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Conversations With My Father: on Isithakazelo, Meadowlands and Acts of Self-Writing

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Abstract

The research reflects on an ongoing conversation between me and my father on isithakazelo, growing up in Meadowlands and how our understanding of these cultural contingencies should be negotiated as part of my self-writing.

The conversations begin with a moment when my father gave me a piece of paper with isithakazelo written on it. The purpose of this was to introduce me to a family lineage which pays homage to my ancestry as practiced and preserved from my father's side of the family. In so doing, isithakazelo becomes a proposition or a mould from which my identity should be cast and understood. As a person who was raised from my mother's side of the family, and has lived most of my life in a township that is comprised of different, and sometimes contradictory cultural practices, my father's proposition presented an outlook which resulted in me being oppositional to some of his views.

In an attempt to get a better sense of both our perspectives on identity, the research places itself at the center of the conversation; as a mediator trying to resolve conflicting views to the question: upon which narratives from our family history should we cast our identity?

As a way of facilitating interaction between our views, the research adopts Gog' Thandah Mathonsi's description of 'ukuphahla' as part of the evaluative process. This idea is further carried into the practical component of the research where it is used as a concept in creating my body of artwork.