

Rescuing Zimbabwe's 'Other' Liberation Archives

By

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Zimbabwe's liberation struggle has been well documented over the past three decades. Apart from the oral testimonies of participants in the war, this is material that already existed in the public domain such as press releases, newsletters, minutes of meetings and communiqués of its two main liberation movements ZIPRA and ZANLA. Very little primary material has come from their private collections and it is public knowledge that both movements still do not possess proper archives. Their age-old animosity continues to make any effort to reveal their individual collections a security concern and this way much of this crucial data has lacked systematic and proper care or been simply left to decay. This paper submits that there is so much more crucial material in the hands of participants in the war who lack confidence in existing modes of documenting and archiving this liberation heritage. Such material such as manuscripts, letters, rare photographs etc. has been encountered in people's private libraries, locked up in trunks in their basements or worse still, left in the custody of people who have no idea of its value. The paper argues that there are ways of rescuing these 'other' archives through advocacy and awareness campaigns by concerned scholars who could regain the confidence of liberation veterans, their associations or families to avail these private materials and otherwise create alternative repositories that compliment whatever efforts have been in place to archive this liberation heritage. It details the work of the Zimbabwe Oral History Trust, an organization founded for purposes of rescuing this scattered material.