

Stability 'will ensure SA turns into the Hong Kong of Africa'

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SA COULD become the "Hong Kong of Africa" provided investors are guaranteed stable policies, says US-based Chris Gardner.

Mr Gardner's rags to riches story inspired the successful autobiography and the movie, *The Pursuit of Happyness*.

In an interview with *Business Day* yesterday, Mr Gardner said an explosion of investor interest in Africa, spurred by global companies seeking fortunes in growing emerging markets, will directly benefit SA.

This is because its economy is the most developed and sophisticated, and is a natural launch-pad into the rest of the continent.

Mr Gardner is in SA at the invitation of private client wealth management firm Citadel and is expected to join Finance Minister Pravin Gordhan tomorrow as a keynote speaker at the firm's Traiblazer event to recognise the most influential black director of a listed firm.

"I can safely say SA will be the Hong Kong of Africa and is the first port of call for every new investor who wants to start from the right base. But the biggest and most important thing is stability," Mr Gardner said.

Investment in Africa, and in particular in SA, is becoming an attractive

option, he said, considering that an estimated affluent market of more than 120-million people will be living in Africa's major cities by 2020. This would be equivalent to a potential purchasing power of \$1-trillion.

SA has recently attracted big-name investors, among them Wal-Mart, which wants to buy wholesale retailing company Massmart for R30bn.

In the financial services sector, HSBC, Europe's largest bank and one of the world's top four, is expected to make a formal offer to buy Nedbank for up to \$10bn.

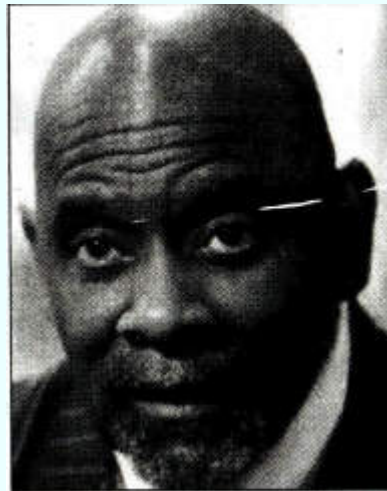
Specialist private equity firm Actis said the interest in SA is due to the strong appetite for emerging markets by global investors.

Mr Gardner — who rose from being a homeless, single father to starting a successful broking business in his home with just \$10 000 — said SA is on the right track to develop entrepreneurship. But he warned that those with a "get rich quick" mentality would fail in business.

This is because success in business comes from passion to make a change underpinned by hard work "and some pain", he said.

"If I had done what I have accomplished for the sake of money, I would not have been where I am. It is not about money, but (it is) about your passion," he said.

"I have seen that people see a



Chris Gardner

market or an opportunity and say 'oh man, I can make money'. First do something that you are passionate about. Young people especially want to be successful now, but it is necessary to work hard and to feel the pain first before you can be successful."

Head of marketing at Citadel, Joe Bester, said the firm had chosen Mr Gardner as a key speaker because his inspirational story is the "perfect match" for the company's project, which aims to identify successful blacks who have also defied challenges and prejudices to become leading businesspeople in SA.

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