

Brother-hood Economics:

Boitumelo Karabo Mosoeu

“Unless something is done to improve the lot of the poor majority who are still longing for real change we will see an aggressive class struggle taking place between affluent blacks and white people and poor black people and white people.” - Isaac Mafatshe

Here I am, supposedly rock at bottom: locked outside my warm house where I usually get home cooked meals made by my loving grandmother or so I thought. Who’s they? My family. Who am I?

Brother-hood Economics is the book that came about when a 23-year old ambitious me went out to start an agriculture business with no experience. I studied Agriculture Economics at Stellenbosch University which I left mainly because I had had enough of the place, rules and restrictions. Before dropping out I had a conflict with my Agriculture Economics lecturer who refused to mark my research assignment on maize (which he clearly specified it was over done) because I missed classes on a grind to make my business idea work that information was not on my radar.

I grew up in Dobsonville, a township in Soweto known for I don’t know what in particular. To be honest, I was very ignorant of my surroundings and how it had the power to influence the person who I am or was to become. My daily life composed of school days and church on a regular weekend and sometimes beatings when I refused to wash the dishes on time. My excuse? The food is still going down, I’ll wash them before I sleep. That is not the kind of language spoken in a black family packed with members on a different paradigm shift. The common thing that is understood very well from a young age to adults is violence. Some people need a little “motivation” is the reason, hopefully not for abuse! Alcoholism is the common thing in any township. It is well and good to sip one drink and 10 more others. The dragon is loose on the eighth.

My mother was Penelope Happy Mosoeu, she passed away when I was 10. May her soul rest in peace. She was not a heavy drinker or was too much of a fan, I think the reason is because her mother was known for drinking more than she could take. There were times she would drink herself to paralysis. Sometimes I used to wonder if she did it on purpose. She was loving, however tough on me and had her speculations about my world which weren’t true. I mean back then I genuinely wanted to be a pastor so you can imagine how dedicated and focused of a young man I was. I never skipped church without an excuse because in the beginning it was engraved in me that we go to church or no food. Later I could skip and get food however the system recognises the irregularities and as you know, more beatings.

Besides the fact that I lost my mother at a young age and had to figure things out by myself, I had people who cared for me and wanted the best for me. Her sisters, Gladys Modiehi Ntuli and Boitumelo Koma whom I was named after took good care of me. They used to say that I was a spoilt child growing up, never used to do this never used to eat that. In the hood that is very picky, and picky does not sit well. As a kid like any other I had fucked up stories of how the world is like. I wanted to be a doctor so I could find the cure for Aids which killed my mother. I hated seeing blood or the thought of blood so that idea didn’t go far. I’ve always loved music, it was the only

thing that my mother and I had a deep connection with. When she was weary, in pain physically or emotionally she would sing. She taught me how to pray.

When she passed I never had the pleasures of life she used to provide for me. I didn't understand that she actually needed to work to make money somehow. She was entrepreneurial, she sold Tupperware, she did people's hair at a salon and privately. She knew Johannesburg the town very well, where to get what to be sold to who. I remember once I lost her after I let go of her hand in the middle of a busy and buzzing Small street in Jozi Maboneng. Maybe that's where I got my knack for hustle from, I've sold sweets, oranges, poems, shoes, clothes, and now an agricultural revolutionary product that retains water in the soil for plants. It is called Senwametsi meaning Water-drinker and comes at a time of water stress for farmers/gardeners/sportsfields/landscapers. In South Africa, Africa and targets California and drought-ridden areas in the world. What I also started is a fashion brand called Plug which is made of sustainable fabric namely hemp, alpaca fleece and African wax fabric which are sold locally.

After I dropped out I was forced to step out of my comfort zone and take my dream to the next level. The goal? To get rich while doing it. Not very specific is it? In business one learns a lot of things about money, people, seasons, and is considered the ultimate school of learning. I went through an incubation program with Launchlab Stellenbosch which gave me the confidence to take my idea further to what it is now and where its going to be. After a year, I haven't made millions like I thought I would however I have taken up many lessons and taken opportunities that have widened my horizon in the business world and how to work effectively to succeed in anything.

