

Truth, Reconciliation and Commission X AFROPRESENT

A provocation by Siviwe James, Researcher-Creative Thinker

I swear to tell the Truth, the whole truth,

whose truth (?) and nothing but a version of that truth, so help me God

Through fashion, we have captured resistances, trapped instructions of reformation, and activated these through our 'dressed bodies'. Fashion was used as a tool of silencing us when the coloniser desired total control. It has also been used by us, as an alchemy of (re)insertion and resurrection. Fashion moves beyond status to locate and collate evidence of our lives-lifestyles-livelihoods. It is capable of making us aware of the rich capacity of the everyday as a historical site/sites, so that we can think of ourselves (and our ways in the world-memories-lives) as beautiful, important and collectable.

Truth, Reconciliation and Commission X AFROPRESENT explores the violent nature of South Africa's history, the inherited egregious nature of governance (leadership), and how a well-meaning Truth and Reconciliation Commission (whose aim was to account for, and document gross human violations committed during 1960-1994) flounders.

Through montage, I experiment with ideas of compassionate listening. The work questions what is meant by 'truth' in lieu of restorative justice. Just like the films from the past, the stories of our grandmothers, our dreams, our intersectional 'knowings' of the world, they are all *palimpsests*. The power of the palimpsest-as-personal is what allows us to *rethink our present as a site of connection, restoration, and revival*.

Through a multi-dimensional processing of history/time, we come to experience the present *via the way we came to know ourselves, via the past of ourselves and our ancestors*. Fashion becomes a way of connecting, sharing, and caring, begins to voice other renderings of histories, to tell other stories of cultural trauma. Fashion that demands deep listening, can ensure justice. In collaboration, designers, thinkers, provocateurs working with creative practises seeking the NEW realisation of our pasts, we encourage and establish a new sense of complex identities and understandings of shared cultures, our unique ontologies, and our incomplete grief.