

UP WE GO MZANSI

TALK GROUP GUIDE: SPEECHES THAT CHANGED OUR WORLD - NKOSI JOHNSON

Watch the 'Speeches that changed our World' video on Nkosi Johnson, then read the Background Notes and discuss the questions in groups.

BACKGROUND NOTES

When Nkosi Johnson—a South African child who was born HIV-positive—was 8-years old, his foster mother had to fight for him to be allowed to attend school. At that time, teachers were afraid of a child with HIV. Nkosi and his foster mom won the fight and things started to change. Provincial education departments across South Africa drew up new policies to give HIV-positive children an equal right to education. His mother said, "I am very proud to say that there is now a policy for all HIV-infected children to be allowed to go into schools and not be discriminated against."

Nkosi became a national figure in the campaign to de-stigmatise HIV/Aids.

In 2000, when he was 11 years old (a year before he died), Nkosi wrote a speech to fight against the stigma around HIV/Aids. He delivered the speech at the 13th International Aids Conference in Durban in front of 10 000 people. This speech was also televised worldwide. In the conclusion of his speech he said "Care for us and accept us - we are all human beings, we are normal. We have hands. We have feet. We can walk, we can talk, we have needs just like everyone else. Don't be afraid of us - we are all the same."

When he died in 2001, Nkosi was given a hero's burial and thousands of people came to his funeral. President Nelson Mandela said, "He was exemplary in showing how one should handle a disaster of this nature. He was very bold about it and he touched many hearts."



QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION:

1. In the video, we see a group of friends playing a general knowledge game called 30 Seconds. What are some of the answers that relate to other 'Speeches that changed our World'? Discuss how you feel these speeches had impact and/or brought people together. (If you'd like you can watch the other videos in this series here: <https://www.youtube.com/playlist?list=PL1vDD0afyad6WrAbQVOPZ8VUbbT1fU-tS6>)
2. "In the last 20 years, our society has become more inclusive of people living with HIV." Do you agree with this statement? Explain your answer.
3. How have young people like Nkosi Johnson played a role in reducing stigma? (If possible, think of national or community heroes.) (Stigma is the shame or disgrace attached to something that people in society want to avoid or make fun of. This is often because the thing scares them, they don't understand it or they think are offended by it.)
4. Do you think HIV/Aids is still a problem in our communities? Explain your answer.
5. Which people in your community struggle the most with being victims of stigma? (Other people in the community look down on them.)
6. Why do you think there is stigma attached to them or the things they do?
7. What is the effect of the stigma on them and on your community?
8. Nkosi mentions "We are all people". We all want to be accepted and have a sense of belonging. How can we accept people with all they are going through, even if they are different to us? How can we ensure people are not bullied and made to feel excluded?
9. What do you think the key message is of Nkosi Johnson's speech?
10. How can you and your peers carry that message into your community?

