

Families, exhumation and reburial in Zimbabwe



**Shari Eppel, Forensic
Anthropologist:
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Exhumation and reburial, 2018



ZANLA (above) and ZIPRA (right)
Fought each other fiercely during
the War of Independence in the
1970s





**1985 – election
year:
Enforced
disappearances
of ZAPU leaders
in rural areas**

- **A serious challenge for families**
- **The angry spirits of the unburied, dishonored dead**

“Culturally it is not right for someone’s bones to be exposed. It brings bad luck which denies people rain.”

The right to mourn





Challenges –

the family “right to know”

- Which is linked to the
“right to truth”
[UNCHR, 2005]



**Silozwe area –
Julius Mvulo Nyathi:
died Feb 1984**





**Recording site before digging
and denuding grave**







Fully exhumed
remains

Prayers for Julius

Hand drawn map



The bones 'talk' –trauma at time of death



Analysing clothing



Eye witness evidence – part of assessing identity



“Daniel was a brave man.”

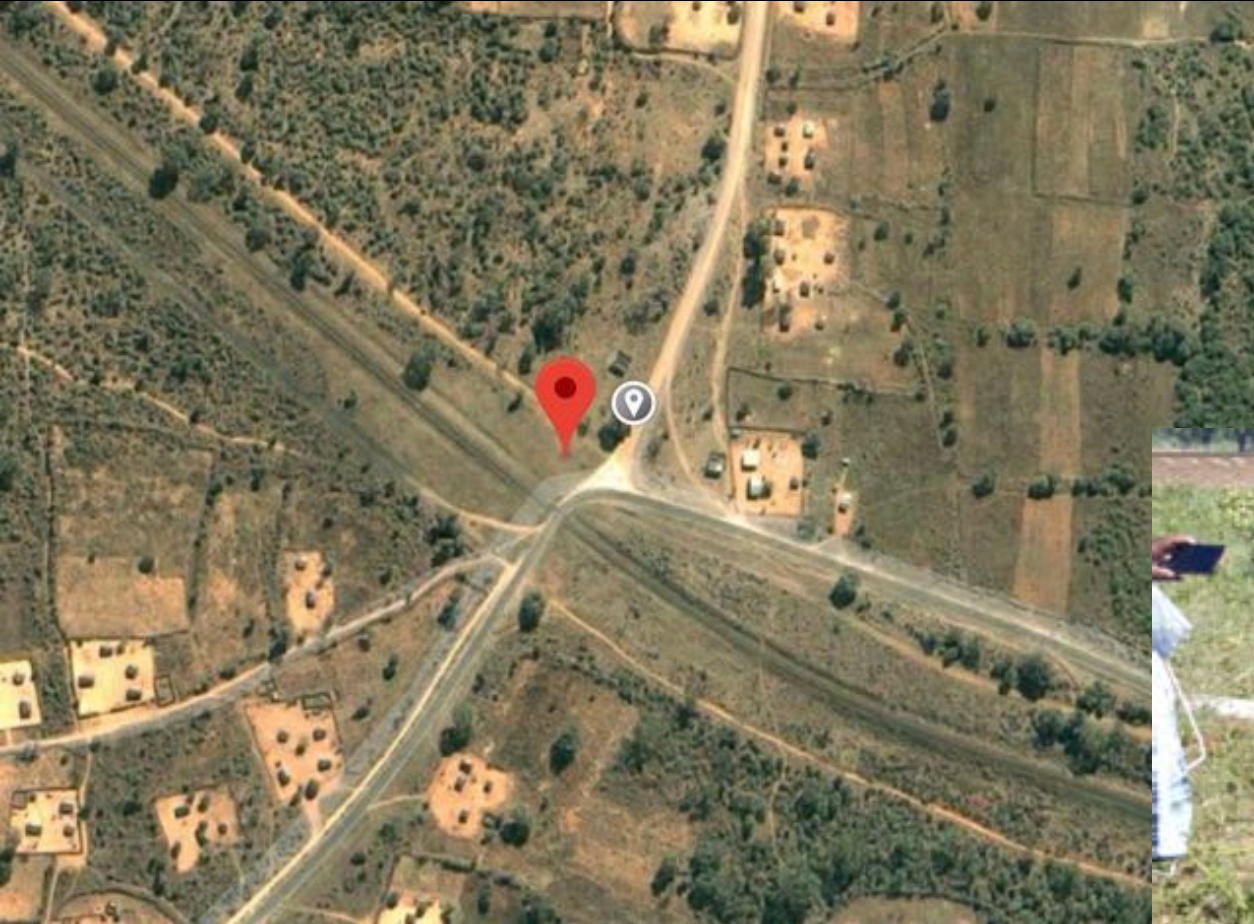
“Disappeared”

Yesterday, when one of his daughters saw the photos for the first time, she said that she had never seen her father before – although she used to dream about her father a lot, he had no face in her dreams....





Nkwalini, Tsholotsho, May 2019









190428
NKWALINI-TSH
CASE 1





Recovery of memory – Xolani meets his father for first time



**Justin and Thembi
come home – Aug
2019**



Laid to rest at last

Working with traditional leaders has always been central – the custodians of community and culture



Families are the most important people in deciding what is best for their dead to be at peace



Many widows, children and grandchildren of the deceased want their dead buried respectfully

We are running out of time – eye witnesses are key and now very old

Graves are vanishing into the landscape

Bones are turning to dust – silencing the dead

The dead are witnesses and loved ones in need of our protection