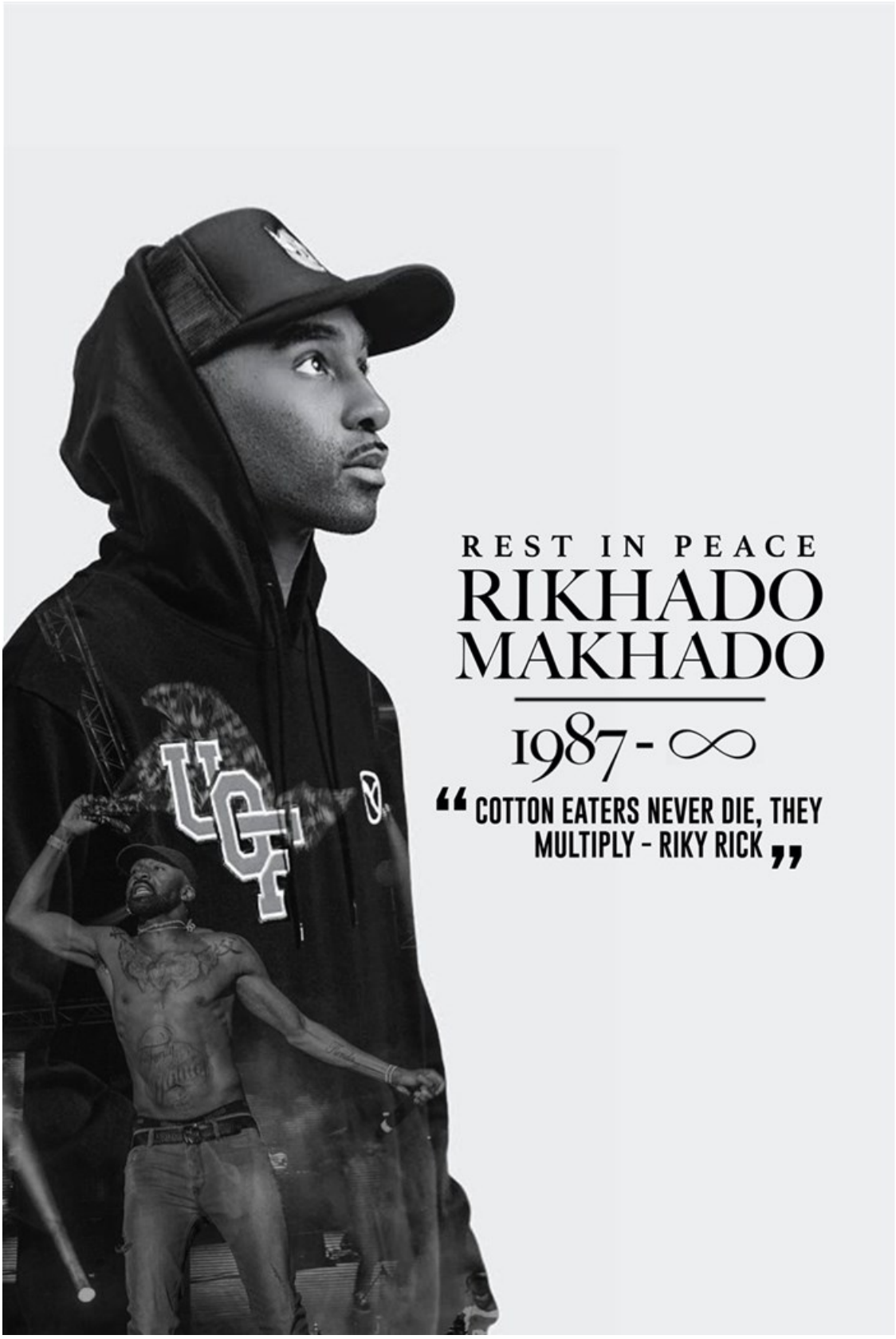
Riky Rick - A true champion of entrepreneurship and youth empowerment

By Lerumo Maisela , issued by Kena Outdoor

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South Africa has lost two million jobs since before the pandemic. Over 10 million of our people are unemployed. That is one in four adults who are ready and willing to work but unable to find employment opportunities. The numbers are even worse for young people. This is truly a national emergency.



This dire situation should force us to ask ourselves what we need to do differently. We cannot keep following the same approaches but expecting different results.

It has become a cliché to say we need to think outside the box, but some clichés are clichés for a reason.

It does seem like government is starting to do things which will get the economy moving. Fast tracking infrastructure projects, reforming state-owned enterprises and cutting red tape. These are all good things. But these are also things that have been on the agenda for years.

In addition to these things, we need a huge effort to expand entrepreneurship and the role of small business. This should be at the centre of not only government's reform agenda, but the entire national agenda: for organised business, black business and all of us as individual consumers and producers in society.

My business journey has shown me that this economy has real growth potential if we know where to look.

We have huge potential if we empower our young and emerging entrepreneurs, creatives, professionals and graduates.

We need big businesses to think about how they can diversify their supply chains. Not just as a B-BBEE tick box exercise, but as an opportunity to innovate and stay competitive. If you want to stay relevant and resonant with South African consumers who are young and diverse, guess who you need in your product development, brand strategy and media buying teams? If you want your brand to speak to black women (which you should), you had better have sisters from KwaMashu, Gugulethu and Eldos as part of your brains trust.

We need to incorporate entrepreneurship into curriculums at all levels of education. Youth need to be exposed to entrepreneurs and small business owners in high school, TIVET colleges and university.

They need to know that entrepreneurship can take many forms. It is the professional with a side hustle, the coder with a tech startup, a small 1–4 person trucking or electrician business or a thousand things in between. Our existing business sector is not going to create ten million jobs overnight, we need to encourage young people to spot and take advantage of opportunities and support them when they do.

Speaking of our youth, we need to start seeing them as the solution, not a group on whose behalf solutions must be found. Our youth drive the dynamism of our creative industries, which have massive potential if we harnessed them. South African artists are lit and making waves globally in music, TV, film and other genres. They inspire interest in South Africa from Lagos to London to Los Angeles. This creates huge marketing opportunities for South African tourism and product exports.

Last week we lost a special young man, Rikhado "Riky Rick" Makhado. He symbolised the best of us. He was unbelievably talented, creative and dynamic. He shined bright but was humble and wore his fame lightly. He was a trendsetter in music and fashion.

Riky showed us the way through his example. He wasn't focused only on his own success, he invested in others' success. A lot of producers, DJs, artists and fashion designers were introduced to the market or advanced by him. He created Cotton Fest, an event that does not have VIP. Where everyone is equal. And where upcoming artists, DJs and fashion designers can be given a chance to showcase their skills and market their products. Rikhado's passing is a massive blow to his family, friends and the many more who appreciated his art and life from afar.

Let us remember Riky Rick's values of entrepreneurship and inclusion. Let us invest in the talent and potential of our young people just like he did.

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