

# TAKUNDA

PRESENTED BY: THE BLACK REP



# Contributors

**Study Guide Curated By** Andrea Mouton  
**Content By** The Cast, The Director, The Professional Fellowship Company

## CAST

**Andrea Mouton** as Takunda

**Tia Rene Williams** as Chipo/Mama/Gogo

**Ras-Kaji Turner** as Police 1, Man 1, Shingai, Fungi's  
 Friend, Samuchena, Chief Mangwende, Nyari's Father

**Damari Padilla** as Police 2, Man 2, Fungi, Uncle  
 Gibson, Nyari

## STAFF

**Founder and Producing Director** Ron Himes

**Director of Education and Community Engagement** Brian McKinley

**Volunteer Coordinator/House Manager** Cheryl Beal

**Development Associate** Christina Yancy

**Comptroller** Dan Tierney

**Box Office Manager** Heather Beal

**Director of Advancement and Strategic Initiatives** Jennifer Stoffel

**Costume Shop Supervisor** Ellen Minch

**Co-Technical Director**

**Props Coordinator** Mikhail Lynn

**THE PROFESSIONAL FELLOWS** Joyous Celestine, Andrea Mouton, Tia Williams, Damari Padilla, Ras-Kaji Turner, Stanley Powell, Alan Phillips  
**Support for our Education and Community Programs** has been provided by: ABNA, Caleres, The Clark-Fox Family Foundation

ClayCo, The Dana Brown Charitable Trust, Enterprise Bank and Trust, The Mary Ranken Jordan and  
 Ettie A. Jordan Charitable Foundation, LHM, The Missouri Arts Council, PNC Arts Alive, The Saigh  
 Foundation, SWMW, Stifel, the Trio Foundation



## COMMUNITY AND EDUCATION PROGRAMS

**OUR MISSION IS TO PROVIDE PLATFORMS FOR THEATRE, DANCE AND OTHER CREATIVE EXPRESSIONS FROM AN AFRICAN AMERICAN PERSPECTIVE THAT HEIGHTEN THE SOCIAL AND CULTURAL AWARENESS OF ITS AUDIENCES.**

The goals of The Black Rep's Education and Community Programs are to: Entertain Diverse Audiences, Educate Promising Youth, and Enrich Our Community. Each year through our award-winning Education and Community Programs The Black Rep is able to reach thousands of students wishing to further their theatrical education. Each season students from across the St. Louis Metropolitan area and Illinois are introduced or given greater exposure to the art of live theatrical performance. Types of programming include classes/workshops, Student Matinees, Summer Performing Arts Program (SPA), Teen Tech Program, and the Professional Fellowship Program. These programs allow students to engage with material not often presented in standard curriculum and tap into their creativity and artistic imagination.

## THE PROFESSIONAL TOURING COMPANY

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The Black Rep offers three 45 to 50 minute touring productions performed by members of the Professional Fellowship Program. These shows are designed to be presented in most open spaces such as multipurpose rooms, gymnasiums and theatre auditoriums. No special lighting or sound equipment is required, Touring productions are accompanied by educational study guides with pre and post performance activities designed to enlighten educators and students, the performance experience can be used to develop activities that: Develop the imagination, stimulate further practice in writing comprehension, and oral skills, foster interest in participation in the arts, encourage the study of history and literature, and develop appreciation for the unique artistic expression of diverse cultures.

# ABOUT THE **P**LAYWRIGHT

**Charles Smith is an American Blues Theater Artistic Affiliate. His plays include The Reclamation of Madison Hemings, Objects in the Mirror, Free Man of Color, Knock Me a Kiss, The Golden Leaf Ragtime Blues, Freefall, The Gospel According to James, Jelly Belly, Pudd'nhead Wilson, Les Trois Dumas, Denmark, Sister Carrie, The Sutherland, Black Star Line, Takunda, and City of Gold. His plays have been produced by Indiana Repertory Theatre, Goodman Theatre, Victory Gardens Theater, The Acting Company, People's Light, The New Federal Theatre, Penumbra, Crossroads Theatre Company, Shakespeare & Company, Penguin Repertory Theatre, Ujima Theatre Company, The Colony Theatre, St. Louis Black Rep, Weissberger Theater Group, Seattle Repertory Theatre, Jubilee Theatre, Ensemble Theatre in Houston, Westcoast Black Rep., Robey Theatre Company, Berkeley Repertory Theater, Ensemble Theatre in Cleveland, Independent Theatre in Adelaide, South Australia, the HBO New Writers Project, the International Children's Theater Festival in Seattle, and The National Black Theatre Festival.**

