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GENDER DEED MESSAGE ON THE WOMEN'S DAY (ISA AND ZIMBABWE) 8 AUGUST 2021

"Wuthuka wathika, wuthika imbokodo" Two strikes a woman, one strikes a rock.

This slogan gained prominence in the struggles of women and particularly in the march by thousands of South Africa women to the Union Buildings in 1984 against the regime of the then Prime Minister P. W. Botha, as women were protesting the pass laws. This slogan became central in subsequent women's struggles for justice and equality. The Gender Deed seeks to problematise the usage of the slogan, which seemingly takes away the dignity and humanity of women.

What does imbokodo mean?

A stone with no feelings, an inanimate object - with no life, which can't move, can't talk, can't think, can't defend itself, only moves when it's picked up and thrown, to object that it used to injure, to fight, to direct and for whatever reason that can null someone's motive. Even in its usage as a grinder of needles or machines, imbokodo is used as an instrument and can only function when handled by someone.

The allegory of women as imbokodo raises concerns. Women are human beings with emotions and feelings. They cannot be seen or viewed as stones (imbokodo). Women have brains and should be viewed/known; they are wise beings. They can do things they feel fit to do. Women are beings and not objects to be thrown to and from, but beings that can move when they feel like. The concept that women are imbokodo should worry us, as it is abusive in its nature. This makes people look at women as objects that can be used and that cannot think for themselves nor feel as normal human beings.

Another worrisome allegory that is used for women to characterise their courage and strength is that they hold the knife or the sharpness. This is so problematic. To begin with, why are they given the sharp and dangerous side? Who is doing that? Who is they given the side that, when handled, would clearly cause harm - a side that would cause bleeding and pain? Why try to prove how strong women are by inflicting pain and hurt to them? Why cut the hands that are there to protect, create, feed, wash and clean them? Why hurt the hands that wipe the tears that are caused by the pain from their shoulders?

The Gender Deed would like to call upon all men to change their mind set and their negative perspectives about women and see them not as stones but human beings who are created in the image of God. This is a call on men and society, in general, to treat women the same way they want themselves to be treated and to stop giving the sharp side of a knife to women. Stop using them as objects for their own personal gains.

We also call upon women to stop being gate keepers for patriarchy. Women should stop pretending as if they are super strong, and as if they have no feelings. Women should stop allowing themselves to be used by men for their (men's) personal gains. They should stop allowing themselves to be referred to as imbokodo but consider themselves as human beings with feeling. They should stop receiving the sharp side of the knife just to prove how strong they are but should turn the sharp side of the knife to the handler who is bent to cause pain and harm, so that it shall be said, "Imoko ipakete mandeni" (the knife has hurt the one that handles it).

The Gender Deed

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