

CHAPTER 4:

WHISTLEBLOWING IN ZIMBABWE: AN EXPOSE

This chapter states and explores many cases of whistleblowing that happened in Zimbabwe. In doing so, the nature and gravity of the possible injury, moral dilemmas and the possible result of the blowing is expatiated on. All this is done within the dictates of the philosophy of *ubuntu* as a moral theorem that seeks to address ethical problems in the business environment in Zimbabwe. These cases are to be critically analysed through the philosophy of *ubuntu*, a process which will see the compatibility between whistleblowing and *hunhu* further justified.

In the Zimbabwean business environment there have been many whistleblowing cases, among them being the case of external-government whistleblowing by some non-governmental organisation such as Crisis Coalition in Zimbabwe (CCZ) to the international community against the violation of human rights which took place during the 2000 fast track land redistribution which was reported in the Zimbabwean Independent of November 24 to 30, 2006, in which a Transnational Company (TNC), Olivine Industries was instructed by its headquarters overseas not to buy raw materials such as groundnuts, sunflowers, macadamia nuts or any farm product from the 'stolen farms' in Zimbabwe. This was a directive from the American government following the blowing of the whistle by the non-governmental organisations such as the CCZ that claimed that there was gross violation of human rights by the Zimbabwean government through and during the 2000 fast track land redistribution which saw white farmers and their top managerial employees thrown out of the farms. In turn the whistle blowers (non-governmental organisations and individuals suspected by the then government to relate to the West) suffered from retributive laws and policies from the Zimbabwean government. Indeed, the suffering of other African at the hands of fellow Shona people was a direct and serious threat to the well-being of the entire community in the eyes of *ubuntu*. Such scenario poses a moral dilemma to the potential whistle blowers, whether to risk their private life and business opportunities in pursuit of upholding the essence of *ubuntu* which values the general good of the whole community. Accordingly, the decision by the non-governmental organisations to blow the whistle was in effect a practice based on empathy because they wanted the politically perpetrated violence to end. By then, the three political parties in the country Zimbabwe African National Union Patriotic Front (ZANU PF), Movement for Democratic Change-Tsvangirai (MDC-

T) and Movement for Democratic Change-Mutambara (MDC-M) were trying to bring back the influence and dominance of *ubuntu* through the political activities within the borders of Zimbabwe. In effect, they were calling for reconciliation and diversity in unity because without these the essence of togetherness in *ubuntu* is non-functional.

Another case was an act of government-cum-external whistleblowing in which the Governor of the Reserve Bank of Zimbabwe (RBZ) Doctor Gideon Gono was screened on the Zimbabwean National Television denouncing some top chefs in the government for perpetrating corruption and a high inflationary business environment in the country through the so called 'burning of forex' in 2009. This was an *ubuntu* initiated practice which came after the Governor saw that the masses of Zimbabwe were being exploited by a few business tycoons with the honour and love for other, a quality greatly called for by the philosophy of *ubuntu*. These activities abused African humanity in Zimbabwe, in that, only those with hefty pockets were draining the few cents the poor had for their survival. This was incompatible with one of the chief tenants of *Hunhuism* that is, of being empathic and valuing of collectivism. The general populace of Zimbabwe could not buy the basic commodities as the prices were eve-skyrocketing a sign that, there was need of *ubuntu's* restoration, a process which would only come by if and only if the whistle was blown to alert those with powers to rectify the immoral activities. To this end, the philosophy of *ubuntu* condemns the government chefs and upholds the doctrine of whistleblowing since it was meant to way of inculcating good behaviour through a well protracted path of valuing the native values, norms and traditions. He (Dr Gono) faced a moral dilemma as to whether to state or not the names of the top government officials involved as the legislators pressured him to do so. He did not want to jeopardise the reputation of the people involved, though it was a noble and moral good to expose them as a way of discouraging such acts. He also feared for his own security and physically and professionally. In such a case, one may claim that there was a breach of loyalty, an act best described by Bok (1998:292), who says whistleblowing is an act of disloyalty because the exposure of the alleged immoral practices is a violation of loyalty, both to the organisation and fellow employees. However, loyalty to individuals who do not uphold *ubuntu* does not imply that we have a duty to refrain from reporting the immoral actions of those to whom we are loyal; rather royalty in Africa only applies to the collective body.

