



DESTINY FORUM: Thebe Ikalafeng on Brand Africa

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Published: 23 July 2012

Ikalafeng kicked off his presentation by playing a recording of **former President Thabo Mbeki's *I am an African*** speech.

"Stop blaming others for the negative perceptions they hold of the continent. Create your own perspective, tell your own stories," he said.

He encouraged the audience to stop fixating on how others see the continent and its people, but to focus on the beauty of Africa and create narratives around that.

Like the fact that Kenya's sprinters will dominate long-distance athletics in the upcoming Olympics. "We waited for Paul Simon to come and tell us that Ladysmith Black Mambazo were great," he said.

Ikalafeng had the following advice for delegates:

Think local, act global – look for what is unique about our lived experience, emphasise it and brand it. To illustrate, Ikalafeng referred to how the design for FNB Stadium was inspired by the African calabash. "In Africa the calabash connects people. What better way to connect hundreds of thousands of people than to put them in one calabash," he said.

Inspire, design, merge brand and culture – here Ikalafeng referred to the fact that pay-as-you-go cellphone usage was invented in Africa to accommodate the fact that millions on the continent are unbanked.

Be African – "That which you celebrate becomes your reality," Ikalafeng said. So embrace being African.

"Don't change the face, face the change," Ikalafeng quoted **Tupac Shakur**. During the question and answer session with **programme director Bruce Whitfield**, Ikalafeng said it was imperative that Africans start creating their own assets. "Everyone wants to own part of an existing company. Nobody wants to create anything. We must grow the pie," he said.

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