



RAYMOND ACKERMAN
ACADEMY OF ENTREPRENEURIAL DEVELOPMENT

Phikolomzi Yekelo

CLASS OF JANUARY 2013

Story told by
Phikolomzi Yekelo
& Carol Williams

“I told myself that
I will follow my
heart. I won’t quit
until my dreams
come true”

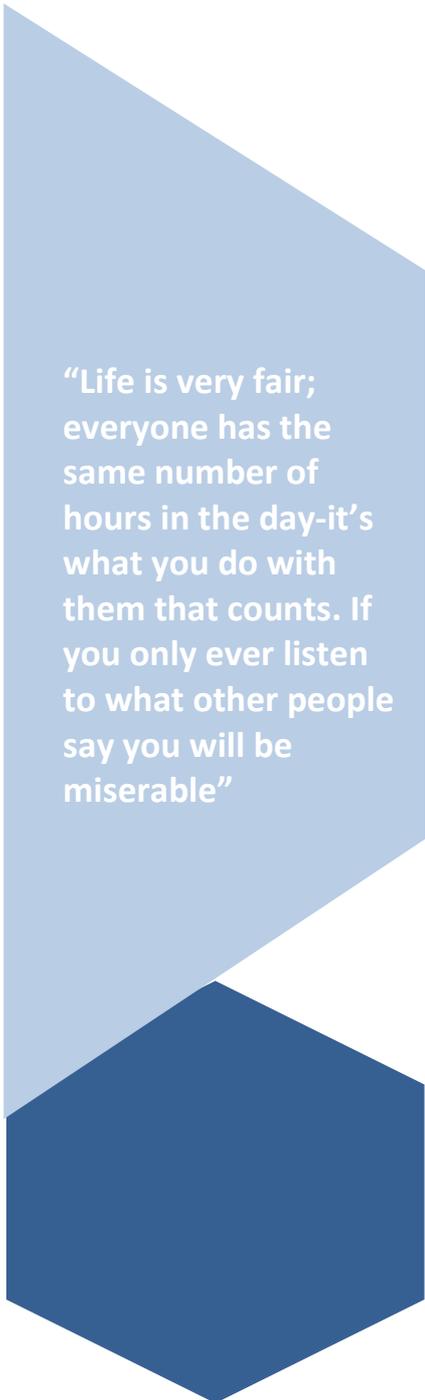
STORIES FROM THE WISE

Phikolomzi Yekelo is a born and bred Cape Townian. He grew up and went to school in Khayelitsha, the second largest township in South Africa. The oldest of nine children, life has not always been easy. In his application essay he mentioned the fact that being an entrepreneur is challenging “because there is a certain age whereby your parents give you pressure to go and look for employment so that you can support your family. Nobody cares about your dreams and future plans. At first I did explain to them that I’m chasing my dream of becoming an entrepreneur by explaining that what I am doing is for them and for me. But nobody took me seriously, they thought that I was being lazy. I did overcome this by choosing not to listen. I told myself that I will follow my heart, I won’t quit until my dreams come true.”

His journey to the RAA was a long one and through sheer determination and by chasing his dream he joined the January 2013 class. This is a particularly important story for those of us who have had to overcome many challenges, especially challenges related to friends and family who do not understand our entrepreneurial spirit. He is such an inspiring young person and this is his story.

MY ENTREPRENEURIAL JOURNEY STARTED many years ago, at the age of six. My mother was a hawker in Khayelitsha and I used to help her. This was the first thing that ever interested me and even at that young age I made lots of sales. My mother was the first person who told me that I should become a businessman, she told me that the business loved me because I made so much money. In terms of cash flow I was one of the richest kids around and I earned every cent of it.

I guess another thing that drew me to business was the feeling of success, the feeling of beating someone. In the fighting games that happened after school in the township when I was younger I was usually beaten because of my short build. This factor was not a problem when I was doing business and I enjoyed that feeling.



“Life is very fair; everyone has the same number of hours in the day-it’s what you do with them that counts. If you only ever listen to what other people say you will be miserable”

ONE OF THE BIGGEST CHALLENGES IN MY COMMUNITY IS the fact that people are only interested in instant gratification. Nobody wants to put in the amount of work that it takes to become successful in an honest way. People are just interested in quick fixes and will therefore more likely choose a life of crime because it is lucrative and quick. Materialism is destroying our communities, it’s all about what car you drive and the clothes you wear. I know that these successes are short-lived and don’t lead to happiness, this is something that the RAA taught me. It is a real challenge being taken seriously in a community like mine though when you don’t have a flashy car and lots of money.

Pride is also a big problem. People who have the opportunity to go and study and then sew back into their own communities are not interested in doing so but rather want to make lots of money and climb the corporate ladder. Infrastructure alone will not solve the problem. The key to solving these problems is to develop the individual first, this is another important lesson that I learned at the RAA.

I DECIDED TO APPLY TO STUDY AT RAA BECAUSE I had been doing business since I was in Grade 10 and had learned many of the practical skills but realised that I needed to gain some theoretical insight into business. I was drawn to the fact that the RAA focused on innovation and I wanted to be introduced to that way of thinking. I always knew that I would need some kind of entrepreneurial input and the RAA turned out to be exactly what I was looking for.

ONE OF THE MAIN THINGS I LEARNED DURING MY TIME AT RAA WAS to challenge my comfort zones. I would definitely not be where I am today if I had not had the opportunity of doing this course. The personal development part of the course taught me so much and helped to remove the blinkers that I had on my eyes. It gave me a helicopter view of things; a much bigger picture. This was not an easy process and it takes time, dedication and consistency to challenge oneself in this way.

A REAL ENTREPRENEUR is not discouraged by challenges. A challenge means that there is an opportunity to do something about it. I am always happy when there are challenges in life, the game would be very boring without challenges. I really believe that most of the problems that we are facing in South Africa can be solved by entrepreneurs. Life is very fair; everyone has the same number of hours in a day- it’s what you do with them that counts. If you only ever listen to what other people say you will be miserable.

MY DREAM IS TO see myself as a successful and inspirational entrepreneur.

MY FUTURE is looking bright, there are many things in the pipeline and I can’t complain. Everything boils down to one important thing and that is **choice**. This is the most important word. You are the only one who is responsible for your life and it’s up to you what you choose to do with it.