In another case of government-cum-external whistleblowing involving Mudiwa who informed the police that Chitungwiza chief internal auditor Tsangamwe wanted a bribe from the informant to give a distorted report of the audit exercise

he had carried out at the Chitungwiza Municipality that would have denied the rate payers of the right information about how their money was being used for their own benefit was reported in the Zimbabwean Independent of 24 to 30, 2006. Subsequently, Tsangamwe was arrested for that immoral practice since the act of bribery cannot be accepted as a moral law. To this end, Mudiwa, be it socially or professionally, his security was at stake in case that Tsangamwe wanted to retaliate in the foreseeable future. So, many people are undecided on whether to blow the whistle or not considering the risks involved in partaking in the act of whistleblowing. After all, the act of stealing is a prohibited practice according to underlying essence of *hunhu*, that is the call for morally ever uprightness in all life endeavours.

In January 2007, the Sunday Mail reported that one of the Trust Bank tellers informed the authorities about a suspicious client who intended to withdraw sixty million dollars. This was typical example of internal-cum-impersonal whistleblowing since the teller simply reported the immoral act through the organisation's protocol. Among the Shona is considered to a vice of which the disclosure of such an act was a sign of being a real *munhu* (an ethical person). An investigation was done only to find out that one of the bank tellers transferred the money from a customer's account into a friend's (a suspicious withdrawer), eventually the two friends were arrested on the strength of the alert teller who blew the whistle. However, the arrested had a syndicate which later threatened the private life of the teller- whistle blower. In view of this whistleblowing becomes a moral dilemma-oriented act not only to the Zimbabwean populace but the world-over, since would be blower is mentally divided over the conflicting social obligation versus the private security duty. However, the blower decided the right way because he was a pure *munhu* with ethical standards congruent with the ethical dictates of *ubuntu*.

The Manica Post of 21-27 March 2011 reported a case of Mr Chapoterera, a Chancellor Government Primary School Headmaster in Mutare, who appeared before the Mutare Magistrate Court following an act of whistleblowing by one of the ancillary staff at the school that the accused stole eleven asbestos sheets and ferried them to his village in Nyanga. Mr Chapoterera is said to have done this immoral act some time in 2008. The non-academic staff-cum whistle blower opted for both internal external whistleblowing because he informed the School Development Committee (SDC) and the Mutare Provincial Office which in turn facilitated an arrest which was followed by suspension from duty. This was government whistleblowing the whistle blower informed the ministry which is a regulatory entity supervising the day-to-day activities in government institutions.

Eventually, an audit team was tasked by the Ministry of Education permanent secretary to further unravel more immoral practices by the headmaster in question. The charges he faced included that, stated above, misappropriation of school funds and many fraud cases which later implicated many tender suppliers in the Eastern Province capital of Mutare. Mr Chapoterera later gave in to many of the above stated allegations including the asbestos issue. This meant his dismissal from the teaching profession. As if it was not enough, he was sentenced to stay in prison for seven years with three years suspended on good behaviour.

The decision by the ancillary staff member to blow the whistle against the headmaster was greatly centred on *ubuntu* because the stealing of school property by the headmaster was tantamount to the destruction of the community since the school children who were supposed to benefit from stolen property are an integral part of the whole Shona people. His decision to publicize the immoral activities was done in the favour and protection of the public interest so that the 'game' could be ended. Indeed, the government and the court of law's decision of dismissal and imprisonment was the proper stance in consideration of rectifying the immoral practices by the headmaster. To this end, the whistle blower in this is an ethical person according to the chief tenants of *ubuntu* who values and upholds the welfare of everyone including children who attend school at this institution.

