A year ago, when I met elite government official, Joseph Wilmington, he had superiority over the natives seeping from his pores. As Wilmington and Cecil J. Rhodes toasted to The Native Bill, I finally understood the strong bond between the Englishmen. They were united by their unjust belief in white above all.

When I approached Wilmington to discuss The Native Bill, he presented it as an opportunity to teach the “lazy natives” in Zimbabwe a work ethic. This was a common tactic for the government to use. They tried to convince English reporters, myself included, that they were helping the native population to disguise their true intentions. The Native Bill resulted in forcing the natives into the wage-labour market and increasing the control of the power hungry government, leading to a decline in the quality of life for the already struggling natives.

The politicians were soaring when the bill passed. To celebrate, a few of the leaders raped Asha, a young native, who was being held down like an animal being prepared for slaughter. I grieved internally for the agony of girl, who I saw from my window. Mr. Joseph Wilmington was horrified and used his authority to stop the inhumane actions of his colleagues.

I was shocked, only a few weeks had passed since my initial meeting with Wilmington, where he had boasted about “teaching the natives their place.” It was not exclusively myself who was astonished by Wilmington protecting a native. When the men released Asha, she was frozen, stunned for a moment before she fled. I cannot imagine how strange and conflicting it must have been to be rescued by one of her oppressors, the man responsible for the Native Bill.

The rapists reported the matter to Rhodes, who reportedly described them as “decent white men simply trying to tame a beast.” Rhodes was furious with Wilmington for publically defying the official stance and abandoning their beliefs. Rhodes felt personally betrayed by his close confidante’s actions and pursued revenge. He publicly addressed Wilmington, humiliating him in front of his peers to encourage his subordination. Had Wilmington not possessed a high status the punishment would have been much more severe.

Soon after, I accompanied Wilmington and other officers on an official visit to a native community. There he spotted Asha and strayed from the group to follow her. I saw both fear and fascination in her eyes as she led him away. Wilmington explains that he followed her because he was curious why he had risked his reputation for a stranger. In broken English, Asha described their conversation as “fire”. Never would I have thought that a native girl would use the word fire, a substance of the highest value in the native communities, with an Englishman.

Wilmington continued to meet Asha in private, ironically dismissing laws that he himself had created. As their connection grew, Asha’s skin melted away from Joseph, exposing to him the human she had always been. The relationship gave Asha joy, something that was severely lacking in Zimbabwe native communities.

Eventually, Asha became pregnant with Joseph’s baby exposing their relationship to both the English and native communities. After the baby was born, Rhodes came to the native community on an official visit on which I was the reporter. When Rhodes saw the baby he began shouting at Wilmington, declaring that the baby was an “abomination”.

I saw him clench his fist, suppressing his urge for violence. Rhodes was undeniably brilliant and understood that if he were to harm that child the English would turn away from him. After all, the child was half like us; therefore by government logic it was half supreme and by extension untouchable by Rhodes.

During Rhodes’ rage I witnessed an extraordinary transition in each of the natives. They began to stand taller as they fed off of Rhodes’ outrage. Each of his cries powered their strength. The cowering women inched closer to the most feared white man hoping to inhale the smoke of his downfall. This was the natives’ first victory against their oppressors. I could feel the warmth of their glowing pride.

It is appropriate that Asha gave birth to the first half-white half-native child as her name translates to the word “hope”. I saw her child restore and become the symbol of faith in the once desperate society. The child sparked a fire in each of the native’s souls, giving them the light to imagine a free future.

We must not let the government extinguish the fire within us. We can use this newfound courage to facilitate change. The baby proves to the supremacist, what most of us have always understood, that we are all human, all equals. We need to use this opportunity and the focus this child has captured to ensure that all are treated justly. This may be the first victory of the natives, however we will not let it be the last. We will not stop until the divide between the communities has been conquered and we are all living in a better Zimbabwe.