Brother-hood Economics looks at the reasons there are successes in business for some of the people in business in South Africa and failure in others. I have travelled and lived in different places in short periods of time on my search for my pot of gold. Looking at my past successes in sales in previous business ventures, I started to do a self-introspection to see why I was winning.

I read a lot and have read over 100 books so that I could get my way right in the business world. Looking at people like Warren Buffet I know I need a bigger library because the most successful read a book a day. Reading for pleasure and to intently learn on a problem you are struggling with in life has helped me to get to the next level. One does have to be careful not to become too dependent on material because there must be a time for action. As there is a time for everything. The first thing one needs to know in business is that you can't be of any value to others until you first value yourself. Self-esteem is truly the foundation of all success.

To continue my story after landing myself an opportunity to start an agribusiness at Khayelitsha Masiphile Peace Project, I wanted to produce vegetables for market in a township in Cape Town by using my product Senwametsi to increase yield and save water especially now that we were water restricted due to persistent droughts. Little did I know the costs that were involved in mobilising workforce and to be prepared for daily activities on the 1.5 hectare plot I had access to. As I have always found solutions with persistence I was able to get volunteers and raise some funds from one of the departments at the University of Stellenbosch. I also went out to restaurants with a proposal to receive start up cash to run the agribusiness. Without access to a lot of funds, I must admit that problems were solved and mistakes handled somehow through hustle in order to continue.

As it is said, if something can no longer go on, it will stop. I had no experience, the workforce was hungry and expecting a pay check, I needed a salary and a car to at least show up every day. It was a challenge. I then after got an opportunity to learn permaculture as an apprentice of an organic farmer who practices permaculture principles which will be further stipulated further on to

Brother-hood Economics

strengthen the book's reason for existence.

I told myself that I wanted to be a farmer and although it is hardwork and can be extremely demanding it is an occupation that I see myself fit to fulfil as my role in nature as a man.

As Nelson Mandela in Long Walk to Freedom was quoted "A garden was one of the few things in prison that one could control. To plant a seed, watch it grow, to tend it and then harvest it, offered a simple but enduring satisfaction. The sense of being the custodian of this small patch of earth offered a taste of freedom."

"In some ways, I saw the garden as a metaphor for certain aspects of my life. A leader must also tend his garden, he too, plants seeds, and then watches, cultivates, and harvests' the result. Like the gardener, a leader must take responsibility for what he cultivates; he must mind his work, try to repel enemies, preserve what can be preserved, and eliminate what cannot succeed."

Having taken advice from Rich Dad Poor Dad Author Robert Kiyosaki, I decided to take some time off to gain a skill that could empower and complement my business savvy-ness. As I value and recognise agriculture as important for our economy in South Africa as it has the potential to provide livelihoods and income for the poor majority needing employment in South Africa. With the land issues being settled and laws slowly being ushered in to allow previously disadvantaged individuals with an opportunity to farm on their "claimed" or given land, education in the sector is very crucial as there will be failure should people just be allowed to "farm". As my mentor Kent Tahir Cooper a permaculture designer, teacher and farmer constantly reminds me that farming is a constant meditation. One mistake and it is an expense for the entire operation. That cost adds to all the other expenses and next thing you know the whole thing will shut down if it is not regenerative. It is key to pay attention and keep in mind that the whole is greater than some of the parts.

