

With Joseph Gerassi

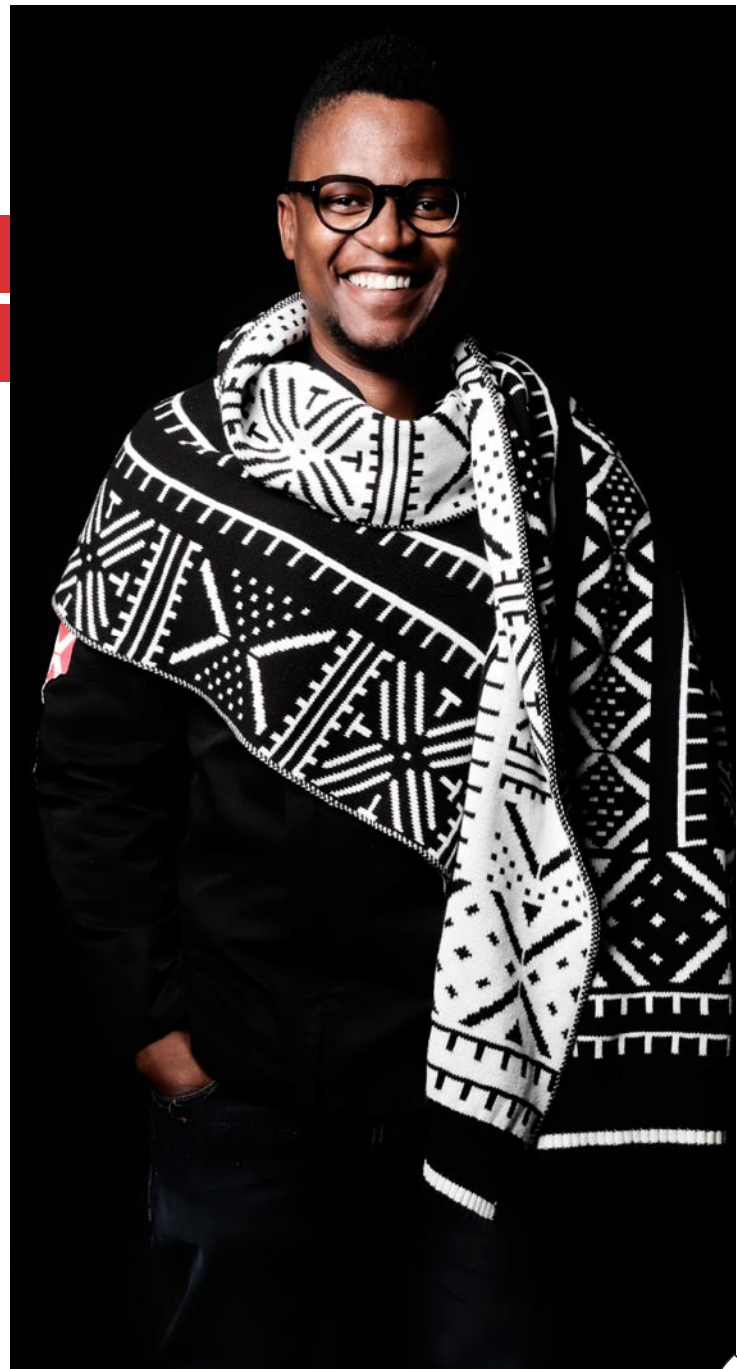


Start by starting:

Miles Kubheka inspires

Redhill's future entrepreneurs.

Miles Kubheka: A passionate serial entrepreneur and changemaker on a mission to drive positive change in South Africa, a country he firmly believes to be the best in the world. With the audacity of hope and innovation, he transforms dreams into reality. His influential story resonates across the cultural landscape of both South Africa and beyond, inspiring others to embrace the spirit of entrepreneurship and contribute to the country's greatness. As a thought leader, he fosters an entrepreneurial mindset in individuals (across walks of life) and organizations, making a lasting impact on the nation's business landscape. Accomplished in business, he founded Vuyos and later, Wakanda Food Accelerator & Gcwalisa. Beyond entrepreneurship, he serves on the board of the food rescue organisation, SA Harvest, further cementing his commitment to making a positive difference in South Africa.



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COLLABORATION • COMMUNICATION • COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT • CREATIVITY • CRITICAL THINKING
CARE • COMMITMENT • CONFIDENCE • COURAGE • CURIOSITY





On 4 October 2023, our Grade 8 – 11 students had the pleasure of listening to Miles Kubheka in assembly. Kubheka is best described as an entrepreneur, but even that falls short of encapsulating what he has achieved in his career. Described on his website as a ‘poster child for the audacity of hope’, we get a bit closer to the truth. ‘Audacity’ certainly feels apt.