**He has been commissioned by Cleveland Play House and The Acting Company, and has received multiple commissions from Victory Gardens, Indiana Rep, and Goodman. His awards include a Joseph Jefferson Award, a John W. Schmid Award, two Ohio Arts Council Individual Excellence Awards, the Illinois Arts Council Governors Award, the Joyce Award, the Cornerstone National Playwriting Award, The National Black Theatre Festival's August Wilson Playwriting Award, Princess Grace Fellowship, the Theodore Ward National Playwriting Award, two Black Theatre Alliance Awards for New Work, the NBC New Voices Award, and numerous other AUDELCO, Jeff, NAACP, and Black Theatre Alliance award nominations.**

**He is an alumnus of New Dramatists, a graduate of the University of Iowa Playwrights Workshop, one of the founding members of the Playwrights Ensemble at the Tony Award winning Victory Gardens Theatre in Chicago, Distinguished Professor Emeritus and Presidential Research Scholar in the Arts and Humanities at Ohio University and has taught playwriting at Northwestern University, for the Prague Summer Program in Creative Writing in the Czech Republic, and for the Center for Dramatic Art in Groznjan, Croatia.**

**His plays may be obtained through Samuel French, Northwestern Press, Dramatic Publishing, Smith and Kraus, Swallow Press, and Alexander Street Press. Charles Smith is a member of The Dramatists Guild.**

**To read more about Charles Smith: <http://www.csplays.com>**

# TAKUNDA

**Sixteen-year-old Takunda's world is turned upside down when her father is arrested for his political activities in the turbulent Rhodesia. This coming-of-age story is relevant for our complex times, carrying a message of hope and courage. The play incorporates African folk tales and songs, featuring an ensemble of four actors and the vibrant art of storytelling.**

**Jon Royal is a director, teaching artist, and facilitator from Nashville, TN. He is excited to be directing his first production at The Black Rep. Last season he was in residence here as the Stage Directors and Choreographers Foundation Lloyd Richards New Futures Resident Artist. He was named Best Theatre Director by the Nashville Scene for the 2019 season. In 2020 he received the Tennessee Arts Commission's Individual Artist Fellowship.**

**Regional directing**

**credits include: The Forgotten Girl (World Premiere), Fences, Pipeline, Topdog/Underdog, Smart People, Hannibal Lokumbei's The Jonah People: A Legacy of Struggle and Triumph (World Premiere), Ghost (World Premiere), And In This Corner: Cassius Clay, Rosa Parks and the Montgomery Bus Boycott, Once On This Island, Twelfth Night, Hairspray, The Colored Museum,**

**Passing Strange, Othello, and Citizen: An American Lyric. Jon recently directed the concert documentary Walk Together Children: The 150th Anniversary of the Fisk Jubilee Singers, which was distributed nationally by PBS.**



**Please be advised: Takunda contains strong themes as well as some strong language. Viewer discretion is advised. If you have any questions, please do not hesitate to reach out to The Black Rep at [education@theblackrep.org](mailto:education@theblackrep.org).**

# ABOUT THE Play

**Genre:**

Drama

**Setting:**

1964 Rhodesia, currently known as Zimbabwe

**Themes:**

Family

Strength

Courage

Friendship

**Symbolism:**

Mbambaira- Connection

Chuma- Love/Promises

**Plot Summary:**

Takunda is a play about a young Shona girl whose father has been taken by authorities for holding “illegal meetings”. She is then forced to learn and grow through life after facing different treatment by the people in her life. The story follows a young woman’s journey through familial and societal trials and tribulations.