"Permaculture is a design approach to creating sustainable human habitats, without impacting negatively on the natural environment around us, as well as afar from us. If we carefully observe our climate, our buildings, our social environment, and our available plants and animals, we can **design** our home spaces into a **productive**, useful and abundant support system for people. The originators of Permaculture put together an approach to human livelihoods, culture and economy that would ensure that no harm came to the Earth, that people were respected and supported, and asks in turn that we give back surplus (extra) time, energy and resources to the **Earth** and to care of **People**. The intention in Permaculture is for people to reclaim their rights and abilities to be self-sufficient without damaging the resources we have wherever possible. This starts at home, and spreads out into our communities, cities and farms. Permaculture systems are based on natural systems- what we call ecosystems – natural habitats around the world. The breakthrough in Permaculture was realising that we needed to create human habitats that were similar to natural ones."- **Sustainable Homes Manual**

Introduction

In the hood, everyone is always on a hustle. From the morning to night, there'll be music playing specifically house music and or gcom which is a popular genre. Partying doesn't stop but continues on the next day. Because the townships are demarcated, everyone feels the right to their own private space even though there's not much privacy if you look around you. Noise pollution conquers the day and is supplemented by heavy drinking and substance abuse.

Businesses are present and people have a way to get money however sufficient only for the day. Survivalists are the kind of entrepreneurs prevalent in the township spaces. Mainly due to the fact that everything is nearby it is not that expensive to survive in the hood than it is to survive outside. Dusty and filthy hair salons still manage to get returning customers from a trusted stylist despite of the conditions of the space around them. It is notable that pollution due to littering and lack of cleanliness does not bother some or most of the consumers. The attitude that it is not my personal space is common in most people and thus the municipality is looked upon to provide service delivery even beyond their portfolio. Protesting normally gets people what they want when they are not satisfied, as it is easier to start a riot than it is to clean up and get one's act together.

Townships are typically the same in that the thought patterns are similar almost everywhere you go in South Africa. There are always more liquor adverts than there are educational posts. Youngsters start consuming alcohol from an early age due to peer pressure and everything goes downhill from there. From my experience, it is when one knows how to say no that they can handle the pressure. Normally teenagers make excuses of their tough living conditions for the people they become. "Mom/dad passed away when I was young, this is all I've had or ever known" is the excuse. Blaming abusive family members for self-defeating behaviour, skipping school and lack of dedication or focus sweeps those who blow with the wind away.

I recall watching TV with my extended family members when we all lived in a house of four – six but were averaging 13-15 as members would come and go as they please. An advertisement came on when we were watching and it was one of the dream big and go for it ads; I saw a fancy car and a big house and said loudly "One day I will live in a house like that and drive a similar car". A voice quickly answered, you best quit dreaming now because we were all there and look at where we are. My spirit was crushed however little I was I knew that anything was possible. For children it takes more than one pessimists word to believe that one can achieve anything they put their mind to. I still have that attitude today and has kept me going. Therefore if you want to make it in the hood or anywhere else for that matter one should consider Mark Twain's quote below:

"Keep away from people who try to belittle your ambitions. Small people always do that, but the really great make you feel that you, too, can become great."

Mark Twain

Hood-Politics

You offend broke people when you ask them for money – Dan Lok, Serial entrepreneur; Speaker

Opportunity cost does not exist in the vocabulary of those in lack. Frankly, because they are concerned with cost and ignore the opportunity at hand. This explains the instant gratification mantra: consume consume consume and think not of the morrow.

Statistics around the poverty line are thrown around about the high amounts of unemployed and poor people in “poor” communities. There are admittedly a lot of people unemployed in all townships. Counting and stating the facts does help to recognise the problem however the reason for writing this book is what can we do about it?

I was sitting with a policeman’s son having a conversation about my experience getting robbed with a gun. He’s 17 and as a wiseman would say his confidence and fearlessness about how he’s seen and held a gun so many times that being scared with one doesn’t phase him. After that I remembered the times when I faced times of near death experience but I’m still here today writing this. Dying to live.

I was homeless for about 15 days to be exact before I got caught for sleeping in a lecture room at UCT after having my late night reading while my phone was charging. It’s not that I never really had any where to go. I had nowhere to go where I was supported. Where my dreams were told could be possible and invested in to flourish. I’ve been told flat out so many times why starting and running a successful business won’t work. Today I almost believed it. To be honest something’s are hard to define when they still play a role in your surroundings and come about in your reality. I love farming/gardening. I have made money from it to a point where single persons would pay me R1500 for it.