A closely related to the above incidents, a case of a Tongogara Secondary in Chipinge teacher by the name Tichaona Mutema embarked onto an internal-impersonal whistleblowing when he blew the whistle against a fellow teacher, Mr Manyumwa at the same institution who was sexually harassing various female students. Mr Manyumwa, a 34-year-old married man who has already fathered three children was caught red handed having sexual intercourse with a 16-year-old Chipiwa Mupedzani, after being in that improper association/ relationship with the juvenile for two years when she was still doing Form two. To make sure that proper investigation was done, Manyumwa was given a forced transfer to Chikore High School where he was later dismissed from the public service.

According to Mutema, the whistle blower, he had been tracking all the sinister moves by the teacher in question during which he caught him red handed having sexual intercourse with the minor. Without any hesitation and resentment, Mutema informed the Headmaster Mr Gondavakuru who then passed on the relay button to the Chipinge District Education Office and subsequently the Permanent Secretary. Following the informative notification, further investigations were done, only to find out that the girl was three months pregnant. At the same

time Manyumwa confessed that he had been in a hexagonal love relationship with other girls. Among the victims of Manyumwa's sexual abuse, there was a thirteen-year-old form one student schooling at the neighbouring Secondary School.

A disciplinary tribunal was convened/ out of which a dismissal out of the Public Service was proffered against the immoral teacher. Further charges were filed against him for statutory rape and subsequently Munyumwa was both dismissed and subsequently jailed. This was internal whistleblowing done after the damage was done to the juvenile though it however curtailed further sexual abuses by the same teacher. The whistle blower showed a gesture of *ubuntu* because Manyumwa's behaviour would have resulted in a high risk of spreading of the dreadful Human Immune Virus (HIV) which causes the untreatable Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome (AIDS). Such consequences would have led to the diminishing of the collective body of *vanhu* through AIDS related death and loss of educated personnel or skilled labour succumbing to the disease. Accordingly, it is worth noting that there is a social regulation embedded among the Shona culture that prohibits the heinous act of adultery, as such Mutema's effort was in tandem with this teaching as he denounces the immoral practice which may have ended in marriage collapse. It is therefore evident that whistleblowing, that, whistleblowing is an integral part of the ubuntu philosophy which makes the basis of the Shona ethical theory.

On the 23rd of November 2010, the Zimbabwe Broadcasting Corporation (ZBC) reported a case of a Harare T.M. Supermarket female worker Tsitsi Nyabeza who internally blew the whistle against her manager who sexually harassed her. The whistle blower said the manager allegedly called her up to his office and upon her arrival he stripped off his clothes trying to entice the lady into a sexual intimacy. Immediately the subordinate rushed out of the office and informed other workers and the senior management that in turn passed on the case to the police. In an interview with the ZBC crew, Nyabeza said;

'The manager wanted me to participate in immoral practices which are non-compatible with *hunhu hwedu* as married people. He is only my boss and not my husband. I will not give in to adultery.'

About this comment, the woman showed that she is a really *munhu* (ethical person) who values the cultural norm and regulation inculcated by the philosophy of *ubuntu*. She undertook personal whistleblowing which was meant to curtail the damage on her. The immoral manager was prosecuted and lost his job. In a way, the whistle blower's decision is greatly appraised by the values and traditions of *ubuntu* in that the pending damage could end up affecting the whole society since

the diminishing of one person is the disintegration of the whole community because the philosophy at work in this project upholds the idea of *ubuntu*. It therefore follows that, almost every whistle blower among the Shona people partakes in the practice with the intention of safeguarding the values, norms and traditions entrenched in the teachings of ubuntu in perpetual succession.

According to the philosophy of *ubuntu*, every member or institution within a society represents the whole. If it is a business, it is developed, moulded and kept 'alive' by societal values, norms and traditions for the people and for itself. That is, the business institution's policy should be in harmony with the expectations and general ethical fibre of the community. It therefore points to the fact that an African businesses corporates among the Shona should value the importance of togetherness and empathy. Thus, it should feel for all the stakeholders. Contrary to this philosophy, the University of Zimbabwe (UZ) had the practice /policy of charging late registration fines to all the students upon the expiry of the set period for registration during the beginning of each semester. The policy has been causing a lot of implications for many economically disadvantaged students in that the failure to pay fees in time implies poverty. An ethical person would then wonder, where and how the poor are to get the doubled amount. That is, the original fees and the late registration fine. This financial policy by the famous highest institution of learning in Zimbabwe was an act of adding salt to a bleeding wound to most students and parents.

