

Juju clobber taken off shelves

Juju, the clothing range inspired by expelled ANC Youth League president Julius Malema, has suffered the same fate as the political life of its namesake.

In January last year when Malema was at his loudest, a business idea was ignited by enterprising Pretoria fashion designer Obakeng Ramabodu. He wasted no time and unveiled a collection of 5,000 bright-coloured T-shirts and 5,000 caps emblazoned with an open-mouthed Malema.

The future looked bright for the label as 1,480 sets (cap and T-shirt) were sold at R350 per set in the three months after its launch, while 200 were given away at the launch.

The label became a familiar sight on the streets of the Pretoria central business district, lifting the prospects for the aspiring designer, but the range has since joined Malema in the doldrums.

Ramabodu said halting production was a business decision as nobody wanted to be seen wearing the range to "protect their interests or jobs and considering that Malema is under siege".

Malema is facing charges of money laundering, racketeering and corruption while the South African Revenue Service (SARS) has him in a corner for tax evasion.

SARS has applied to have his estate sequestered to recover a R16m tax debt.

The once feisty leader's political fate was sealed last month when the ANCYL said it would no longer fight for him to be accepted back into the party. He has reportedly lamented that he was being treated as a leper by people who were once his friends.

This is the same fate suffered by the clothing range he inspired, with Ramabodu saying he was sceptical about producing more clothes in the range as powerful anti-Malema crusaders were hell-bent on suppressing the label.

"I approached clothing shops to sell my range but they all refused, saying they did not want to be on a collision course with the ANC as the label was perceived as political," Ramabodu said.

He said a member of the ANC's national executive committee during the 8 January statement given at a rally in Durban had advised him to replace Malema's face on the clothes with a cabbage.

Source: *Sowetan* via I-Net Bridge

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