

Grey Jabesi on nurturing creativity and innovation in Africa



By [Evan-Lee Courie](#)

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Having being born in Malawi and moving to South Africa as the age of 17, Grey Jabesi is an entrepreneur, Blockchain enthusiast, cryptocurrency evangelist, analyst, and investor based in Africa.

As an autodidac, Jabesi maintains the company of some of the best minds in business and tech and he takes a practical approach to knowledge and experience building, always with a focus on developing the best possible solutions.



Grey Jabesi

As a man on many talents, Jabesi is also an event panel host, a producer of The Grey Ave Podcast, where he interviews prominent business personalities and influencers. He has a background in IT and visual communications and has worked with big corporates on popular commercial projects but has also been involved with several startups.

As an entrepreneur, he has a passion for job creation and growth, particularly in emerging markets. His chief goal is to play a crucial role in nurturing creativity and innovation in Africa to help harness the full potential and explore the lucrative opportunities the continent has to offer.

Some of Jabesi's most prominent qualities include a strong sense of self-empowerment, a curiosity for innovation, and the adaptability and open-mindedness to expand horizons across borders. Always taking a global view, he is optimistic, forward-thinking, and above all results driven.

With a passion for peer to peer finance and decentralised systems especially for the African continent as it accelerates trade and give Africans an opportunity to do business with the rest of the world in real time, he is reported to have become the first trader to educate and sell Bitcoin to Malawians through simple tools like Facebook.

Jabesi was recently inducted as the new director of marketing for The Blockchain Association of Africa and is based in Cape Town, and we had the opportunity to chat to him to find out more about this 24-year olds journey...

■ ***Could you tell us more about who you are?***

I'm Grey Jabesi, an entrepreneur, podcast host and cryptocurrency enthusiast.

■ ***You are panel host and producer of The Grey Ave Podcast. When, how and why did you get started?***

I started The Grey Ave Podcast in 2016. I was hosting strangers/travellers from around the world to sleep on my couch for free via an app called couch surfing. I had very profound conversations with these people and later I thought it would be a very good idea to record and share these conversations.

■ ***I believe your podcast is currently the number 1 African podcast on Tech and business interviews. What have been some of your highlights to this day?***

The podcast has evolved a lot over the years. It almost acts a reflection of myself. It grows as I grow and vice versa and that has been the highlight to me. It tracks my growth over time. From interviewing travellers in my apartment to billionaires and game changers.



■ ***You've worked in several areas of the technology space, but in the last few years, your focus has shifted to the Blockchain and cryptocurrencies spaces. Could you tell us about that moment you realised you wanted to enter this arena?***

I despise unnecessary bureaucracy and I strongly believe it is one of the main contributors of poverty in South Africa, especially to poor people. The Blockchain industry is mostly built around the idea of decentralisation, permissionless and borderless which means everyone can wake up today, setup shop and get into business with the rest of the world without having to worry about red tape, racism or nepotism. Once I realised this, I knew I could become more successful in market of that type. It also aligns with my values.

■ ***You were recently inducted as the Director of Marketing for The Blockchain Association of Africa. How did this***

come about and what has the journey been like up until now?

You never know who is watching, I have been relentlessly creating educational content on the subject of Blockchain and Cryptocurrency through The Grey Ave Podcast and my YouTube channel. The United Africa Blockchain Association saw my contributions and passion for the African continent and contacted me.

So far so good, we are aiming to educate one million people about Blockchain in 12 months.

■ *What is your core function in this new role?*

My role is dynamic but at its core; I have to get the association and its projects heard by relevant parties i.e. developers, designers, governments, institutions etc. and build meaningful partnerships.

■ *What are some of the obstacles you've had to overcome since starting out?*

The main obstacle I've had to deal with is fighting my own mental blocks. We all set our own limits and it takes courage to overcome them and move to the next level. Change is scary sometimes.



■ *As an experienced entrepreneur and being involved in several start-ups, what advice would you give to other aspiring entrepreneurs?*

The advice I can give to entrepreneurs is...When faced with options, the best choice is always the most uncomfortable one. Don't be soft.

■ *What has been your proudest achievements thus far?*

My proudest moments include: living my belief that every black man has a responsibility to build and create jobs so fix this continent, and also going to bed at 4am and waking up at 9am without being late at work.

■ *What does the future of entrepreneurship look like to you?*

Artificial Intelligence will play a big role in business. It'll require entrepreneurs to have technical knowledge which will give them the advantage to utilise the capabilities of AI.

■ *What is the importance of startup accelerator/incubator programmes?*

Accelerators/Incubators are great but only when they are run by other entrepreneurs who understand business in a real-world sense. Most accelerators suck because they think business is some sort of a predictable program which can be analysed or assessed by checkboxes, in the end, they end up ruling out real entrepreneurs who are more likely to not meet requirements on paper anyway.

■ *What would you like to see changed in the African start-up landscape?*

I would like to see support from the government. It seems like when the government says "businesses" they only refer to

big corporations. Too much red tape and fines should be eliminated to allow entrepreneurs to try new things.



■ ***What do you believe are the traits an entrepreneur needs in order to succeed?***

1. Eccentric 2. Fearless 3. Worry about results, not narratives 4. Very in touch with reality

■ ***Why would you encourage someone to become an entrepreneur?***

Entrepreneurship is the only way you can fix problems that bother you. You can do this at your own terms and style but also make other people's lives better

■ ***What is your biggest goal for the next 5 years?***

My biggest goal for the next five years is to expand into the real estate business at a larger scale. Start building good affordable homes for young adults in major cities and becoming a venture capitalist.

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