



BLOG, P2 SOUTH AFRICA MAPPING COMMUNITY HERITAGE, PHASE 2 PROJECTS, PROJECT NEWS,  
YOUNG CHANGEMAKERS /// THURSDAY 31 OCTOBER 2019

# The Allegory of the Fence

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The Fence. Credit: Prudence Nkomo

Written by Prudence Nkomo, a young change maker on the Phase 2 Changing the Story project [Mapping Community Heritage with Young People in Rural South Africa](#).

In August, 2019, our team held a workshop in White River, which was followed by a site visit to Utah. Almost at the end of our site visit, we drove down a road sandwiched by a game reserve and the Kruger National Park's fence.

For the young researchers in the community of Utah, mapping their community heritage presented them with endless memories of the construction of the 'fence'. The older generation that was interviewed reiterated the pain that the fence had brought them and highlighted how their community heritage could not be archived without acknowledging the pain and changes evoked by the existence of the fence. The fence, in this community, is a painful reminder and constant trigger for the older generation of Utah. It is a reminder of a life that once was, communal hunting activities that are no more and a coexistence that has been redefined without inclusive consideration.



For the Great Limpopo Transfrontier Conservation Area, the fence presented an obstacle for wildlife ecosystems. In an act to forge allegiance for transboundary conservation; approximately 50 meters of the fence between Kruger National Park (South Africa) and Limpopo National Park (Mozambique) was dropped. This allowed the animals to easily move between the two countries. However, the animals' ability to cross borders manifested multiple cases of human-wildlife conflicts.

For the Shangaan communities located within the Kruger National Park, Limpopo National Park and Gonarezhou National Park (Zimbabwe) – the physical eruption of the fence brought a disruption in their communal way of life, their heritage and isolation. The fence became a physical demarcation of territory and broke their social fabric. A fabric

that tied them together, across borders.

As posited above, the physical existence of the fence holds different significance for the different habitats of the same geographic space. The existence of the fence is a staunch trigger for the communities in Utah, Mozambique, Zimbabwe and South Africa. The fence is a reminder of the colonial rulers that drew the borders to separate these three countries and the gruesome displacements these communities had to endure to accommodate it. The fence is thus deemed a divider, a disruptor and a sight for pain.

Ironically, the removal of the fence means freedom and a thriving ecosystem for wildlife within the same space. The animals' freedom cannot coexist with the communities' livelihood strategies without minimal management. There have to be parameters that define this freedom to allow for some coexistence between the two habitats.



Credit: Prudence Nkomo

The young community researchers in Utah realised that mapping their community heritage awakened them to the pain that the older generation had to endure to build the community that is now Utah. For a young researcher such as myself, the commonalities across different countries have evoked a keen interest in mapping the socio-cultural historic ties that span across the Shangaan people straddling multiple national borders. Most importantly, this is a reminder of how the Natives Land Act of 1913 has not been abolished, as it keeps manifesting in different ways, decades later.

As an MA candidate, the opportunity of being part of this project has gifted me with lenses, perspectives and senses to gather invaluable information paramount for my research work. I have learnt about the Shangaan community in Utah and the linkages between the Shangaan people across the three countries mentioned earlier were affirmed. I have been given the space to engage with well-established academics and see a collaborative research project in action. The team of community researchers has proven to me that capacity-building is an important skill to impact within any community if given a chance. They are now confidently interested in telling their own stories and finding other ways to preserve their heritage. As the project grows, I am certain of not only my growth but that of the community researchers and even the established academics.





Project team photo. Photo credit: Prudence Nkomo

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