Deeply affected and concerned with the practice, the then Student Representative Committee (SRC) presidency aspirant, Agency Gumbo, decided to blow the whistle against the University, an act which was both external and impersonal in nature. He informed the media (the Herald and ZBC) that further gathered more details about the matter and then publicised it. The publication ended up informing some regulatory agency. For instance, the Ministry of Higher and Tertiary Education, a wing of the government later intervened to restore respect for the poor. In turn, the ministry gave a directive to the UZ administration that the policy of late registration fine be removed and the already collected money (fine) be refunded to the concerned students because the move was washing down the *ubuntu*-oriented Cadetship Scheme meant to help the underprivileged from the government coffers. Gumbo's decision was driven by the zeal to promote and protect the general interest of the entire society because the late registration fine would end up barring some potential medical practitioners, lawyers, teachers, and all other personnel poised to benefit the entire nation. As an ethical person who knows that he threatened when others

are diminished, he was there equally to the task and saved the situation as a whistle blower.

In this section of the research, it has been found important to present some case of gross immorality which warranted the practice of whistleblowing according to the underlying essence of *ubuntu*, but it went away with whistleblowing for moral rectification. The first one pertains to the behaviour of bus crews of various companies plying various routes in Zimbabwe who load and make passengers pay bus fares with the full knowledge of road unworthiness conditions of their vehicles. This immoral practice has seen many people losing their properties, health and even their lives. In some cases, the buses would break down shortly after travelling a small portion of the journey resulting in passengers being held in ransom stranded by the road as the bus crew tries to fix the technical problems. Such behaviour or practice is unethical according to the *ubuntu* philosophy. In a bid to find out why these workers participate in such unethical practices, some rank marshals (*mahwindi*) were interviewed and they revealed that they were working under the directive of their bosses, failure to stick to the instruction, they risk losing their jobs. Reflecting on this remark, one may argue that the bus crews were forced to do accordingly, because if they were to lose their jobs, it would be difficult to come by in these times of high rate of unemployment. However, this is an acute violation and demeaning of the ethical fibre embedded in *ubuntu* since the transport operators and their employees are not living by the dictates of their own philosophy. Rather, they seem to be the capitalists who value their profit margins contrary to the doctrine of *ubuntu* which defines and mirrors the concept of personhood through the wellbeing of the collective. The fact that whistleblowing in such case would curtail human deaths and lose of property implies that the insiders in which transport operators operates should blow the whistle for moral rectification hence the upkeep of humanity's sacredness and togetherness under the emblem of *ubuntu*.

The aforementioned stated expositions contained in the chapter therefore present the different condition and cases that demand the practice of whistleblowing among the Shona. As such, only the upholding of the philosophy of *ubuntu* gives rise to morality among the Shona since good intentions make the morality of any human action. It has been shown in this study as well, that *ubuntu* solves many moral dilemmas in the business environment especial regard to whistleblowing. In a bid to fully explore the notion of whistleblowing in the business realm, some moral dilemmas were also typified and elaborated in the context of the Zimbabwean situation. It has been shown from the above exposition that the Shona are well acquainted with this practice of whistleblowing.

In view of these cases it can be claimed that through passage of time their native philosophy of *ubuntu* has accustomed and accommodated many Western traits of whistleblowing which have fitted very well into the Shona culture. It has been unravelled in these cases that the whistle blowers were *ubuntu* oriented whenever they decided to blow the whistle seeking to see the *ubuntu*-way of living being restored for the benefit of all the members of the Shona community. The cases in question also showed that among the Shona everyone is important as the concerns of children, woman and the general populace were given an attentive ear resulting in moral rectification taking its course of action.