

Imbokodo: Thandoe Sibanda

At the age of 22, she has already performed on big stages at home and abroad, sharing the podium with renowned local as well as international artists: Award-winning spoken word artist, Thandokuhle Cleo Sibanda from Bulawayo. Personal conversations and emotions inspire her. And so do big social issues about gender, human rights, mental health and identity politics.

Sibanda's poem speaks of Imbokodo, the resilience and indispensability of women. "Imbokodo," is the "rock" in the famous slogan "You hit a woman, you hit a rock." Imbokodo is not a random stone, but one that has been honed and hardened by the elements and can now be used to grind grain, for example.

Five months pregnant, Thandoe's mother was left alone with four young children when she lost her husband. In her poem "Walk with Me," Thandoe takes us into her world as a girl from southern Zimbabwe who experiences her mother crossing the border to a foreign country and becoming a slave to a system that feeds off her suffering.

Unfortunately, South Africa is once again sinking into a wave of xenophobia these days.

Thandoe writes to us about this: "We don't want to be here and take anything away from them, but going back is as good as death, because there is nothing to go back to. We deserve compassion and fairness, not this level of devaluation while we try to make an honest living."