

## Zimbabwe Campaign



Mark Magonde joined Oakwood Park this year. He made an immediate impression by starting a petition demanding that the U.K. government intervene in the situation in Zimbabwe. With the help of the Politics and I.T. departments, Mark and two students from 6A have been using the school's I.T facilities to publicise the Zimbabwe campaign.

Below he outlines the reasons why he feels moved to raise the profile of Zimbabwe.

*Takudzwa Mark Magonde*

*I was born in Zimbabwe 18 years ago, and I moved to the UK (Eastbourne) in December 1999. I've lived here for half of my life, thus I feel I have really adopted this culture as my own. But I*

*feel that I still have my roots firmly in Zimbabwe. I still have a lot of family there.*

*I went back to Zimbabwe in the summer of 2006 for the first time. I was amazed at how things were so different, so bad. The problems, the corruption, the scandals, the ill treatment, the injustice... I found out that is was all true. I know I'm being overly poetic, but the sense of fear and death is actually putrid.*

*In Zimbabwe, I didn't have the power to do anything. All I could do was to give money to the very poor in the streets, or give the food that was in my hands to those who were hungry. I wasn't hungry. I'm not hungry. Those people, I felt, knew what hunger was.*

*Now that I am here, I feel a sense of duty- and obligation- to help people there. I keep reading about the problems that are worsening. It is as if the idea of helping those less fortunate is ubiquitous, yet people aren't up to it, or they don't want to actively do something. That is what I want to change. Consequently, I have been lobbying for support, I have written to Ann Widdecombe. I have also written a letter that is going to all the ME16 schools. I will deliver them myself. I have been given a 'carte blanche' by the head to write these letters. I haven't had any responses yet. I have all the signatures from the sixth form prefects and teachers in my school. I have full confidence that the other ME16 schools will support my cause.*

'MOODLE' is a VLE (Virtual Learning Environment) that I use to write about the progress about the petitions I am doing, putting bulletins and information about Zimbabwe. It's used by the Government and Politics classes. They can then come to me if they have any further ideas about how they can help me in the petition.

I have a copy of 'East Magazine' about the fashion show my friend Lizzie and I organised for Fairtrade Eastbourne. (The mayor of Eastbourne attended the event, and the local press covered it.) Since then, Eastbourne has gained 'Fairtrade status'. See: <http://www.fairtradeeastbourne.co.uk/> - There is a picture of me under 'Fairtrade Fashion'.

I am going to continue lobbying for support from MPs to help Zimbabwe. Firstly, campaigning for all countries that have links with Zimbabwe to fight for fair elections and to bring back democracy. Secondly, I want to raise awareness about Zimbabwe- and the rest of the world- to the youth. (I choked when Mr Moody told me that some people in the school didn't even know where Zimbabwe was!) It a fact that our youth aren't aware of global issues that touch us.

The thing that we need to address immediately is the President attending the UE-Africa Summit. I think more countries should boycott the event if the president is coming. We need to make sure that countries that aren't democracies know where we stand. Portugal should not grant him a VISA.

**If you would like to find out more about the campaign or can offer Mark some advice, please go to the Zimbabwe forum on Moodle.**