

# Leading the rebellion

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ZIMBABWEAN SINGER CHIWONISO TELLS RUSSELL MYRIE ABOUT TAKING ON CORRUPTION AND SINGING IN HER NATIVE LANGUAGE

**W**hile the majority of people only read and hear about what's going on in Zimbabwe, Chiwoniso has lived through it.

And the Zimbabwean songstress is telling her tale, most notably through her new album, *Rebel Woman*. Currently based in Vermont, USA she tells us more about matters close to her heart.

*The majority of the songs on your album are sung in Shona. What is your opinion of artists from non-English speaking countries who choose to sing exclusively in English?*

I am bilingual coz I was born here (in The States) and I spent a lot of time here and in Zim as well. Coz of the whole colonial thing, most people in Zimbabwe are bi and tri-lingual.

But I do have an issue with people singing in a language they don't understand. I think it always sounds better when you're singing something that's natural to you.

But at the same time, it's cool if you're doing a live experiment or something like that. It's coz of the way the industry works. It's built around mostly English speaking people, closely followed by French or Spanish.

*Matsotsi is one non-English language song that catches the attention, mainly because of the film Tsotsi...*

That song is called *The Land Of Thieves* and that song got me into a lot of trouble when I started performing it about two years ago! It's a song about what people are experiencing in Zimbabwe.

It's a song which basically says, 'How am I going to get home if I don't have any bus fare? How do I travel?' Some people have big cars - it's obvious that these people are better off than us. I was really



OUTSPOKEN: Chiwoniso

touching on the issues in Zim like people not having enough money to go and visit their family out of town.

If you used to go every three months, now you have to go once a year. And so by saying we're living in a land of thieves, it's touching on corruption and that kind of thing.

*What is your opinion on how the Western media reports on the current situation in Zimbabwe?*

Man... The Western world is the Western world. It's got to be where its at coz it's gotta be first. It's got to be on top in all situations.

I don't agree with the Zimbabwean government banning foreign journalists from coming into the country and writing about what's going on. But at the same

time I understand the reasoning behind it. You get to a point where you want to filter the information correctly. You can't write random things just coz it's gonna make you look better as a Western journalist and make the people in the Western world feel happy in their comfort zones coz everyone in Africa is dying of Malaria and AIDS.

At some point that's got to stop, coz African people are not that dumb. We do not come from countries where there's a 70 percent AIDS rate. Those figures are created by donor agencies and stuff, so people give money and they can feel good.

*How long have you been living in Vermont for and what made you leave Zimbabwe?*

(Almost whispering) I broke up with my fiancé. You're probably the first person I mentioned it too so be good about it.

*As sad as that is, I thought it was going to be some scary political reason!*

Nah. I'm actually not living in Vermont, we're just rehearsing here. I'm a real nature person big time. Like, I was a vegetarian for many years.

I didn't want to come and start rehearsing in a place that was loud so my manager was like 'If I could get a house for the whole band to come over at once would you be cool with that?' I was like 'definitely!'

● *Rebel Woman is out now on Cumbancha Records*