



Thebe Ikalafeng isn't just a name in branding or Africa - he is a living philosophy. A voice. A movement. A mirror through which Africa sees its worth, tells its story, and reclaims its rightful place in the world. A trailblazing, Hall of Fame global African and an unrelenting advocate for a brand-led African renaissance, his life's work is rooted in reclaiming Africa's identity, reshaping its narrative and affirming its global influence. Born in the diamond capital of the world - Kimberley, South Africa - with ancestral roots reaching into Botswana, and raised on values as enduring as the continent itself, Ikalafeng has walked with presidents and everyday Africans like him, climbed the world's highest peaks, crossed every border on the African continent, and built brands that have defined a generation. He carries Africa not only in his passport, but in his purpose. As TedXGhana once noted, "Thebe is Africa."

For over 30 years, he has been at the forefront of strategy, culture, and identity – helping nations, corporations, and creators build purpose-led brands. He is the founder of the Brand Leadership Group, a multi-disciplinary advisory at the intersection of strategy, creativity, and intellectual property law. He is the founder and chairman of Brand Africa and the architect of the Brand Africa 100: Africa's Best Brands initiative – the most definitive consumer-led survey and ranking of brands on the continent.

Described by *African Business* as "Africa's branding authority," he has been honoured by *New African Magazine*, *Global Reputation Forum*, *Most Influential People of African Descent*, and others as one of the 100 Most Influential, Creative and Reputable Africans. His influence is matched only by his commitment. He has served on private and public boards for over 25 years, including the formerly JSE-listed Mercantile Bank (now Capitec), *South African Tourism* as deputy chairperson, the Nasdaq-listed Cartrack, and WWF. He serves on the Council of his hometown's *Sol Plaatje University*, the board of *PSI*, and the *WWF Nedbank Green Trust*.

His work has earned him Lifetime Achievement Awards from *Financial Mail* and the *Public Relations Institute of Southern Africa*, a Special Recognition Award by *EMY Africa*, and honorary doctorates from the *University of Johannesburg* and the *University of South Africa* for his contributions to branding and Africa.

Always as a traveller and never a tourist, he has been to every African country, on every continent, trekked with gorillas in Rwanda, stood at the summit of the highest points in Africa and Europe – *Mt. Kilimanjaro* in Tanzania and *Mt. Elbrus* in Russia – and set foot on both poles of the Earth – from Greenland to Antarctica among his many breath-taking adventures and journeys to over 125 destinations globally.

His bestselling memoirs, *The Traveller: Crossing Borders and Connecting Africa*, capture his journey across geography, identity, belonging, and his vision for Africa. His upcoming book, *Rooted & Rising: Reclaiming Our Culture and Redefining Our Global Influence*, builds on that legacy with a bold manifesto for a new generation of Africans to lead with purpose, live with pride, and return to the values that define and distinguish them as global Africans.

Whether on the road, on stage, or in boardrooms, he speaks with the clarity of an authority, the soul of a griot, and the conviction of a pan-Africanist. He challenges audiences to rethink Africa — not through borrowed lenses, but through rooted truths. In every word he speaks, every step he takes, every brand he builds, and every soul he meets, Thebe Ikalafeng lives one truth: Africa is not its past. Africa's greatness lies within us. www.ikalafeng.africa

