

# Empowerment through storytelling: in conversation with Dillon Khan

 By [Emily Stander](#)

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In the creative industry, storytelling is a key method of giving meaningful perspective on the lives and experiences of those who tell them. Africa is rich with history, diversity and culture - and is an important point for stories that need to be told.



Dillon Khan, vice president of Comedy Central, Nickelodeon, Viacom International Studios and Creative Services (Africa) ViacomCBS

Dillon Khan, the vice president of Comedy Central, Nickelodeon, Viacom International Studios and Creative Services (Africa) ViacomCBS, shares this perspective. Having worked with Viacom for about seven and a half years, he has worked with many creatives to try and implement storytelling in Africa as a passion point in his work.

Here, he tells us more about his work, his career path and plans for the future...

## Who is Dillon Khan?

The average day does not exist in Khan's working world. Every day is different - presenting new opportunities, new challenges and the pursuit of finding new ways to connect with audiences. The fast-paced nature of his work presents new opportunities, which affords him the privilege of working with many amazing creatives. "I see myself as a creative at heart with business on the mind," he said.



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After doing a finance degree, Khan had to figure out what his passion point was. After finding that through journalism, music and media - he worked to land an internship with MTV. According to Khan, this was the real starting point of his career. In 2014, he fully dedicated himself to content which is born in Africa. His love and passion for the continent never faded away, and he wanted to take charge of the opportunities which storytelling in Africa brought forward.

## Storytelling

Giving Africa and particularly youth in Africa an opportunity to tell their stories is a point of priority for Khan and Viacom. With the likes of creatives like Trevor Noah coming out of Africa and making global impressions, the time truly is now for Africa to show what we have to offer.

Our culture and stories are a really big export for the African narrative. “Our duty [at Viacom] is to make sure we tell that narrative, not just to audiences in Africa, but outside Africa,” said Khan. For example, the Virtual Africa Day benefit concert in 2020 and 2021 was a showcase for the world to see what is emanating from Africa - even in the midst of a global pandemic.

It’s all about giving talent the opportunity and platform to speak their truth through music and other modes and storytelling. “Storytelling is really at the heart of what we do. We really want to be a global leader in this space and I think we really are. Our mission is to give a voice to African talent and audiences so that they can represent and showcase themselves. For us, it’s really about showcasing diversity and inclusion for the multitude of African voices on the continent,” said Khan.

## Empowering youth

The Viacom perspective aims to acknowledge young voices in Africa. The benefit concert is an example of using a significant platform not only to showcase those who have already ‘made it’, but the young wave of people in Africa who are rising to success.

The *The People Vs* trilogy was a documentary series which looked at The Rainbow Nation, the patriarchy and Black love.

*The People Vs. The Rainbow Nation* focused on the continued struggle which Black youth faces in unemployment and access to education and *The People Vs. the Patriarchy* focused on the epidemic of violence on women which sparked the #MenAreTrash movement. The last instalment featured Black youth which spoke about what Black love means to them, issues of internalised oppression, self-worth and others they face in their day-to-day lives.

Giving youth the platform to express themselves, tell their stories and feel that their voices are imperative to the narrative is an important step towards making Africa heard. Through series and projects like Virtual Africa Day and *The People Vs.* series, this can be done with full effect. Media has a responsibility to carry stories forward - for Africa, it is time to tell the story of the people.

As a final thought, Khan said, "I'd like to wish youths a happy Youth Month, encourage young Africans to be preserving in their passions, their career, their creative journeys. Africa and the rest of the world needs to hear our stories. Our narrative needs to be owned by us, now is our opportunity to tell our unique story."

## ABOUT EMILY STANDER

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