

UP WE GO MZANSI

TALK GROUP GUIDE: SPEECHES THAT CHANGED OUR WORLD - RIVONIA TRIAL



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

BACKGROUND NOTES

On 11 July 1963, the South African security police raided Lilliesleaf Farm in Rivonia, Johannesburg and arrested a group of men. The men were charged with 'recruiting persons for training in the preparation and use of explosives and in guerrilla warfare for the purpose of violent revolution and committing acts of sabotage' and furthering the objectives of communism.

The apartheid government described the raid as a breakthrough in the fight against terrorism.

The Rivonia Trial took place between 9 October 1963 and 12 June 1964. The trial was condemned by the United Nations Security Council and nations around the world, leading to international sanctions against the South African government. (Sanctions = action that is taken or an order that is given to force a country to obey international laws by limiting or stopping trade with that country, by not allowing economic aid for that country, etc.)

At the beginning of the defence's proceedings, Nelson Mandela gave a three-hour speech from the defendant's dock. The speech is considered one of the founding moments of South Africa's democracy.



QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION:

1. There are several videos in the 'Speeches that changed our World' series. If you've already watched any of them, take a moment to remember the main ideas of each speech. Discuss whether you think South Africa changed as a result of those landmark speeches. Discuss the impact they had on our country and on you, when you listened to them. (If you'd like you can watch the other videos in this series here: <https://www.youtube.com/playlist?list=PL1vD0afyad6WrAbQVOPZ8VUbbT1fU-tS6>)
2. "In my youth in the Transkei I listened to the elders of my tribe telling stories of the old days. Among the tales they related to me were those of wars fought by our ancestors in the defense of the fatherland."
 - a) Why did people feel that they had to defend 'their fatherland'?
 - b) What was the war that Nelson Mandela and other Freedom Fighters had to fight in South Africa?
 - c) Why do you think Mandela starts his speech from the defendant's dock by talking about 'defending the fatherland' and 'fighting wars'? (Consider the charges brought against him.)
3. "I hoped then that my life would offer me an opportunity to serve my people and make my own humble contribution to their freedom struggle. This is what has motivated me in all that I have done."
 - a) How do you think Nelson Mandela's accusers would have felt when they heard these words?
4. "We believe that SA belongs to all the people who live in it and not one group, be it Black or White. We believe the words of the Declaration of Human Rights that the will of the people shall be the basis of the power of the government. I've always considered myself in the first place an African patriot."
 - a) What is a patriot?
 - b) What are some of the things that a South African patriot would believe and do?
 - c) Do you think you and your peers are patriotic? Give a reason for your answer.

5. "Our fight is against real and not imaginary hardships. Basically, we fight against two features which are the hallmark of African life in South Africa and that are entrenched in the legislation that we seek to have repealed. These features are poverty and lack of human dignity. There are two ways to break out of poverty. The first is by formal education and the second is by the worker acquiring a greater skill in his work and thus higher wages."
- a) Nelson Mandela's fight continues today. How can we join in this fight for an end to poverty and human dignity for all people?
6. "The invincibility of our cause and the certainty of our final victory is the impregnable armor held by those who consistently hold their faith in freedom and justice in spite of political persecution. During my lifetime I have dedicated my life to the struggle of the African people. I have fought against white domination and I have fought against black domination. I have cherished the ideals of a democratic and free society in which all peoples live together in harmony and have equal opportunities. It is an ideal for which I hope to live and to achieve. But, if needs be, it is an ideal for which I am prepared to die."
- a) What stands out for you when you hear this part of Nelson Mandela's speech?
- b) How do these words make you feel about South Africa?
- c) How can we build a democratic and free society in which all people live together in harmony and have equal opportunities?
- d) Name one thing that you can do to build our society this year to continue the life goals of Nelson Mandela and other freedom fighters.

