the past, and some dangle between these two aspects. In my case, Identity is not cast in stone, but is always evolving. But I choose to be me and that is the essence of my identity. I have no one specific culture, but I can dabble with many cultures and therefore my identity is a diverse one.

Q: Is it all about new beginnings? Or, old appeals and sundering of emotional ties?

New beginnings are always a both scary and amazing time, depending how one looks at it. In my view its a question of looking at the glass as half empty or as half full. As for old emotional ties, I use that to fuel my writing. It is fuel and very good fuel.

Q: How can an exiled writer straddle these two worlds and remain relevant and appealing to both?

For me, its about taking one day at a time and keeping busy. I have a passion to collaborate with a vast number of artists from across the world. I also dabble in different artistic expressions. Last year I won the Nice Film Festival in France, for a film co-produced with Vitor Lopes(Portugal). The film is based on an old poem I wrote in 2010 and then I transformed it into a script and it took us one year to make 8 mins of animation film. So I keep busy and I hardly spend time straddling these two worlds. I live in the moment, just like a heartbeat.

Q: Is it not difficult to resurrect disappearing home landscapes in a new socio-cultural settings? You feel, initially, alien in both places---for your beliefs and values?

Hahaha. I am an Alien. At least that's what my Danish government issued travel passport said. In many ways, i am different from many people. No matter where I am, even back home,or while traveling, I am always a little different. Its my lifestyle and I love and embrace it. I am not afraid of being different so I embrace being called or feeling Alien.

Q: Has not political exile a programme of moving to West by some writers as a self-promoting exercise? You get asylum, better opportunities and recognition---for denouncing your country and its regime? Trust me, not at all. One still has to work hard and network. One must still shake the coconut tree to get the coconut. And African literature has some kind of glass ceiling in the West. That is why I am putting my literature in different art mediums like Animation, Comics and hopefully in the future, video games. In these new artistic expressions, its a level playing field. Where one comes from does not influence the marketing and promotion of the works. Today, with the internet, one's work can be in many places at the same time. So one can be in the West and not know how to network, and one could be in Africa and use the internet and achieve many positive results.

Q: Why not be an embedded writer in your own culture, stand up for your values and offer resistance and get caught? So-called dissidents in China, Latin America, Africa, Middle East, are doing this as an act of honesty and bravery.

Culture to me is dynamic, well at least mine is and all the time. So maybe this is where the aspect of globalization should come in. In my work, it can be very traditional, contemporary or even futuristic. I choose to swing from one cultural branch to another in the vast jungle of artistic expression.

Q: poetry as a political weapon. Can it bring required/desired changes? How? Dictators do not read poetry these days.

In Africa, poetry is mostly used in songs and if you look at singer/poets like Miriam Makeba, Fela Kuti, Thomas Mapfumo, Oliver Mtukudzi, Lucky Dube, you will see that they used poetry as the most potent weapon against the oppressors and many people heard the message. When Mandela was in Robben Island, many poems went out to the world. Even Mandela is a bit of a poet himself and his writings are a treasure chest for Africa's development.

Q: The role of writer in an age of micro-narratives?

I dont believe in Ages. The age that is, is the one chooses for him/herself. I am in an Age of SELF Discovery and business is good.

Q: The politics of awards? Is there a life for the Non-Booker writers?

Yes of course. I have an award from a prestigious Film Award for my animation film, "A Can of Worms" A week I received this award, I was attending the Frankfurt Book Fair and giving a lecture at an event on stage. I told the audience that the term African writer is often misunderstood and used as a giant glass ceiling. Some Western editors decide for the rest of the world what is good African literature. In my opinion, this decision is best left to Africans just like the West decides upon its own literature. The big publishing firms are controlled by a cabal of people who sometimes don't do enough to promote African and so called Third World Literature. So for many African or third world authors, awards are a great way to leverage the economy of reputation.

Q: Role of community in writing is crucial. How exiled in their writing can capture that sense of involvement, while living abroad?

I think if one is to enjoy exile, one has to participate in the local community as well. I am a hyperactive person and so I can do as many as ten projects at the same time, one day at a time. So for me the

community is a way to make friends and also networks and collaborate e.g my latest Children's book in Danish, which was illustrated by Lone Hadegaard. I have also developed a fan base in the community I live by starting a popular cultural blog.

Q: The role of English/ any other language in dealing with your ancestral realities, national paradoxes and ironies?

Most of Southern Africa was colonized by the British. So the English language was forced down my throat from an early age. I had no choice in the matter. That is why I can express myself so well in English. In any case, the British Empire has declined from its "glory" days and today English is a world language. So it enables me to reach mass audiences. But sometimes, I also write in my mother tongue but the readership is only in Zimbabwe and I am currently banned and exiled, including my work.

Q: Can an exile live by their literature alone?

Well one has to be a jack of a few trades in order to live from writing along. In my case, I have a vast set of skills that I use to leverage the economic situation. Mostly I enjoy starting innovative enterprises along the lines of art and culture.

Q: How is publishing scene abroad?

I already told you. Not easy.

Q: Any message?

I wish writers in India, Africa, Brasil and Latin America could join forces and develop their markets. Gone are the days of Western domination in our literature! I would love to have a readership in these continents, not just in Europe and the West. The only way is for the writers in these countries to work together. I would love to promote Indian literature in Africa. With the internet, we can do it!!!

Brief-bio: Tendai has authored over 20 books, on various subject matter and in various genres. He is also a columnist for the following newspapers and publications: Aarhus Culture Blog-Founding Editor since Sept 2012, Copenhagen Post (Denmark's biggest English newspaper)-Columnist, Afrikablog Denmark(Denmark's largest online publication on Africa)-Columnist, Zimeye Newspaper -Columnist, Africanherald Express Newspaper(Nigeria)- Columnist, Malawi Times (Malawi)-Columnist. Famous Interviews: Tendai has interviewed some famous celebrities including rapper Fat Joe, Xzibit, Snoop Dog, Staff Benda Bilili, Hening Mankell (Author) and several local celebrities in Denmark, Germany and Africa. Famous Reviews: Tendai reviewed Ingmar Bergman's theater play, Fanny and Alexander for Jyllands Posten Newspaper. He also wrote a review on Jeff Koons Frankfurt Exhibition in 2012 for other publications. TV and Radio: Tendai, in partnership with Aarhusglobal Media, developed and hosted a successful TV and radio program titled African Rainbow on three regional Danish TV stations, Kanal Ostjylland, Aarhus TV, Kanal Midwest to a potential 1,2 million viewership.