

## **S.African Fashion Designer Inspired By Rural Roots**

By Tabela Timse

JOHANNESBURG, August 25 (AFP) – Brought to Africa by German settlers, the humble cotton "isishweshwe" fabric has shrugged off its colonial origins to become a symbol of urban Afro wear in South Africa.

Long associated with newly wed brides and older women, designer Bongiwe Walaza has taken the distinct repetitive patterns in shades of indigo, brown and reds to countries from the United States to Japan and Switzerland.

Inspired by growing up in the rural Eastern Cape -- an impoverished region of breathtaking scenery and thatched mud hut villages that gave birth to Nelson Mandela -- tradition runs strongly through Walaza's collections.

But she has left the fabric's old-fashioned connotations behind, creating a style that has resonated in South Africa's relatively new, post-apartheid democracy.



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