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DOCUMENTATION OF ORAL HISTORY AT THE NATIONAL ARCHIVES OF
ZIMBABWE.

BY

NONKAZIMULO NYATHI
[N009 4472B]

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ABSTRACT

The National Archives of Zimbabwe's (NAZ) mandate is to acquire, preserve and provide public access to Zimbabwean documentation in whatever format, in an efficient and economic manner. Oral history contributes immensely to the fulfillment of this mandate as an indispensable source of our documentary heritage. Notwithstanding the initial role of oral history in reconstructing the past by filling the gaps that exist in the written record, oral history documentation at NAZ leaves so much to be desired. As a result this study sought to investigate the documentation of oral history at the NAZ. The exclusion of other societies and voices in the institutional archive was cited as the major problem caused by the absence of a documented collection development policy. A case study research design was employed so as to obtain in depth information on the oral history programme at NAZ. Data was obtained through questionnaires administered to the Director of NAZ, six provincial oral historians, two former oral historians and two archivists. Interviews were also conducted with the same respondents. This study revealed that there is no collection development policy in place to guide the documentation of oral history at NAZ. The findings revealed that Oral History Units in all provinces are understaffed and lack suitably qualified archivists and training programmes. The findings also revealed that the oral history programme at NAZ has not covered all the societies of Zimbabwe, hence its failure to fill the gaps that exist in the written documents. The major recommendation of this study was the formulation and documentation of a comprehensive collection development policy for the oral history collection at NAZ. This study also recommended adequate staffing of the Oral History Unit and the employment of qualified archivists in the documentation of oral history. Coordination between all provincial oral history units was also suggested to ensure the effective documentation of Zimbabwean oral history.