

Selected Quotes

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ON SPEAKING

Long speeches, the shaking of fists, the banging of tables and strongly worded resolutions out of touch with the objective conditions do not bring about mass action and can do a great deal of harm to the organisation and the struggle we serve.

PRESIDENTIAL ADDRESS TO THE ANC TRANVAAL CONGRESS, ALSO KNOWN AS THE 'NO EASY WALK TO FREEDOM' SPEECH, TRANVAAL, SOUTH AFRICA, 21 SEPTEMBER 1953

ON THE FUTURE

Many people in this country have paid the price before me and many will pay the price after me.

SPEECH IN MITIGATION OF SENTENCE AFTER BEING CONVICTED OF INCITING WORKERS TO STRIKE AND LEAVING THE COUNTRY ILLEGALLY, OLD SYNAGOGUE, PRETORIA, SOUTH AFRICA, NOVEMBER 1962

ON THE LIBERATION MOVEMENT

If I had my time over I would do the same again. So would any man who dares call himself a man.

SPEECH IN MITIGATION OF SENTENCE AFTER BEING CONVICTED OF INCITING WORKERS TO STRIKE AND LEAVING THE COUNTRY ILLEGALLY, OLD SYNAGOGUE, PRETORIA, SOUTH AFRICA, NOVEMBER 1962

ON CHALLENGES

Difficulties break some men but make others. No axe is sharp enough to cut the soul of a sinner who keeps on trying, one armed with the hope that he will rise even in the end.

FROM A LETTER TO WINNIE MANDELA, WRITTEN ON ROBBERN ISLAND, 1 FEBRUARY 1975

ON FRIENDSHIP

I like friends who have independent minds because they tend to make you see problems from all angles.

FROM HIS UNPUBLISHED AUTOBIOGRAPHICAL MANUSCRIPT WRITTEN IN PRISON, 1975

ON EQUALITY

I have never regarded any man as my superior, either in my life outside or inside prison.

FROM A LETTER TO GENERAL DU PREEZ, COMMISSIONER OF PRISONS, WRITTEN ON ROBBERN ISLAND, CAPE TOWN, SOUTH AFRICA, 12 JULY 1976

ON TIME

I never think of the time I have lost. I just carry out a programme because it's there. It's mapped out for me.

FROM A CONVERSATION WITH RICHARD STENGEL, 3 MAY 1993

ON DEATH

Death is something inevitable. When a man has done what he considers to be his duty to his people and his country, he can rest in peace. I believe I have made that effort and that is, therefore, why I will sleep for the eternity.

FROM AN INTERVIEW FOR THE DOCUMENTARY *MANDELA*, 1994

ON IDEOLOGY

I had no specific belief except that our cause was just, was very strong and it was winning more and more support.

ROBBEN ISLAND, CAPE TOWN, SOUTH AFRICA, 11 FEBRUARY 1994

ON FREEDOM OF EXPRESSION

A critical, independent and investigative press is the lifeblood of any democracy. The press must be free from state interference. It must have the economic strength to stand up to the blandishments of government officials. It must have sufficient independence from vested interests to be bold and inquiring without fear or favour. It must enjoy the protection of the constitution, so that it can protect our rights as citizens.

AT THE INTERNATIONAL PRESS INSTITUTE CONGRESS, 14 FEBRUARY 1994

ON CHARACTER

It is in the character of growth that we should learn from both pleasant and unpleasant experiences.

FOREIGN CORRESPONDENTS' ASSOCIATION'S ANNUAL DINNER, JOHANNESBURG, SOUTH AFRICA, 21 NOVEMBER 1997

ON LEADERSHIP

Real leaders must be ready to sacrifice all for the freedom of their people.

CHIEF ALBERT LUTHULI CENTENARY CELEBRATIONS, KWADUKUZA, KWAZULU-NATAL, 25 APRIL 1998, SOUTH AFRICA

ON WORDS

It is never my custom to use words lightly. If twenty-seven years in prison have done anything to us, it was to use the silence of solitude to make us understand how precious words are and how real speech is in its impact on the way people live and die.

CLOSING ADDRESS 13TH INTERNATIONAL AIDS CONFERENCE, DURBAN, SOUTH AFRICA, 14 JULY 2000

ON LIFE

What counts in life is not the mere fact that we have lived. It is what difference we have made to the lives of others that will determine the significance of the life we lead.

90TH BIRTHDAY CELEBRATION OF WALTER SISULU, WALTER SISULU HALL, RANDBURG, JOHANNESBURG, SOUTH AFRICA, 18 MAY 2002

ON FREEDOM FIGHTERS

We tried in our simple way to lead our life in a manner that may make a difference to those of others.

UPON RECEIVING THE ROOSEVELT FREEDOM AWARD, 8 JUNE 2002

ON INTEGRITY

Those who conduct themselves with morality, integrity and consistency need not fear the forces of inhumanity and cruelty.

AT THE BRITISH RED CROSS HUMANITY LECTURE, QUEEN ELIZABETH CONFERENCE CENTRE, LONDON, ENGLAND, 10 JULY 2003

ON AIDS

When the history of our times is written, will we be remembered as the generation that turned our backs in a moment of global crisis or will it be recorded that we did the right thing?

46664 CONCERT, TROMSO, NORWAY, 11 JUNE 2005

ON HUMOUR

You sharpen your ideas by reducing yourself to the level of the people you are with and a sense of humour and a complete relaxation, even when you're discussing serious things, does help to mobilise friends around you. And I love that.

FROM AN INTERVIEW WITH TIM COUZENS, VERNE HARRIS AND MAC MAHARAJ FOR *MANDELA: THE AUTHORISED PORTRAIT*, 2006, 13 AUGUST 2005

ON SELFLESSNESS

A fundamental concern for others in our individual and community lives would go a long way in making the world the better place we so passionately dreamt of.

KLIPTOWN, SOWETO, SOUTH AFRICA, 12 JULY 2008

ON DETERMINATION

Everyone can rise above their circumstances and achieve success if they are dedicated to and passionate about what they do.

FROM A LETTER TO MAKHAYA NTINI ON HIS 100TH CRICKET TEST, 17 DECEMBER 2009