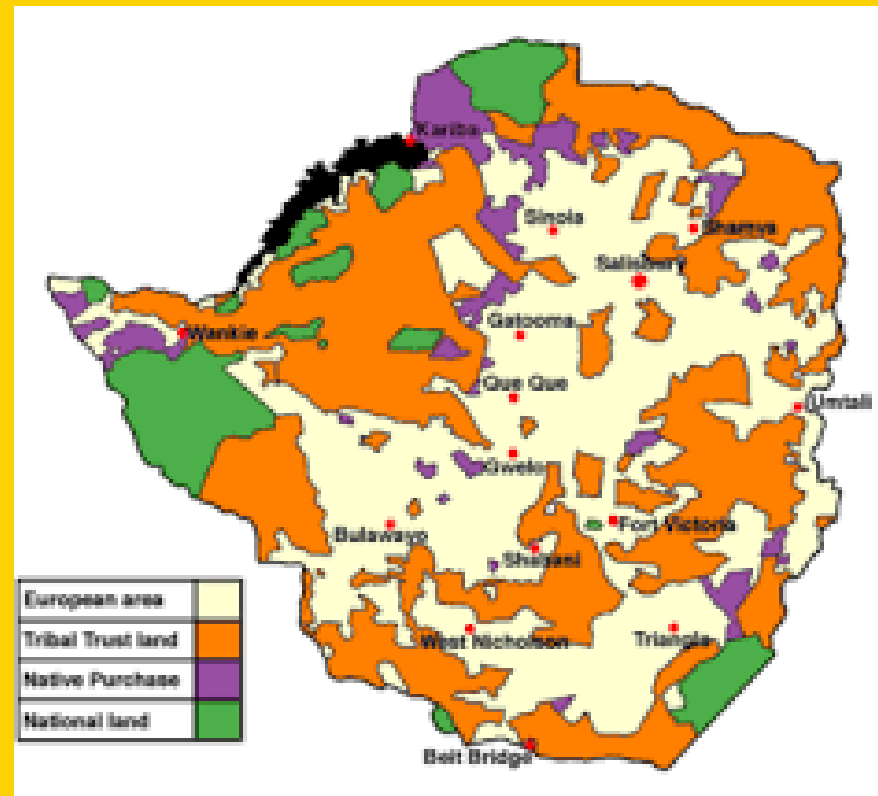
# VOCABULARY

Chimbo Mira- wait a moment	Indava- why or what's the reason	Hapana zvangu- I don't have anything	Kadeya deya nendore chena- "Kadeya, the one with the white shell"	Sarura wako- choose yours	Wangu mutema- mine is black (affectionate)	Chuma- beads	Uri kupi- where are you?
Ndiri kuno- I am here	Baba- father	Musangano- Meeting, gathering, or assembly.	Mbambaira- sweet potatoes	Samuchena - Name or Title "the pure one," "the bright one," or a name/title meaning "of purity."	Kabenzi- it's a metaphor for wealthy or privileged people	Musha- Home or village	Chitupa- identification card
ZANU party- The ZANU Party short for Zimbabwe African National Union (ZANU) is a major political party in Zimbabwe	Shingai- "Be strong," "Have courage," or "Be brave."	Iwe Kani- Ahhh, you really?! or Ahhh, is that so?	Musikana- girl	Bako- a possessive term meaning: "Yours" (referring to a place, home, or thing).	Mapurisa- police	Kumusha- to home	Tambo- string
Muvimi- hunter	Line of hokum- something someone says that sounds fake, manipulative, or too good to be true.	Machende- a vulgar or explicit term that refers to male genitals (testicles).	Piet- friend	Shanty- A small, roughly built shack or hut, usually made from wood, tin, or scrap materials.	Chief Mangwende- The title "Chief Mangwende" carries historical and cultural authority, representing leadership, land, and ancestral heritage.		

# RHODESIAN HISTORY

Rhodesia was a white-ruled settler colony in Southern Africa that existed from the late 19th century until 1979, officially in Southern Rhodesia (now Zimbabwe). It began as a territory administered by the British South Africa Company before becoming a self-governing British colony in 1923. In 1965, a minority white government led by Ian Smith declared independence from Britain to prevent black majority rule, which was not recognized internationally. This led to the Rhodesian Bush War and the eventual establishment of a transitional government that led to internationally recognized independence as Zimbabwe in 1980.

A Rhodesian soldier wearing sneakers takes a smoke break during the Rhodesian Bush War, 1970s