For instance, Kubheka saw the same Hansa ad that many of us watched years ago, about Vuyo, the ‘big big dreamer’. Vuyo is a fictional creation, crafted for the purpose of the ad. Kubheka had a different plan: just as Vuyo started with a boerie roll cart and made it big, he took fiction and made it a reality by launching a boerie roll business named ‘Vuyo’s’.

If you’re shaking your head, saying ‘but you can’t just do that’... you can. And he did. Kubheka did a bit of digging and determined there wasn’t actually a Vuyo’s restaurant out there. The rest is history. He registered a trademark and ran with it, creating a phenomenally successful franchise that he has since sold and exited.

We all watched that Hansa ad. But it’s people like Kubheka who take it to the next level. The refrain ‘I should have thought of that’ is common around him, but ultimately his point remains. It’s not the person who thinks of it – it’s the person who acts on it. In his words: “start by starting.”

“...start by starting.”

During the address, Kubheka told us about his background: a systems engineer. That said, there was no degree that taught him an

entrepreneurial mindset, no course that revealed the path to business acumen. He shared his best advice with our students, beginning by telling them to try to separate themselves from the fear of looking stupid or holding back because something looks too risky.

“People hold themselves back because they overthink everything,” he said, looking at the crowd of students before him. “We need to get comfortable with failure.” He shared an analogy of a toddler learning to walk and falling countless times each day. “Never, at any point, does the toddler think, well, walking isn’t for me then. I’ll just keep crawling.”

“We need to get comfortable with failure.”

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Kubheka advised students to stop aiming for perfection and aim for action instead, citing his time at Microsoft as the inspiration for this. “Don’t wait until the product is perfect. Launch it, then use the revenue to make the necessary improvements,” he said, laughing as he explained that’s why software updates exist in the first place.

Kubheka also spent some time debunking myths around business, including ‘pivoting’. “Pivoting sounds sexy. It’s not. It’s hard. Pivoting means that your initial plan is failing and you need an alternative.”

He was equally frank about the role of authority, explaining that the people in charge sometimes don’t have a clue what they’re doing.



You learn when you get into the dust and start figuring things out.

He spoke about systemic problems and creating solutions that fix them on a macro-scale, explaining that those at the top aren't necessarily poised to make the necessary fixes. "Don't relegate your responsibility to others because you think they know more than you," he said. "Start looking for the problems around what seems to be the biggest problem."

Kubheka explained other ventures he has initiated, including philanthropic efforts, debunking the myth that business and helping those in need can't go hand-in-hand. He cites Capitec as an example of a disruptor entering a saturated industry and making a bigger success of themselves than predecessors, because of the market Capitec selected.

The key, according to Kubheka, is to avoid unintentionally creating dependency. Dependence ends up as a by-product of charitable endeavours, moving from appreciation to anticipation, then to expectation, entitlement, and ultimately, dependence. Kubheka relayed the story of one of his businesses, Gcwalisa, where people in low-income communities are able to buy groceries in reusable containers, paying just what they need and at vastly discounted rates because of the affordability of bulk produce compared to small packaging. The result? Money saved along with money earned, and less waste as a by-product.

Rather than buying into the adage of 'accepting what you cannot change', Kubheka advocates

for changing the things you can't accept. By catalysing change, people are able to move from dependence to independence.

Our students were invigorated by the presentation, asking numerous questions during the Q&A period, with even more students remaining behind afterwards to continue speaking to Kubheka. He spoke about his 'highlight reel' and that, amongst the copious successes, there are numerous failures. "Coming back is the key," Kubheka said.

When Kubheka was asked if his tertiary education helped him become an entrepreneur his answer was short and sweet: "No." He explains that all a university degree indicates is the ability to start and finish something, but ultimately knowledge is transferrable. "Just because you study something doesn't mean you must die still doing that thing you studied," he says. "Being an employee is fixed. Entrepreneurship allows the opportunity to make an impact." He also encouraged students to make the most of networks and friendships both at school and, more importantly at university, with the exposure that comes with tertiary education, meeting people from different backgrounds.

Kubheka's greatest recommendation is to start young and embrace a changemaker mindset. "You learn when you get into the dust and start figuring things out." In his mind, there is so much opportunity here in South Africa, and he indicated his scepticism of other countries' best features being compared to South Africa's worst, rather than comparing like for like.

Redhill extends our thanks to Kubheka for taking the time to share his insights with our students. It's inspiring to think how many entrepreneurial minds in our student body are already percolating, and planning for the future. Parents and staff who missed out on Kubheka's talk will have the opportunity to hear him again in February next year for 2024's First Tuesdays offering.