At times it looks like boys in the corner are not doing anything constructive. Ideas are there. Yes some of them are sitting in one place however in a township full of thousands of people it is still difficult to be heard. Thanks to the internet I have a business today that allows me to connect to at least 1500 people per week. Old school folk still do not realise how massive and life changing the internet has made businesses today. Economists in South Africa are speaking about how the state either has to spend less or taxes will have to keep going up. That is what they are concerned about. No one wants to deal with the global unemployment problem. What about entrepreneurs? They are looked down upon. Vusi Thembekwayo in the news has spoken about how South African entrepreneurs are too risky. Yes he has lost some money however if the entrepreneurs do not bear the risk who will? Even with a solid business plan if your angels are not on your right side please do not be surprised being turned down. I have travelled to most of the provinces in South Africa squatting while looking to make sales to get it to boom to the next level.

If I can tell you how I survived in the streets, it is something which I was afraid to sell because of the law being against it’s distribution. Cannabis Sativa saved my life. I remember I was shivering from not having anything in my stomach for over 2-3 days. I was looking for a job to no available. The people I was selling to were students. I had to look fly in order to make sales especially the fact that I washed and lived on the forest side of the campus. Life was complete. I did get cold, I had no blankets but a long black plastic that was leading water down the damn. I shared soap with the rats, except they ate my bar of soaps. Things have never been that tough for me. I remembered Erick Thomas’ words “Don’t cry to quit” when I didn’t have an answer and campus security had me in

Brother-hood Economics

their offices for trespassing.

There was a businessman writing a book about success struggling to be successful.

Hood people do want a better life. Some are just not willing to suffer for it. As psychology major Jordan Peterson says that all life is suffering, We choose what we suffer for.

Pay the Price

Some people think the price to pay for success is through stealing, lying, murder as is common on tv, social media and mainstream music. Yes everyone has their hustle however we can get whatever we want as long as it doesn't impose on the other person's way of getting what they want. The creative flow is what inspires the pay the price. Ideas are money. Money is an idea. Energy flows and if directed in the right way can lead to money. Corruption is a common occurrence in South Africa with Deputy Presidents walking away scot free for their thievery and money laundering. That is why entrepreneurship is not being paid attention to. If it were not so we would know how racism still perpetuates itself in the economy. Some people still like to see black people poor because they want to be the only rich ones. That is what the monopoly does. That is what monoculture is about. I have been driven to farms in search of prospective clients for my idea to help save water for farmers by my lovely Afrikaans teacher I met during a bridging course I did after high school. She taught critical thinking. I remember when we walked in all of the nurseries and farms in Worcester Western Cape to present the solution and I would be ignored as a black person and she'd be spoken to although I was the one with the solution to present. Being a mother she had an explanation on why some people still want and are resistant to change that they'd rather struggle than buy from a young black man. Are things set to change? I don't know but writing about it sure does make facing it easier. Due to majority of the farming industry being dominated or populated rather by white farmers maybe I should pay the price of discrimination? Bullshit.

The funny thing is the government is also filled with employees who'd rather withhold funds for their personal use than to support entrepreneurs. I have been with so many of the government institutions dedicated to supporting entrepreneurs and nothing but red tape to be found. Ego thrives in those environments. Some people feel threatened by my age and ignore the fact that I came with something that could be of value to all of us. Why is it hard for people to realise that? Again, Bullshit.

Black and white people in South Africa still have not come to terms with the fact that we all have a common enemy and it is the self. It is the doubts, insecurities, lack of confidence and self-esteem. That is what the "other" projects to other people due to lack of cooperation and understanding to find common ground. Politics however thrives on this. Fear. What if they white people ruled again? They already run the economy. White people think that black people are nothing but savages and have no dignity. Why are they sitting in poverty? I've had white people ask me what they should do about the state of poverty and inactivity of black people in the economy and when the answer I say slaps them in the face "Support entrepreneurs". It is one thing to be against corruption and another to not want to do anything to make a positive change. Quit complaining. There are young entrepreneurs like me, black or white with ideas that need funding.

