



Performing Power in Zimbabwe

Focusing on political trials in Zimbabwe's Magistrates' Courts between 2000 and 2012, Susanne Verheul explores why the judiciary have remained a central site of contestation in post-independence Zimbabwe. Drawing on rich court observations and in-depth interviews, this book foregrounds law's potential to reproduce or transform social and political power through the narrative, material and sensory dimensions of courtroom performances. Instead of viewing appeals to law as acts of resistance by marginalised orders for inclusion in dominant modes of rule, Susanne Verheul argues that it was not recognition *by* but *of* this formal, rule-bound ordering, and the form of citizenship it stood for, that was at stake in performative legal engagements. In this manner, law was much more than a mere instrument. Law was a site in which competing conceptions of political authority were given expression, and in which people's understandings of themselves as citizens were formed and performed.

SUSANNE VERHEUL is a Research Fellow in International Development at the University of Oxford where her research focuses on questions of law and politics in southern Africa. She previously taught at University College Roosevelt, Utrecht University and holds a DPhil from the University of Oxford.

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Performing Power in Zimbabwe

Politics, Law, and the Courts since 2000

SUSANNE VERHEUL
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¹ Susanne Verheul, “‘Rebels’ and ‘Good Boys’: Patronage, Intimidation, and Resistance in Zimbabwe’s Attorney General’s Office Post-2000”, *Journal of Southern African Studies*, 39, 4, 2013, pp. 765–82.

² Susanne Verheul, “‘Zimbabweans Are Foolishly Litigious’: Exploring the Internal Logics for Appeals to a Politicised Legal System”, *Africa*, 86, 1, 2016, pp. 78–97.

³ Susanne Verheul, “‘Rotten Row Is Rotten to the Core’: The Material and Sensory Politics of Harare’s Magistrates Courts after 2000”, *PoLAR: Political and Legal Anthropology Review*, 43, 2, 2020, pp. 262–79.

⁴ Susanne Verheul, ‘Land, Law and the Courts in Zimbabwe’, in Jocelyn Alexander, JoAnn McGregor and Miles Tendi (eds), *Handbook of Zimbabwean Politics*, July 2020, retrieved from <https://www.oxfordhandbooks.com/view/10.1093/oxfordhb/9780198805472.001.0001/oxfordhb-9780198805472-e-4>.

Abbreviations

CCJP	Catholic Commission for Justice and Peace
CFU	Commercial Farmers Union
CIO	Central Intelligence Organisation
GNU	Government of National Unity
GPA	Global Political Agreement
ICTR	International Criminal Tribunal for Rwanda
ISO	International Socialist Organisation
ISO-Z	International Socialist Organisation in Zimbabwe
LOMA	Law and Order Maintenance Act
LRF	Legal Resources Foundation
MDC	Movement for Democratic Change
MLF	Mthwakazi Liberation Front
MP	Member of Parliament
POSA	Public Order and Security Act
SPT	Solidarity Peace Trust
ZANLA	Zimbabwe African National Liberation Army
ZANU	Zimbabwe African National Union
ZANU-PF	Zimbabwe African National Union-Patriotic Front
ZAPU	Zimbabwe African People's Union
ZINASU	Zimbabwe National Students Union
ZIPRA	Zimbabwe People's Revolutionary Army
ZLHR	Zimbabwe Lawyers for Human Rights
ZLP	Zimbabwe Liberators Platform
ZNLWVA	Zimbabwe National Liberation War Veterans' Association
ZRP	Zimbabwe Republic Police