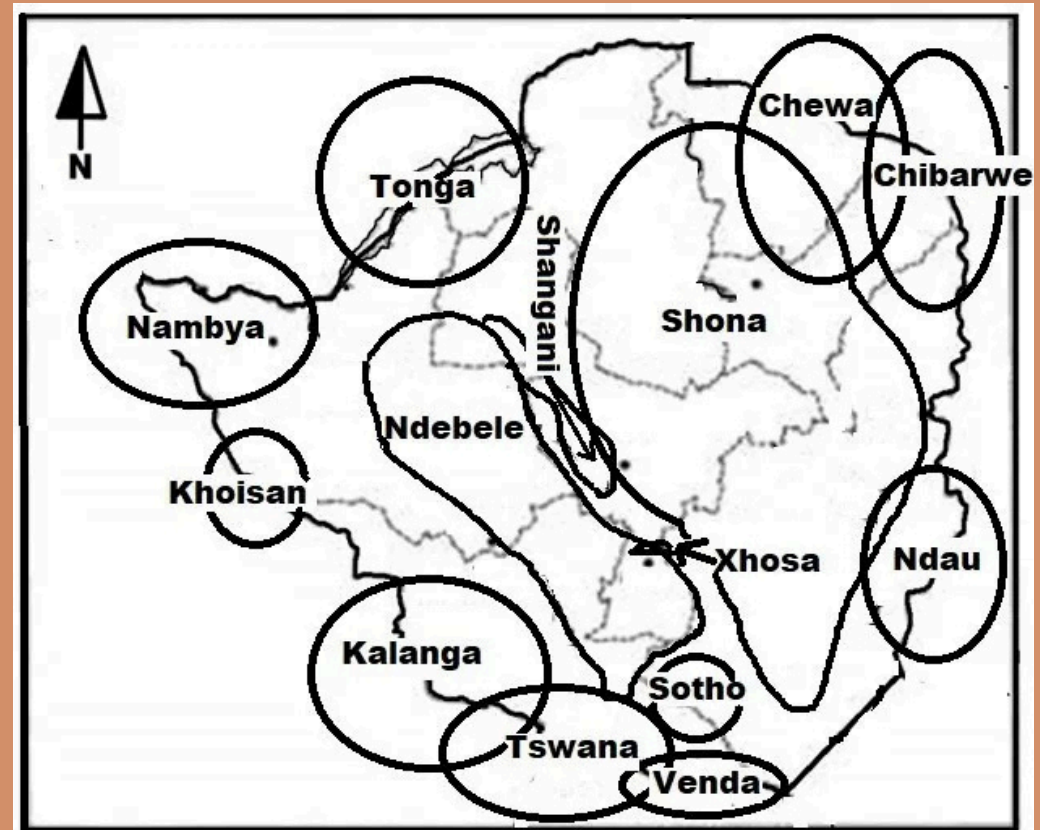
# Zimbabwe at a Glance



**Writing Prompt:**

**If you had to fight for a cause, what would you fight for and why?**

THE MAIN DIALECTS (A PARTICULAR FORM OF A LANGUAGE WHICH IS PARTICULAR TO A SPECIFIC REGION OR SOCIAL GROUP) OF SHONA INCLUDE KARANGA, ZEZURU, KOREKORE, MANYIKA, AND NDAU, WITH STANDARD SHONA BASED ON THE ZEZURU AND KARANGA DIALECTS. DESPITE DIFFERENCES IN PRONUNCIATION, GRAMMAR, AND VOCABULARY, THESE DIALECTS ARE GENERALLY MUTUALLY INTELLIGIBLE. THE DIALECTS ARE ASSOCIATED WITH DIFFERENT REGIONS OF ZIMBABWE, SUCH AS ZEZURU WITH THE CAPITAL CITY HARARE AND KARANGA WITH MASVINGO PROVINCE.



OFFICIAL LANGUAGES OF ZIMBABWE - APPROXIMATE DISTRIBUTION MAP

## Writing Prompt:

Choose a character and write a diary entry from their perspective.

Think of the character's emotions, actions, and motives.

Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

# Zimbabwe

E V V Z Y C E J F O M E Y R A Z F X H O Z S O B  
V I I L D I N X U P C P J O Q L U D C I L E T Q  
U B C T A L F L J U X Y G S D J J A J N J Y I A  
F E T N B O E E P O G R J E Z P N K W U H W E D  
V Q O X I Q W U S A Y R Q A J M W T E J D O W W  
G W R R R E S H V G V D Z B Q G B F T Q E H F S  
Q S I F A Y H N O M N I L J P A E S S I K N V V  
D Z A V K Q I A R N T I D Z L N Q H E M C Z U Z  
T M F R E Y G C G T C N D A W U S P A H O N S Z  
E C A M K R Q D Z P E N N L D Z Y R S R L M T I  
W E L E A C L K J P S C H T O C F J O N D Y H O  
W S L L L H S J C D I U C P P H Q Q N U N M V A  
I S S M A L J R Z N C O G F H X L C V S A V I E  
A F V A L C O J G B U M U G A B E L V M L U E C  
T R R F L P I R P N M E N T O I G I A Z Y A R C  
N C Y F L X O R T N A O B A I X P A H M E M A X  
I M Y H G C F R F W S Z Y A P G F Y Q J S N R L  
L W T E K N Y H C A K H I E L O H R E T A W A S  
G X U S G J C L E I I S M M E L O K B W D D H V  
M T N R U F Z S K S E C U U B X V Z I J O Y W V  
P V K L J K Y F R D O T I C W A Y P P K D R K H  
S F S T M R L M O N I S Y B O D B C B W K G Y B  
V G A L D A M H G T A K W W J C L W N J S R B C  
F Q A Q K U R S U I N S Q I E H D X E Q Q N R W

balancing rocks

Lake Kariba

wet season

Zimbabwe

Harare

Victoria Falls

dry season

waterhole

country

Mugabe

smallholdings

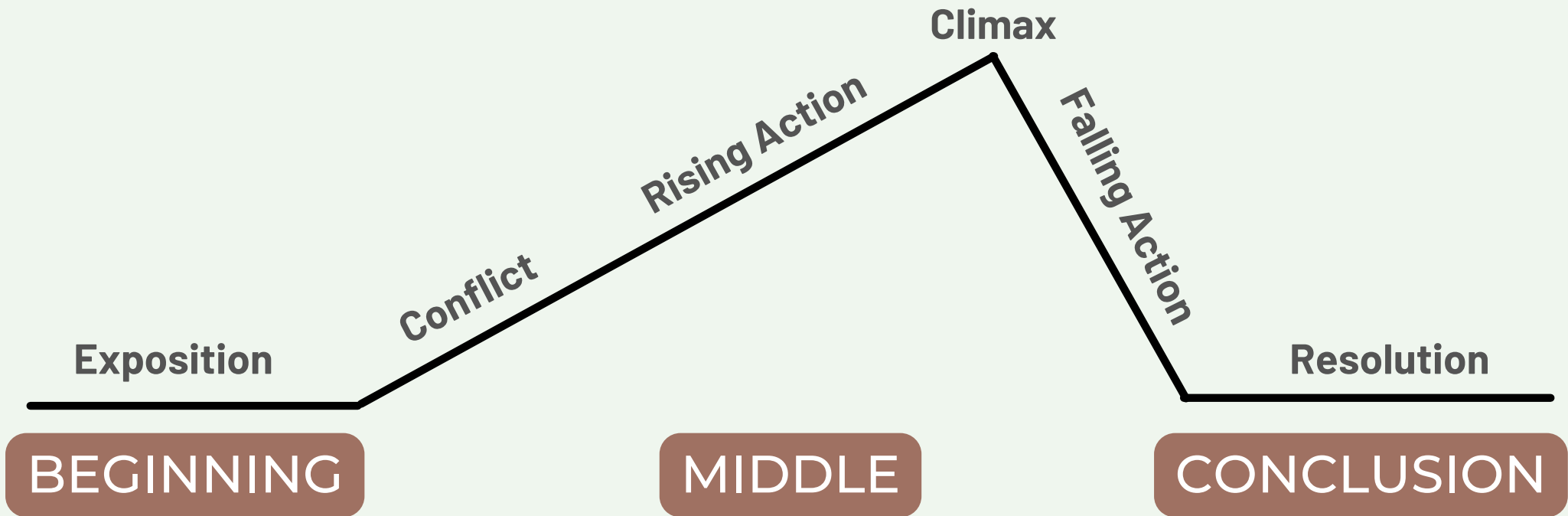
landlocked

Rhodesia

Africa

# The Six Parts of a Story

Identify the plot of Takunda using this diagram.



@reallygreatsite



# Inter-generational Matinees

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**DANCE ON  
WIDOW'S ROW  
JANUARY  
14<sup>TH</sup>, 2026**

*Edison  
Theatre, Washington  
University*

**THE BLACK  
FEMINIST GUIDE...  
FEBRUARY  
11<sup>TH</sup>, 2026**

*Edison Theatre, Washington  
University*

For more information, visit  
[theblackrep.org](http://theblackrep.org)





# THE BLACK REP

THEATRE OF THE SOUL SINCE 1976

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LET'S GET IN  
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