If you want to make a difference in the South African economy, pay the price. Invest. Put your money where your mouth is. We are ready, We are capable. We are willing. As the Jewish do with their young, Bar and Bat Mitzvah us. In simple terms. Give us money. Allow us to be rich.

The brothers in the Muslim fraternity have always taken care of their brothers whom assume their role in making their businesses a success. It has also come to my light that a loan from the Muslim does not even have interest. In a capitalist society you have to have money to have money. Does it even make sense? To thrive there, when needs to learn and master how to make money off their ideas. Wanna have a cool show? Start a youtube channel and tell people to watch. You'll find your people. They'll support you. The economy has made a drastic shift that you can make money on your phone while in bed because of the technological change and thank God Cryptocurrency. Peer to peer transactions allow one to access funds from anywhere in the world at an instant without having a middle man. The government soon wants to tax this. Will they succeed I don't know. What I know is the power is in our hands. The people have a voice and can change their lives by coming together using strategy and reach a common goal for a harmonious economy.

The green economy, backed by the infamous cannabis sativa could easily make a lot of poor people rich in an instant. Why is it illegal? Ask the all knowing state.

The truth is there are forces or beings who feel the need to control the distribution of resources although there really is no need. We know how the countries who commercialise cannabis are making multimillions in revenues due to the high consumption and wide medical industry. Like Bob Marley said if you know your history you will know where you're coming from. We ought to learn from history or we will be punished by the same stupid mistakes we make that make discrimination, racism, sexism, and classism thrive.

Take Control

“Lord grant me the serenity to accept the things I cannot change, courage to change the things that I can and the wisdom to know the difference”

The laws of economics are based on demand and supply. It matters not if you're a cleaner if a cleaner makes \$100 an hour. Demand is high? Raise the price. Supply is low? Increase activity. Sell more people, add and display value. Find a gap and fill it. And the best of ways to do that today is through the internet. If you don't think so you probably still buy the same newspaper for over 10 years. Any sign of change? I think not. Mainstream media is filled with propaganda with everyone trying to sell you on their ideas. Politicians seeking votes today call you to remind you that they exist. Why don't we too let them know that we too do? They affect and have an indirect impact on business due to the inflation and lack of investors or loss of existing ones.

Fear is a tool that most advertisements use to compel people to buy their products. Those whom do not have the right intent and have ill-intentions do that too. Aren't we supposed to thrive? Why redtape if we are? Why are white people still scared to go buy things or hang around townships? Fear? My friends I grew up with were afraid of going to Stellenbosch because of racism that is heard off in the news. Does it exist? Yes. What is it really? Ignorance.

Ignorance is considered as a poverty of the mind. This is a disease that the rich and poor commonly have because why the division?

If there is one thing we can do to turn things around post-apartheid is to take control of our situations. We cannot pretend like other people's situations do not affect us because they do. Nature works in cooperation. We must cooperate or we will surely disintegrate due to hate and animosity from individuals because others seeming to have better circumstances. Respect needs to be the language passed around. If you have a family to feed what makes you think I do not? If you do not

buy or fail to give an opportunity to someone because you do not want to see them succeed then you must not expect their things to change because idiots like you still exist. We don't need change. We must change. We cannot control others but we can control how we go about our business. Support local businesses. Invest in that lad at the corner house who has a bright idea. Let the singer make his hit records in your studio pro bono until someone buys his/her music. Help each other thrive. Success leaves clues and is abundant to and for all. Not all of us want the same thing. Desires and needs are different. Yours should drive you to provide value to the world to an extent that you can be recognised internationally for it. The internet allows it. The platforms and channels are there. The positives exist. Someone will buy into your idea. Never give up. You can and have the power to control the situations.

If ever you find yourself wanting to fight or wage war with the bigger guys/forces/parties remember, creation is better than war. Our God-nature is to co-create amongst ourselves by having the same people in the same frequency work together to make something spectacular. It is possible. Steve Jobs did it. Dr. Dre did it. Sandile Shezi did it. Musicians do it every day. Why can't businessmen and women? Why can't the government and it's people?